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AUTHOR:

JOHN OF THE CROSS,
SAINT

TITLE:

THE COMPLETE WORKS
OF SAINT JOHN OF ...

PLACE:

LONDON

DATE:

1864

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Complete works tr from the original Spanish
by David Lewis, ed by the Oblate Fathers of Saint Charles
with a pref by His Eminence Cardinal Wiseman
London 1864 0 2 v
Contents
1 The ascent of Mount Carmel: The obscure
night of the soul

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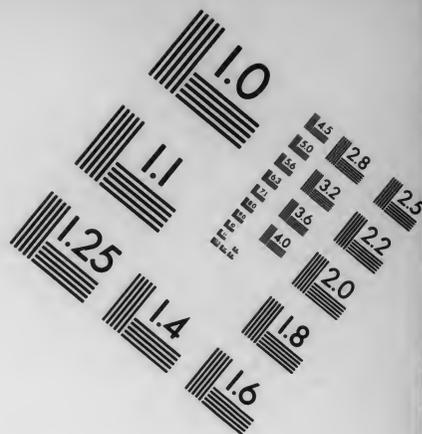
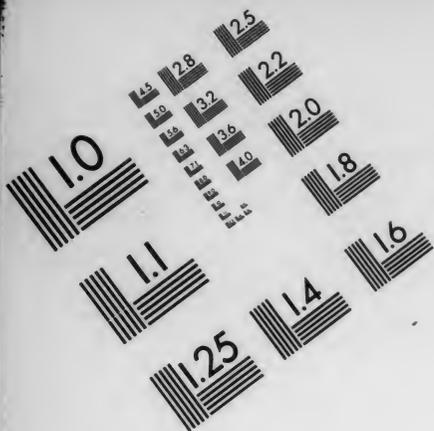


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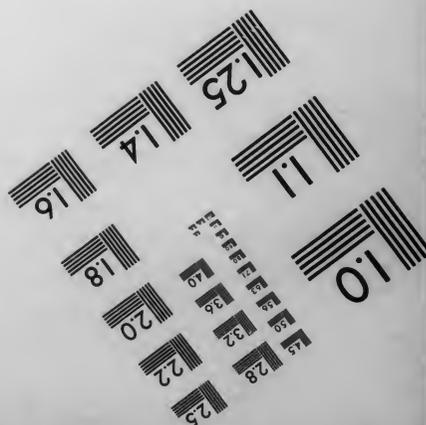
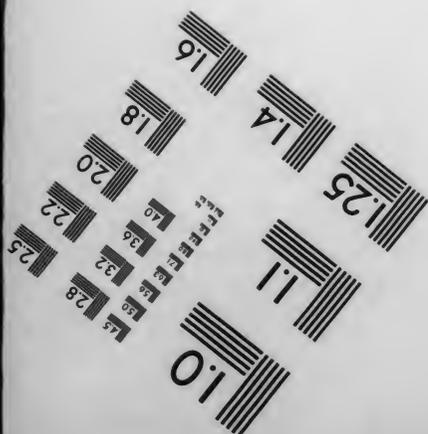
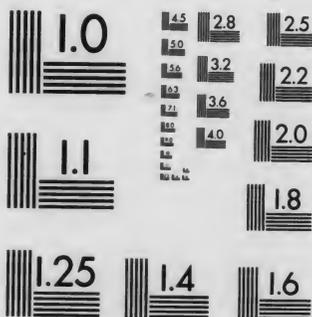
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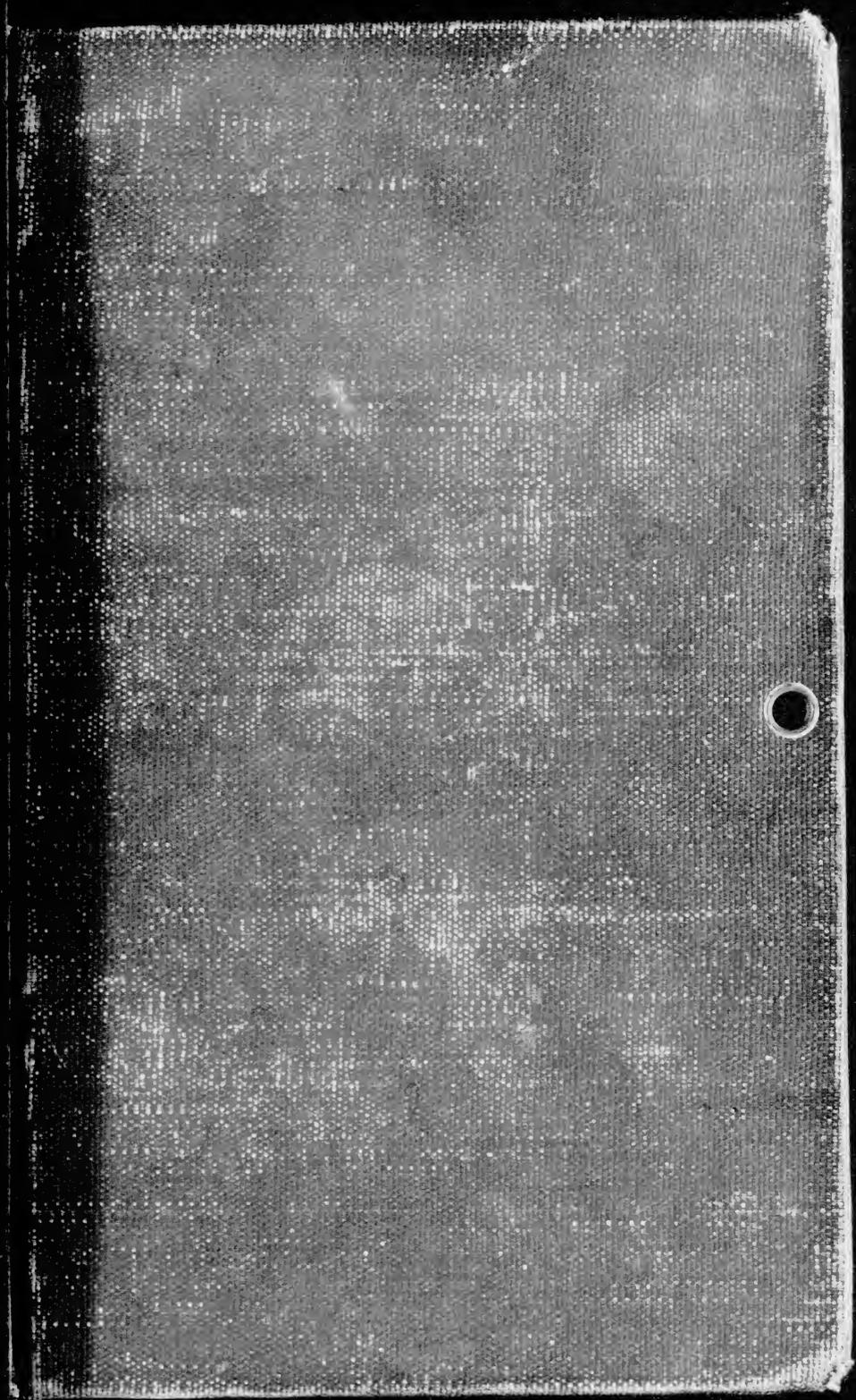
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Cruz, Juan de la, St

THE

COMPLETE WORKS

OF

SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS,

OF THE

ORDER OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL SPANISH

BY

DAVID LEWIS, Esq. M.A.

EDITED BY THE OBLATE FATHERS OF SAINT CHARLES.

WITH A PREFACE

BY

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL WISEMAN.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, ROBERTS, & GREEN.

1864.

LONDON
PRINTED BY SPOTTISWOODE AND CO
NEW-STREET SQUARE

NOV 17 1864

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NOTE BY THE TRANSLATOR.

This Translation was made for the late Father FABER, Provost of the London Oratory.

He intended to publish it himself, but, hindered by many cares, and finally by failing health, he presented it to the Oblate Fathers of S. Charles, to whose laborious care this Impression is due.

The Fathers have further enriched it with marginal notes and a double index.

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1

PREFACE.

IT is now many years ago, long before the episcopal burthen pressed upon his shoulders, that the author enjoyed the pleasure of knowing, and frequently conversing with, the estimable Görres, at Munich. One day, the conversation turned on a remark in that deep writer's 'Philosophy of Mysticism,' to the effect, that saints most remarkable for their mystical learning and piety were far from exhibiting, in their features and expression, the characteristics usually attributed to them. They are popularly considered, and by artists represented, as soft, fainting, and perhaps hysterical persons; whereas their portraits present to us countenances of men, or women, of a practical, business-like, working character.

The author asked Görres if he had ever seen an original likeness of S. Teresa, in whom he thought these remarks were particularly exemplified. He replied that he never had; and the writer, on returning to Rome, fulfilled the promise which he had made the philosopher, by procuring a sketch of an authentic portrait of that saint, preserved with great care in the Monastery of S. Sylvester, near Tusculum.

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It was painted for Philip II. by a concealed artist, while he was conversing with her.

This portrait confirms most strongly the theory of Görres, as the author wrote to him with the drawing; for while no mystical saint has ever been more idealised by artists, or represented as living in a continual swoon, than S. Teresa, her true portraits all represent her with strong, firmly set, and almost masculine features, with forms and lines that denoted vigour, resolution, and strong sense. Her handwriting perfectly suggests the same conclusion.

Still more does the successful activity of her life, in her many painful struggles, under every possible disadvantage, and her final and complete triumph, strengthen this idea of her. And then, her almost superhuman prudence, by which she guided so many minds, and prosperously conducted so many complicated interests and affairs, and her wonderful influence over men of high education and position, and of great powers, are further evidences of her strong, commanding nature; such as, in the world, might have claimed an almost unexampled preeminence.

It is not improbable that some who take up these volumes, or dip into them here and there, may conceive that they were written by a dreamy ascetic, who passed his life in hazy contemplation of things unreal and unpractical. Yet it was quite the contrary. Twin-saint, it may be said, to S. Teresa — sharer in her labours and in her sufferings, S. John of the Cross, actively and unflinchingly pursued their joint object, that of

reforming and restoring to its primitive purity and observance the religious Order of Carmelites, and founding, throughout Spain, a severer branch, known as discalced, or barefooted Carmelites, or more briefly as Teresians.

We do not possess any autobiography of S. John, as we do of S. Teresa, or the more active portion and character of his life would be at once apparent. Moreover, only very few of his letters have been preserved; not twenty, in fact, or we should undoubtedly have had sufficient evidence of his busy and active life. But, even as it is, proofs glance out from his epistles of this important element in his composition.

In his second letter (vol. ii. p. 318), he thus writes to the religious of Veas, a highly favoured foundation: 'What is wanting in you, if, indeed, anything be wanting, is . . . silence, and work. For, whereas speaking distracts, silence and action collect the thoughts, and strengthen the spirit.' And again, 'To arrest this evil, and to preserve our spirit, as I have said, there is no surer remedy than to suffer, to work, to be silent.'

It was not, therefore, a life of visionary or speculative meditation that S. John taught even the nuns to pursue, but one of activity and operative occupation. But we may judge of his own practice by a passage in another of his letters. Thus he writes:

'I have been waiting to finish these visitations and foundations, which our Lord has hastened forward in such wise that there has been no time to spare. The

Friars have been received at Cordova with the greatest joy and solemnity on the part of the whole city I am now busied at Seville with the removal of the nuns, who have bought one of the principal houses at a cost of about 14,000 ducats, being worth more than 20,000. They are now established there. 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 S. John, I shall set forth to Eciija, where, with the Divine blessing, we shall found another; thence to Malaga I wish I had authority to make this foundation, as I had for the other. I do not expect much difficulty' * (p. 322).

This is only a few months' work, or rather some weeks'; for the interval described in the letter is from the Ascension to the 24th of June. We must allow some portion of this time for the slow travelling of those days and those regions, over *sierras*, on mule-back. And then S. John's travels were not triumphal progresses, but often were painful pilgrimages, crossed by arrests, and even long imprisonments, embittered by personal unkindness.

Yet, with calm firmness he persevered and travelled and worked at the establishment of his new houses in many parts of Spain, till the Order was fully and permanently planted. In fact, if we looked only at his life, we should naturally conclude that he was a man

* The writer has had the pleasure of visiting these early foundations at Seville, Eciija, Malaga, and Granada. The first fervour of the Order yet remains in them.

of an operative mind, always at work, ever in movement, who could not afford much time for inward concentration on abstract subjects.

But when we read his writings, another high quality, for which we are not prepared, must strike us forcibly as entering into the composition of his character. He must have given much time to reading and study. He is learned in all those pursuits which we desire and expect to find in an ecclesiastical scholar of his age. Every page in his book gives proof of thorough acquaintance with that mental discipline which trained and formed the mind in the schools, and gave a mould into which thought ran and settled itself in fixed principles; or, where this possessed extraordinary power, opened a channel through which it passed to further spheres of activity. Even the mind of a Bacon was conducted through the dialectics of those schools, to all the developments of his intellectual vigour. x

In S. John we discover, at every turn, a mind so educated by reading and by study. His writings are far from being a string of loose disjointed thoughts, scattered apophthegms, or aimless rhapsodies. Quite on the contrary, there is ever a sequence and strict logical continuity in every division of his discourse, and all the several parts are coherent and consistent. However detailed his treatment of his subject, he never becomes entangled or confused; he never drops a thread of what may appear a fine-spun web of expansion in a difficult topic, and loses it; but he returns to what he has interrupted or intercalated with undisturbed fidelity,

and repursues his reasoning with a distinctness and discrimination which shows that in truth there had been no interruption, but that unity of thought had pervaded all the design, and nothing had been left to chance or the idea of the moment.

Indeed, one feels in reading him that he has to deal with the master of a science. There is no wandering from the first purpose, no straying aside from the predetermined road, after even flowers that grow on its sides. Every division and subdivision of the way has been charted from the beginning by one who saw it all before him. And the secret lies in this, and nothing more: S. John invents nothing, borrows nothing from others, but gives us clearly the results of his own experience in himself and in others. He presents you with a portrait, not with a fancy picture. He represents the ideal of one who has passed, as he had done, through the career of the spiritual life, through its struggles and its victories.

Not only does he at all times exhibit proof of his mental cultivation by those processes which formed every great mind in those days, and the gradual decline of which, in later times, has led proportionably to looseness of reasoning and diminution of thinking power, but S. John throughout exhibits tokens of a personal culture of his own mental powers and many graceful gifts.

His mind is eminently poetical, imaginative, tender, and gentle. Whatever mystical theology may appear to the mind of the uninitiated, to S. John it was clearly

with ardour
a bright and well-loved pursuit; it was a work of the heart more than of the head; its place was rather in the affections than among the intellectual powers. Hence, with every rigour of logical precision, and an unbending exactness in his reasonings, there is blended a buoyancy of feeling, a richness of varied illustration, and often a sweet and elegant fancy playing with grave subjects, so as to render them attractive, which show a mind unfettered by mere formal methods, but easy in its movements and free in its flights. Indeed, often a point which is obscure and abstruse when barely treated, receives, from a lively illustration, a clearness and almost brilliancy quite unexpected. ✕

But the prominent learning of the saint and the source of his most numerous and happiest elucidations, are to be found in the inspired Word of God. That is his treasure-house, that the inspirer of his wisdom, and subject of his meditation. The sacred volume must have been in his hands all day, and can hardly have dropped out of them at night. Even by merely glancing at the index of texts quoted by him, placed at the end of the second volume, anyone may convince himself of his rare familiarity with the inspired writings, and one very different from what we may find among readers of Scripture in our days.

For, first, it is an impartial familiarity, not confined to some favourite portions, as is often the case, where the reader thinks he finds passages or subjects that confirm his own views or encourage his tastes. But in S. John we discover nothing of this sort. Of course,

such a book as the Canticle, the special food of mystics, is familiar to his pen as it was to the mouths of Jewish maidens, made sweeter and sweeter by frequent reiterations. But every other book is almost equally ready to his hand, to prove more formally, occasionally illustrate, every one of his positions. For the first purpose he must have deeply studied the sacred text; for the second, its expressions must have been his very household words.

Then, secondly, the beauty and elegance of his applications prove not mere familiarity, but a refined study, and a loving meditation on what he considers most holy and divine. Some of his quotations are richly set in his own graceful explanations and commentaries; and, though the adaptations which he makes may sometimes appear startling and original to an ordinary peruser of Scripture, they seem so apt and so profound in their spiritual wisdom that they often win approbation and even admiration.

So far, it may appear that this Preface has dealt with S. John of the Cross outside of the sphere in which the volume to which it is prefixed represents him as moving. It has not treated him as a mystical theologian. Why is this? it may be justly asked.

The answer must be honest and straightforward. It is too common for overlooking or disguising, to pronounce a contemplative life to be only a cloak for idleness, a pretext for abandoning or neglecting the active duties of domestic or social existence, and shrinking from their responsibilities. Those who pro-

fess to lead it are considered as the drones of the human hive, who leave its work to others, and yet exact a share of its sweets. And if, from time to time, one emerges from the passive, or, as it is deemed, indolent, condition of mere dreamers, and gives form and precision to the rules and laws which guide them, he is probably held merely to have more method and skill in his disordered ideas, and to be only more pernicious than his companions or followers.

This prejudice, firmly rooted in many English minds, it has been thought well to remove, as a preliminary to presenting S. John to his readers in his highest and distinctive character. He has been shown to possess other eminent qualities. He was a man of active life and practical abilities, industrious, conversant with business, where prudence, shrewdness, and calculation, as well as boldness, were required. He was a man of well-trained mind, cultivated by the exercise of intellectual faculties, and matured by solid, especially religious knowledge.

He has now to come before us as a diver into the very depths of thought, as a contemplative of the highest order.

A man with such a character as we have claimed for him cannot have dozed away his years of life in unpractical dreams, or in crude speculations. These would be incompatible with the rest of his character. His contemplativeness, and his mode of explaining it, may be anticipated to be methodical and practical, and at the same time feeling and attractive. And such

both are; his own practice, and his communication of it to us.

But now, perhaps, many readers may ask for some introductory information on the very nature of the subjects treated in the volumes before him, and it cannot be reasonably refused. This may be conveyed in various ways; perhaps the most simple and appreciable will be found in an analogy, though imperfect, with other spheres of thought.

It is well known that a mind naturally adapted to a pursuit, and thus led ardently to follow it, after having become thoroughly conversant and familiar with all its resources, becomes almost, or altogether, independent of its methods, and attains conclusions by compendious processes, or by intuitive foresight, which require in others long and often complicated deductions. Familiar illustrations may be found in our habitual speaking without thinking of our grammar, which a foreigner has constantly to do while learning our language; or the almost inexplicable accuracy of calculation in even children, gifted with the power of instantaneous arithmetical solutions.

A mathematician acquires by study this faculty; and it is said that Laplace, in the decline of life, could not any longer fill up the gaps in the processes by which, at the age of greater mental vigour, he had reached, without effort, the most wonderful yet accurate conclusions.

What is to be found in these abstruser pursuits, exists no less in those of a lighter character. The

literary mind, whether in thinking, writing, or speaking, when well disposed by abilities, and well tutored by application, takes in without effort the entire theme presented to it, even with its parts and its details. Sometimes it is like a landscape revealed, in a dark night, by one flash of lightning; oftener it resembles the calmer contemplation of it, in bright day, by an artist's eye, which is so filled with its various beauties, that it enables him to transfer it, at home, to the enduring canvas, on which many may enjoy it.

The historian may see, in one glance, the exact plan of a work, with its specific aims and views; its sources, too, and its auxiliary elucidations. The finished orator, no less, when suddenly called upon, will hold from end to end the drift and purpose of his entire discourse, and deliver, without effort, what to others appears an elaborate composition. But, still more, the poet indulges in noblest flights up to the regions of sublime, or over the surface of beautiful, thoughts, while he appears to be engaged in ordinary occupation, or momentarily musing in vague abstraction.

Indeed, even where manual action is required to give utterance to thought, the result is the same. The consummate musician sits down to a complicated instrument, silent and dumb, till his fingers communicate to it his improvised imaginings; bearing to its innermost organisation, by a sort of reflex action of the nerves of sensation on those of motion, the ready and inexhaustible workings of his brain, sweet melodies and rich harmonies, with tangled knots and delicious

resolutions ; effortless, as if the soul were in the hand, or the mechanical action in the head. ✕

In the few examples which are here given, and which might easily be multiplied, the point illustrated is this ; that where, with previous natural dispositions and persevering cultivation, perfection in any intellectual pursuit has been attained or approached, the faculty exercised in it becomes, in a manner, passive, dispenses with intermediate processes, and receives their ultimate conclusions like impressions stamped upon it. ✕ Labour almost ceases, and *spontaneity* of thought becomes its substitute. ✕

In this condition of mind, familiar to any one possessing genius in any form, perceptions, ideas, reasonings, imagery, have not to be sought ; they either dart at once complete into the thought, inborn, and perfect to their very arms, as Pallas was symbolically fabled to express this process ; or they grow up, expanding from a small seed to a noble plant, but as if by an innate sap and vigour. There is a flow into the mind of unsought images, or reflections, or truths ; whence they come, one hardly knows. ✕ They were not there before ; they have not been forged, or cast, or distilled within.

And when this spontaneous productiveness has been gained, the occupation of mind is not interrupted. S. Thomas is said to have concluded an argument against the Manichees alone at the royal table ; Bishop Walmesley renounced his mathematical studies on finding them painfully distract him at the altar.

Neither recreation, nor serious employment, nor noise, nor any condition of time or place, will suffice to dissipate or even to disturb the continuous, unlaborious, and unfatiguing absorption, of thought in the mental region which has become its natural dwelling.

Let us now ask, why may not a soul, that is the mind accompanied by the best feelings, be placed in a similar position with relation to the noblest and sublimest object which it can pursue—God? He and His attributes present more perfect claims, motives, and allurements, and more full gratification, repletion, and reward to earnest and affectionate contemplation, than any other object or subject. How much soever the mathematician may strain his intellect in pursuit of the true ; however the poet may luxuriate in the enjoyment of the beautiful ; to whatsoever extent the moralist may delight in the apprehension of the good in its recondite quintessence, none of these can reach, in his special aim and longing, that elevation and consummation which can be attained in those of all the three, by one whose contemplation is directed to the Infinite in Truth, in Beauty, and in Goodness.*

Why, then, should not this, so comprehensive and so grand a source of every mental enjoyment, become a supreme, all-exhausting, and sole object of contempla-

* It is recorded of the celebrated, though perhaps eccentric scholar, Raymond Lully, that once he entered the school of Duns Scotus, to whom he was unknown. The lecturer addressed to him the question, *Quotuplex pars scientie est Deus?*—‘What part of knowledge includes God?’ His reply overmastered the interrogator: *Deus non est pars, qui est Totum*: ‘God is in no part—He is the WHOLE.’

tive fruition? Why should not some, or rather many, minds be found which have selected this as their occupation, their solace, their delight; and found it to be what none other can of its nature be, inexhaustible? Everything else is measureable and fathomable; this alone unlimited.

Then, if there be no repugnance to such a choice being made in the aim of contemplation, it is natural for us to expect conditions and laws in its attainment analogous to what we find where the mental powers have selected for their exercise some inferior and more restricted object. There will be the same gradual and often slow course of assiduous training, the same difficulty of fixing and concentrating the thoughts; till by degrees forms and intermediate steps are dispensed with; when the mind becomes passive, and its trains of thought seem spontaneous and in-coming, rather than worked out by elaborating processes.

This state, when God is the sole occupier of thought, represents the highest condition of contemplation, the reaching of which Mystical Theology professes to direct.

There are, however, two essential differences between the natural and the spiritual exercises of the contemplative faculties. In treating of the first, a natural aptitude was named throughout as a condition for attaining that highest sphere of spontaneous suggestion in the mind. In the second, this condition is not included. Its place is taken by the supernatural power of GRACE.

Every believer in Christianity acknowledges the existence of an inward gift, which belongs of right to all; though many may not choose to claim it. It takes the place of mere natural advantages so completely, that its name has become a rooted word in our language, even apart from religion. We say that a man 'has had, or has not had, the grace' to do a good thing; 'a graceless act' is, in some way, evil; 'a graceless youth' is one walking, somehow, on the path leading to perdition. And we feel, and say, that it is grace which makes a poor man often more virtuous, and virtuously wise, though ignorant and in other ways not wise-minded, than clever, better-educated, and more intellectual rich ones.

Whoever thus believes in a superhuman gift, which supplies, in the higher life of man, the ordinary powers of nature, or elevates these to the attainment of what requires more than ordinary qualities, will hardly be able to deny that this supernatural aid will be copiously granted, where the whole energy of a soul is directed exclusively to the most holy and sublime of purposes, the knowledge and contemplation of God. If it be easily accepted that any one reading, with pure and simple docility, His written records is helped by this grace to understand them, it surely is not much to ask, that one may expect no less assistance when, instead of the eye running over a written page, the entire soul is centred in Him, and every power, and every affection, is absorbed in deep and silent meditation on His own Divine essence.

A further distinction between this application of man's noblest faculties combined to their simplest but sublimest possible object, and their separate exercise on any inferior speculation, consists in this. God, towards whom the mystical contemplative directs himself, is a living active Power, at once without and within the soul. Every Christian believes that He deals as such with the individual man; that in his natural life each one has received his destiny, his time, and place, and measure of both, by a special allotment; that in his outward being, whatever befalls him, he is the ward of a personal Providence; while in his inward and unseen existence, he receives visitations of light, of remorse, of strength, and of guidance, which can apply and belong to him alone.

If so, how can he doubt that one of his own kind and class, who, more than tens of thousands, singles out that Giver of every good gift as supereminent, or rather sole claimant of his soul's best tributes; the throne on which all his ideal conceptions of the great and the good are concentrated in a single unclouded vision of majesty and glory; the altar on which are laid, in willing oblation, all his tenderest affections, and, in ready immolation, every inferior appetite and desire—who can doubt that such a one establishes a right to a larger share than others of the active interposition of Divine kindness, and of personal favour in seconding his disinterested love?

These two differences, great and essential, show that we have been only illustrating, rather than vindicating,

the spiritual science of S. John, by comparing it with other classes of knowledge. We have endeavoured to prove that, even prescindng from the spiritual quality, which is its characteristic, there is nothing singular, unnatural, or reprehensible in what would only add one more, and a most worthy, mental pursuit, to those which generally receive not mere approbation but praise.

And hence the religious and ascetic contemplative may be allowed not only to deserve equal admiration with the poet or philosopher, but to be as fit as either for the ordinary duties of life, and in as full possession of practical and social virtues.

Having thus, by this analogy, disposed the uninitiated reader to judge unprejudicedly of this spiritual occupation of so many persons of singularly virtuous life in the Catholic Church, we may invite him to consider if it have not strong presumptions in its favour.

But, first, it may be well to give a brief explanation of this religious mysticism, of which the works of S. John are considered to treat so admirably. What we have already said will greatly assist us.

In the Catholic Church, besides public or private vocal prayer, everyone is directed and urged to the practice of mental prayer, or meditation. For this duty the Church furnishes simple rules and methods, varying somewhat, but all with one practical end. She has at hand almost countless models, forms, and even fully-developed draughts, scarcely requiring to be filled in.

In carrying out this familiar practice, it will be obvious that very different degrees of success will be attained. To some it continues, almost to the end, irksome and trying, full of distraction and imperfection. This may easily arise from natural deficiencies in the mind, or from habitual negligence. But to a willing and persevering mind, these difficulties will diminish, and the power of concentrating the thoughts and affections upon a given subject will increase and strengthen.

Thus far, anyone may aspire, with every chance of success. Then comes a higher stage; when this power of fixing the mind is not only easy, but most pleasing; when, without formal guidance, the soul rests, like the bird poised upon its wings, motionless above the earth, plunged, as it were, in the calm atmosphere which surrounds and sustains it on every side. This is the state of contemplation, when the placid action of a deeply inward thoughtfulness, undisturbed by other objects, is intent on gazing upon images and scenes fixed or passing as on a mirror before it, without exertion or fatigue, almost without note of time.

This condition, with its requisite power, is also attainable by those who regularly and seriously apply to meditation.* (Yet, when we have reached it, we are still standing on the ground, and have not set foot on

* Anyone familiar with the Exercises of S. Ignatius will understand the difference between meditation and contemplation, in the sense here used; and how from one he is led to the other. This is very different from the 'prayer of contemplation,' which belongs to mystical theology.

the first step of the 'mystical ladder,' which S. John teaches how to mount.

Far above this earthly exercise of contemplation, is one which belongs to a much higher and purer sphere, above the clouds and mists of the one in which we move. To reach it, is given to few; and of those few, fewer still have left us records of their experience. Yet—and this is sufficient for our present purpose—that the consummation of their desires, and attainment of their scope, was a closer union with God, is acknowledged by all. The soul, thoroughly purified of all other affections, reaches a sublime and supernatural power of settling all its faculties in the contemplation of the Supreme Being with such clearness and intensity, that its very existence seems lost in Him; the most perfect conformity and uniformity with all the emanations of His Will are established as its guiding laws; and, as far as is yet compatible, union the most complete is obtained between the imperfect spirit of man and the infinite Spirit that created it to its own image and likeness.

Now, this aim of infirm humanity, and the possibility of reaching it, may appear, at first sight, extravagant and presumptuous. Yet there has hardly ever, if ever, existed a religious system which has not supposed such an aspiration as its highest, but still possible, flight to be within the reach of some more favoured votaries.

It is too well known to require proof that there existed, beyond a gross visible idolatry, a hidden, eso-

teric, and mysterious system in the mythologies of the East, handed down in the succession of their priesthoods. The mystic teachings of India, the best known to us, because we possess their works, reveal this doctrine to us, that contemplation is the means by which a man may attain to unification of himself with the Deity, rising by steps gradually to this almost blissful enjoyment of His presence. In China the sect or school of Lao-tseu, with which the learned Abel-Remusat made Europe acquainted by a special memoir, taught and practised the same mystical system.

Chaldea and Egypt no doubt held it also; for it was from them that Pythagoras borrowed, and infused into the philosophy of Greece and Italy precisely the same doctrine; for, while his foolish theory, also Oriental, of transmigration put off to an indefinite period the fruition of the Divine essence, he taught that the soul, thoroughly purified and detached from every inferior affection, could, through contemplation, attain a union with God.

Although this sublime philosophy became obscured in the ages which succeeded him, it shone forth again in the Neo-platonic school—in Plotinus, Porphyrius, and their followers. Whether they merely revived a faded, or published an occult, tradition of their heathen philosophy, or whether they drew disfigured doctrines and practices from the still young and fresh Christianity of their times, it matters but little. In the one case we conclude how instinctive it is to man, even amidst absurd wanderings of his intellect, to expect, nay to

crave for, not merely an approach to God, but unification with Him;* and such a noble and holy desire and longing of humanity may naturally expect to find satisfaction in the true revelation of man's Creator.

In the second hypothesis, we must admit that already Christianity had sufficiently developed the germs of its mystical system to be known to aliens, and even enemies.

Indeed, we cannot doubt that the religion of Christ, following the early manifestations of God in the Old Testament, laid deep those seeds of highest contemplation which were at once matured in His apostles. S. Paul, who was taken to the third heaven, to hear words unutterable to man, and to require a severe counterpoise to the greatness of his revelations (2 Cor. xii.), came so to be united with his Lord as to hold but one life with and in Him (Gal. ii. 20; Phil. i. 21).

As to the existence, in the seers and holy sages of the Old Law, of a state of unitive contemplation, as in Abraham, Job, Moses, and Elias, we are not called aside to speak or consider. This point may be safely left in the hands of S. John of the Cross; for, though he does not anywhere expressly treat of this point, he has so filled his pages with quotations from every part of Scripture in illustration of his teaching, and the texts alleged by him are so apt and naturally applied, as to force conviction upon us that the mystical and spiritual

* In races of both continents a ruder yet deeply symbolical feeling prevailed at all times, that incorporation with the Deity was obtained by partaking of the victims offered to Him.—See Gerbet's beautiful treatise, *Sur le Dogme générateur de la Piété Catholique*.

communion with God was carried to the highest degree. Nay, does not a state of close intercommunion between God and man, through revelations, manifestations, angelic messages, and the prophetic spirit, on the one hand, and visions and ecstasies on the other, necessarily suppose it? And does the frequent boldness of the Psalmist's familiarity with God, still more the domestic intimacy with Him so tenderly shadowed forth in the *Canticle of Canticles*, allow of any alternative except the highest and purest admission of a perishable and frail creature into the very sanctuary of the Divine glory? Surely on Sinai and in the cave of Horeb such loving intercourse of almost friendship was held.

But the history of the Church soon unfolds to us a bright page, on which is emblazoned, as its title, *CONTEMPLATION*. At the very time when martyrs are shedding their blood and receiving the highest homage and praise, the Church, which so loves and honours them, reveres scarcely less the hundreds who fled from the very persecutions which the martyrs encountered and overcame. And the reason was, that the anchorites and cenobites, who retired to the desert, and did not again return to the world after peace was restored to the Church, but swelled their numbers to thousands, were considered by her no less conquerors of the world and triumphers over the weakness of nature. Their lives of solitude and silence were not idle, for they laboured with their hands for their slender sustenance; but this was expressly the rule of their lives, that, even while their hands were at work, their minds should be

fixed on God. And hours of the dark night had no other occupation.

It was this power of fixed and unflagging contemplation which sustained them through eighty, often, and a hundred years of this seclusion. Many were men of refined minds and high education, who, in their thoughtful meditative lives, must be supposed to have attained the highest refinement of devout application to spiritual things which can be enjoyed on earth. And what pious solitaries thus gained in the desert of the Thebais, our own hermits, like Guthlake, and monks, like Cuthbert, as surely possessed. Without the peaceful enjoyment of such a sweet interior reward, their lives would have been intolerable.

So necessary does the power of communing with God alone, and 'face to face,' appear to every class of Christians, that not only the ascetics of the Eastern Church, or the mystics of the Western, profess to possess it, but even the least enthusiastic forms of religion claim, or admit it. Jacob Böhme and Swedenborg have found plenty of admirers; the latter is still leader of a sect. It would be invidious to enter into a comparison between the writings of these men and the volumes before us. We refer to them only as evidence that every form of Christianity feels the want of some transcendental piety, which bears the soul beyond the dominion and almost out of the prison of the 'body of death,' and allows it a free and familiar intercourse with God, as of spirit with spirit.

When, however, perusing the writings of S. John,

the reader will find no symptom of fanaticism, no arrogation of superior privileges, of inspirations, Divine guidance, or angelic ministrations, as are to be found in pretended mystics. There is scarcely an allusion to himself, except occasionally to apologise for being so unequal to the sublime doctrines which he is unfolding, or for the rudeness of his style. Never, for a moment, does he let us know, that he is communicating to us the treasures of his own experience, or describing his own sensations. One sees and knows it. A man who writes a handbook of travel need not tell us, whether or no, he has passed over the route himself. We feel if he has, by the minuteness of his details, by the freshness of his descriptions, by the exactness of his acquaintance with men and things.

Then, no one who had not tasted, and relished, the sweetness of the spiritual food prepared by him, could possibly treat of it with such zest; its delicious flavour is on the lips that speak about it. Nor need the reader imagine that he will hear from this humble and holy man accounts of visions, or ecstasies, or marvellous occurrences to himself, or others; or rules, or means for attaining supernatural illuminations, or miraculous gifts. No; he proposes to guide any pupil, who feels drawn by God, to supreme love of Him, and towards those regions of contemplative prayer in which He often communicates Himself most intimately to the human soul; but only through a dark and painful road, from which all joy and almost consolation is excluded.

It is now time to lay before the reader an outline, though imperfect, of what he will find in the volumes before him. The first contains two treatises, embodying what may be called the portion of mystical instruction, most fully and excellently imparted by S. John.

It may be considered a rule in this highest spiritual life, that, before it is attained, there must be a period of severe probation, lasting often many years, and separating it from the previous state, which may have been one of most exalted virtue. Probably, many whom the Catholic Church honours as saints have never received this singular gift. But, in reading the biography of such as have been favoured with it, we shall invariably find that the possession of it has been preceded, not only by a voluntary course of mortification of sense, fervent devotion, constant meditation, and separation from the world, but also by a trying course of dryness, weariness of spirit, insipidity of devotional duties, and, what is infinitely worse, dejection, despondency, temptation to give all up in disgust, and almost despair. During this tremendous probation, the soul is dark, parched, and wayless, as 'earth without water,' as one staggering across a desert; or, to rise to a nobler illustration, like Him, remotely, who lay on the ground on Olivet, loathing the cup which he had longed for, beyond the sweet chalice which He had drunk with His Apostles just before.

Assuming, as we do, that this trial comes upon the soul from God, its purpose is clear. That sublime condition to which it aspires, and is called, of spiritual

union with infinite holiness, and of the nearest approach allowable to the closer gazing of blessed spirits into the unfathomable glory, requires a purity like gold in the crucible, and a spiritualising unclathing of whatever can be cast off, of our earthly and almost of our corporeal existence. The soul is to be winged, strongly as the eagle, gently as the dove,* to leave all this world behind it, and seek a sweet repose.

no
then
Detachment and purity are the reasons for this intermediate state of desolation; detachment not merely from outward objects and from visible bonds, but from our own wills and desires, however virtuous; detachment from our own ways of even seeking God, and still more from our sensible enjoyment of devotion, and the very sweetness of His service. There must be no trust in one's own intellect, where faith alone can guide through the deep darkness; no reliance upon the ordinary aids to contemplation, for the very impulses and first thrilling touches of love must come from God's delicate hand; no impatience for release, no desire to return back. It is an earthly purgatory, in which all dross is painfully drained out, all straw and stubble burnt up.

And what is the result? The soul has indeed been brought into a state little below that of angels; but it has given proof of a love than which theirs cannot be higher. That dark period of hard probation

* 'They shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary' (Isa. xl. 31); 'Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest?' Psalm liv. 7).

has completely inured her to fidelity to God, not for the sake of His rewards, not for the happiness of His service even here below, but for His own dear and good sake, because He *is* her God. And this persevering and persisting love of Him, without a ray or even a glimmering of the brightness of His countenance to light and cheer the dreary path, has surely, by gentle patience, won a returning love beyond the claims of ordinarily virtuous souls.

It is after this often long, but always severe, trial of faithful love, that what one may call the mystical espousals of God with the soul take place; when its spiritual existence may be said to have been raised into a heavenly sphere; when the exercise of that sublime privilege of contemplation has become so habitual, that scarce do the knees touch the ground in prayer, than the affections flash upwards from the heart, and are embosomed and absorbed at once in almost blissful fruition in God's mighty love; and when the body is busy with the affairs of life, these no more hinder the familiar colloquies and the burning glances of affection directed to the one exclusive Ruler of the soul, than did the slim and light palm-leaves woven by the desert anchoret distract his thoughts.

This happy consummation of both trials and desires forms the subject of mystical treatises by many who have enjoyed it. S. John does not, except incidentally, dwell upon it. He does not systematically deal with those who bask on the summit of that spiritual Thabor; he only guides the pilgrim to it. The ascent to the

mystical mountain is rugged and steep; the journey can only be made in the darkness of probationary privations of inward light and joy. Hence the titles of his two great treatises—'The Ascent of Mount Carmel;' 'The Obscure Night of the Soul.'

Each of these works may be said to go over the same ground, though without repetitions, or even tiresome similarities. To each is prefixed a poem of eight stanzas, which forms not merely an introduction, but an argument rather, to a full dissertation on mystical science. † But our author does not go beyond the two or three first strophes in his commentary, which often extends to many chapters; copious, most methodical, and rich upon one only line.

× Mount Carmel is his natural type of the spiritual mount: for there dwelt his 'Father Elias' (vol. i. p. 143), whom the Carmelites revere as their model and founder; and there in a dark cavern he spake with God, and even caught a glimpse of His glorious being, in His might, and in His gentleness (3 Kings xix. 8). Up, up, slowly but warily, he guides his scholar along the steep and perilous ascent. He may be compared to the Alpine guide who, himself familiar with the craggy path, and sure of his steps, is all solicitude for his inexperienced charge, and watches and directs every movement. He makes him keep his eyes intent on the rude path before his feet, or on the slippery stair which he has cut out for them. He does not allow him to look down into the valley below, beautiful though it be, lest his head turn giddy, and he

topple over the bluff precipice; nor to gaze upwards, in immature hope, towards the bright pinnacles, which reflect and refract the sun's rays, lest he become weary at their distance, and blinded by their brilliancy, and unable to pick his steps. Now the faithful guide takes his hand and leads him; now he bids him rely on his trusty pole, throwing his weight upon it; now he encourages him to gather all his strength, and bound over the yawning crevasse. And so in the end he lands his charge safe upon the high and dizzy summit, whence he may look around, and above, and downwards in safety, and enjoy a sweet repose and a refreshing banquet. † So careful, so minute, so tender, and so resolute is the guidance of S. John in the 'Ascent of Mount Carmel.'

And through 'The Obscure Night,' no less safe by its prudence, and encouraging by its firmness, is his leadership to the soul. The twofold night, that of sense and that of the spirit, may be securely traversed under his direction, and the soul return to a daylight sevenfold brighter than that of the ordinary sun.

After thus attempting, however imperfectly, to give an outline of S. John's principal treatises on the spiritual life, no space remains to say anything about the beautiful writings which fill the second volume. We are mistaken if many readers, who have not courage or disposition to master the abstruser and sublimer doctrines and precepts of the first, will not peruse with delight the more practical and cheerful maxims of the second part, and even find exquisite satisfaction in

those lessons of Divine love, and in those aphorisms of a holy life, which are adapted for every devout soul.

Before closing this preface, it is a mere act of justice to say, that the translation of these difficult works has been made with a care seldom bestowed upon such books when rendered from a foreign language. So simple, so clear, and so thoroughly idiomatic is this version, that the reader will never have to read a sentence twice from any obscurity of language; however abstruse the subject may be. Indeed, he will almost find a difficulty in believing that the work is a translation, and has not been written originally as he reads it, in his own tongue.

LONDON: *February 23, 1864.*

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ERRATUM.

Vol. I, pp. 1, 323, Second Stanza, *for* obscurity *read* security.

THE

ASCENT OF MOUNT CARMEL.

THE
ASCENT OF MOUNT CARMEL.

—
—
—
ARGUMENT.

THE following stanzas are a summary of the doctrine contained in this book of the Ascent of Mount Carmel. They also describe how we are to ascend to the summit of it, that is, to the high estate of perfection, called here union of the soul with God. I place all the stanzas together, because what I have to say is founded upon them. Thus the whole substance of my book may be comprehended at once. I shall also transcribe each stanza again, and each line separately, as the nature of my work requires.

STANZAS

I

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

II

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

STANZAS.

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 but He 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,
He reposed and slept;
I kept Him, and the waving
Of the cedars fanned Him.

VII

Then His hair floated in the breeze
That blew from the turret;
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;
I fainted away, abandoned,
And, amid the lilies forgotten,
Threw all my cares away.

PROLOGUE.

THE dark night, through which the soul passes, on its way PROLOGUE.
to the Divine light of the perfect union of the love of
God — so far as it is in this life possible — requires for its
explanation greater experience and light of knowledge than I
possess. For so great are the trials, and so profound the dark-
ness, spiritual as well as corporal, which souls must endure,
if they will attain to perfection, that no human knowledge
can comprehend them, nor experience describe them. He
only who has passed through them can know them, but even
he cannot explain them. Therefore, while touching but
slightly on the subject of this dark night, I trust neither to
experience nor to knowledge, for both may mislead me; but
solely to the Holy Scriptures, under the teaching of which
I cannot err, because he who speaks therein is the Holy
Ghost. Nevertheless, I accept the aid of experience and
knowledge, and if through ignorance I should err, it is not
my intention to depart from the sound doctrine of our holy
mother the Catholic Church. I resign myself absolutely to
her light, and bow down before her decisions, and moreover
to the better judgment herein of private men, be they who
they may.

The Author's
submission
to the
Church.

It is not any personal fitness which I recognise in myself
that has led me to undertake this work, so high and so
difficult, but solely my trust in our Lord, Who, I hope, will
enable me to speak on account of the great necessities of
many souls. Many persons begin to walk in the way of
virtue — our Lord longing to lead them into the obscure
night that they may travel onwards into the Divine union —
but make no progress; sometimes because they will not
enter upon this night, or suffer Him to lead them into it;
and sometimes also because they do not understand their

PROLOGUE. own state, and are destitute of fit and wise directors who
Hindrances. may guide them to the summit of the mount. How miserable
 it is to see many souls, to whom God has given grace to
 advance — and who, had they taken courage, would have
 reached perfection — remain satisfied with narrow-minded
 views of God's dealings, through want of will or through
 ignorance, or because there is not one to direct their steps,
 and to teach them how to go onwards from the beginning.
 And in the end, when our Lord has compassion on them,
 and leads them on in spite of these hindrances, they arrive
 late, with much difficulty, and less merit, because they have
 not submitted themselves to His ways, nor suffered Him to
 plant their feet on the pure and certain road of union.
 Though it is true that God, Who conducts them, can do so
 without these helps, still, because they do not yield them-
 selves up to Him, they make less progress on the road,
 resisting their Guide; and they merit less because they do
 not submit their will, whereby their sufferings are increased.
 There are souls who, instead of abandoning themselves to
 the care and protection of God, hinder Him rather by their
 indiscreet behaviour, or resist Him like little children who,
 when their mothers would carry them in their arms, struggle
 and cry that they may be allowed to walk. These souls
 make no progress, or if they do, it is comparable only to the
 walking of an infant child.

1. Cowardice.
 2. Self-will.

So, then — that men may know, beginners as well as those
 who have made some progress, how to resign themselves into
 the hands of God when it is His pleasure to lead them — I
 purpose, by His help, to furnish some directions, so that they
 may understand the matter for themselves, or at least submit
 to the guidance of God. Some confessors and spiritual di-
 rectors, because they have no perception or experience of
 these ways, are a hindrance and an evil, rather than a help
 to such souls: they are like the builders of Babel; who, when

required to furnish certain materials, furnished others of a PROLOGUE.
 very different sort, because they knew not the language of
 those around them, and thus the building was stopped.
 'Come ye therefore,' saith God, 'let us go down and there
 confound their tongue, that they may not understand one
 another's speech. And so the Lord scattered them.'*

It is a hard and miserable thing for souls when they can-
 not comprehend their own state, nor meet with any one who
 can. For when God leads any one along the highest road of
 obscure contemplation and aridity, such an one will think
 himself lost; and in this darkness and affliction, temptation
 and distress, some will be sure to tell him, like the comforters
 of Job,† that his sufferings are the effects of melancholy,
 or disordered health, or of natural temperament, or, it may
 be, of some secret sin for which God has abandoned him.
 Yea, they will decide that he is, or that he has been, exceed-
 ingly wicked, seeing that he is thus afflicted. Some also will
 say that he is going backwards, because he finds no consol-
 ation or pleasure, as before, in the things of God. Thus they
 multiply the sorrows of this poor soul, for his greatest trial
 is the knowledge of his own misery, when it seems to him
 clearer than light that he is full of evil and sin, because God
 enables him, as I shall hereafter explain, to see this in the
 obscure night of contemplation. And so, when he meets
 with those who tell him, in accordance with his own impres-
 sions, that his troubles arise out of his own sins, his grief
 and misery are infinitely increased and rendered more bitter
 than death.

3. Self-
 ignorance.

Such confessors as these, not satisfied with considering all
 his sorrows to flow from past sins, compel him to retrace his
 whole life, and to make frequent general confessions, putting
 him on the rack anew. They do not understand that this is
 not the time for such acts, but that it is now the day of

4. Want of
 a guide.

* Gen. xi. 7, 8.

† Job iv.

PROLOGUE. God's purgation; and when they ought to leave him alone, comforting him, indeed, and encouraging him to bear his trials patiently until God shall be pleased to deliver him; for until then, notwithstanding all they may say or do, there can be no relief.

I have to treat this matter hereafter, and how the soul is to be guided, and how the confessor is to conduct himself with regard to his penitent, and what are the signs whereby we may ascertain whether this be a state of purgation, and if it be, whether of sense or of spirit—this is the obscure night—and whether or not it be the effect of melancholy or any other imperfection of body or soul. For there are persons who will think, or their confessors for them, that God is leading them along the road of the obscure night of spiritual purgation, and yet, perhaps, all is nothing but imperfection of sense and spirit; and others also who will think they do not pray when they pray much, and, on the other hand, there are others who think they pray much when they do not in reality pray scarcely at all.

5. Abuse of grace.

There are some—and it is sad to see them—who toil and labour, wearying themselves, and yet go backwards, because they make the fruit which is profitable to consist in that which profits not, but which is rather a hindrance; and others who, in rest and quietness, make great advancement. Others also there are who turn the graces and the gifts of God, given them for their advancement, into embarrassments and stumbling-blocks on this road.

Those who travel on this road will meet with many occasions of joy and sorrow, hope and pain, some of which are the result of the spirit of perfection, others of imperfections. I shall endeavour, by God's help, to speak of all, so that everyone who shall read my book may, in some degree, see the road he takes, and that which he ought to take, if he wishes to ascend to the summit of this mount.

As my book treats of the obscure night in which the soul PROLOGUE. journeys on to God, let no one be surprised if he finds it 6. Obscurity. also somewhat obscure. It will be so, certainly, at first, but as the reader advances he will understand it better, for one part of it will throw light on another. If it be read a second How remedied. time it will become more intelligible, and the doctrine it contains will appear the more certain. But if still there should be any to whom it shall seem hard, let them ascribe it to my ignorance and poor style, for the matter of it is in itself good and most necessary.

But after all I believe that, if I had written it in a more perfect manner, many would not appreciate it, because its contents are not those moralities and soothing matters which those spiritual persons run after who desire to draw near to God in pleasant ways, but a solid and substantial doctrine suited to all, if they seek to advance to that detachment of spirit which is here described. My principal object, however, is not to address myself to all, but only to certain persons of our holy religion of Mount Carmel, who by the grace of God are on the pathway of this mount. It is at their request I have undertaken my task. They, indeed, already detached from the things of this life, will the better understand this doctrine of detachment of spirit.

BOOK I.

THE NATURE OF THE OBSCURE NIGHT, THE NECESSITY OF PASSING THROUGH IT IN ORDER TO ATTAIN TO THE DIVINE UNION: AND SPECIALLY THE OBSCURE NIGHT OF SENSE AND DESIRE, WITH THE EVILS WHICH THESE INFLICT ON THE SOUL.

CHAPTER I.

Two kinds of this night, corresponding with the division of the soul into higher and lower.

STANZA I.

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

BOOK
I.

THIS stanza describes the happy state of the soul at its departure from all things, from the appetites and imperfections of our sensual nature to which all are subject because of our disobedience to reason. I mean that, in order to reach perfection, the soul has to pass, ordinarily, through two kinds of night, which spiritual writers call purgations, or purifications of the soul, and which I have called night, because in the one as well as in the other the soul travels, as it were, by night, in darkness.

Perfection
requires;

I. Purga-
tion of the
flesh.

II. Purga-
tion of the
spirit.

The first is the night, or purgation of the sensual part of the soul, treated of in this first stanza, and described in the first part of this work. The second is the night of the spiritual part, of which the second stanza speaks, and which I shall discuss in the second part of my work, so far as it

relates to the soul's activity therein, and in the third and fourth part, so far as it relates to its passive condition in it.

The meaning of the stanza then is, that the soul went forth, led of God, through love of Him only, and with that love inflamed, into the obscure night, which is the privation of, and purgation from, all sensual desires, in all external things; all the pleasures of the flesh, and all the satisfactions of the will. This is wrought in this purgation of the will, and for this reason is it said that the soul departed, its house, that is the sensual part, being at rest — all the desires being at rest and asleep, and the soul asleep to them; for there is no departing from the pains and vexations of desire till it be mortified and put to sleep.

The happy lot of the soul, then, is this unobserved departure, when no carnal desire or aught else was able to detain it. And also in that this departure took place by night, which is the privation of all desire wrought by God, a condition which is as night to the soul. The happy lot of the soul, then, consists in being led by God into this night from which so great a blessing results, but into which it could not have entered of itself, because no one is able in his own strength to empty his heart of all desires, so as to draw near unto God. This is the meaning of the stanza. I now proceed to explain each line of it separately, and to discuss the subject of this book.

CHAPTER II.

The nature and cause of the obscure night.

'In an obscure night.'—The journey of the soul to the Divine union is called night for three reasons. The first is derived from the point from which the soul sets out, the privation of the desire of all pleasure in all the things

CHAP.
I.

Explanation
of the first
stanza.

Three parts
of the ob-
scure night.
1. Priva-
tion.
2. Faith.
3. God.

of this world, by an entire detachment therefrom. This is as night for every desire and sense of man. The second, from the road by which it travels; that is faith, for faith is obscure, like night, to the intellect. The third, from the goal to which it tends, God, incomprehensible and infinite, Who in this life is as night to the soul. We must pass through these three nights if we are to attain to the Divine union with God.

Illustrated
by the
history of
Tobias.

They are foreshadowed in Holy Scripture by the three nights which were to elapse, according to the command of the angel, between the betrothal and the marriage of the younger Tobias. 'When thou shalt take her,' said the angel, 'go into the chamber, and for three days keep thyself continent from her.*' On the first night he was to burn the liver of the fish in the fire, which is the heart whose affections are set on the things of this world, and which, if it will enter on the road that leadeth unto God, must be burned up, and purified of all created things in the fire of this love. This purgation drives away the evil spirit who has dominion over our soul, because of our attachment to those pleasures which flow from temporal and corporeal things.

'The second night,' said the angel, 'thou shalt be admitted into the society of the Holy Patriarchs,' the fathers of the faith. The soul having passed the first night, which is the privation of all sensible things, enters immediately into the second night, alone in pure faith, and by it alone directed: for faith is not subject to sense.

'The third night,' said the angel, 'thou shalt obtain a blessing'—that is, God, Who, in the second night of faith, communicates Himself so secretly and so intimately to the soul. This is another night, inasmuch as this communication is more obscure than the others, as I shall presently

* Tob. vi. 18.

explain. When this night is over, which is the accomplishment of the communication of God in spirit, ordinarily effected when the soul is in great darkness, the union with the bride, which is the Wisdom of God, immediately ensues. The angel adds also, saying to Tobias, 'When the third night is passed, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord.' This fear is then perfect when it is also the love of God, and it is made perfect when the soul is by love transformed in God.

I shall speak of these three causes separately, that they may be the better understood, first reminding the reader that the three nights are but one divided into three parts. The first, which is that of the senses, may be likened to the commencement of night when material objects begin to be invisible. The second, of faith, may be compared to midnight, which is utter darkness. The third resembles the close of night, which is God, when the dawn of day is at hand.

CHAPTER III.

The first cause, the privation of the desire.

THE privation of all pleasure to the desire in all things is here called night. For as night is nothing else but the absence of light, and, consequently, of visible objects, whereby the faculty of vision remains in darkness unemployed, so the mortification of the desires is as night to the soul. For when the soul denies itself those pleasures which outward things furnish to the desire, it is as it were in darkness, without occupation. As the faculty of vision is nourished by light and fed by visible objects, and ceases to be so fed when the light is withdrawn, so the soul by means of the desire feeds on those things which, corresponding with its powers, give it pleasure; but when the desire

I. The night
of privation.

is mortified, it derives no more pleasure from them, and thus, so far as the desire is concerned, the soul abides in darkness, without occupation.

This may be illustrated in the case of all the faculties of the soul. When the soul denies itself the pleasure arising from all that gratifies the ear, it remains, so far as the faculty of hearing is concerned, in darkness, without occupation; and when it denies itself in all that is pleasing to the eye, it remains in darkness, so far as it relates to the faculty of sight. The same may be said of the other senses, so that he who shall deny himself all satisfaction derivable from external objects, mortifying the desire thereof, may be said to be in a state which is as night, and this is nothing else but an entire detachment from all things.

Philosophers say that the soul is a blank when first infused into the body, without knowledge of any kind whatever, and incapable of receiving knowledge, in the course of nature, in any other way than through the senses. Thus, while in the body, the soul is like a man imprisoned in darkness, who has no knowledge of what passes without beyond what he can learn by looking through the window of his cell, and who if he did not so look could in no other way learn anything at all. Thus, then, the soul cannot naturally know anything beyond what reaches it through the senses, which are the windows of its cell. If, then, the impressions and communications of sense be neglected and denied, we may well say that the soul is in darkness and empty, because according to this opinion there is no other natural way for knowledge or light to enter in. It is true, indeed, that we cannot help hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching, but this is of no moment, and does not trouble the soul, when the objects of sense are repelled, any more than if we neither heard nor saw; for he who shuts his eyes is as much in darkness as a blind man who cannot

see. This is the meaning of the Psalmist when he said, 'I am poor and in labours from my youth.'* He says that he is poor, though it is certain he was rich; because he had not set his mind upon riches, he was really like a poor man. But if he had been really poor, yet not in spirit, he would not have been truly poor, for his soul would have been rich, full of desires.

I call this detachment the night of the soul, for I am not speaking here of the absence of things—for absence is not detachment, if the desire of them remain—but of that detachment which consists in suppressing desire, and avoiding pleasure; it is this that sets the soul free, even though possession may be still retained. The things of this world neither occupy nor injure the soul, because they do not enter within, but rather the will and desire of them which abide within it. This is the night of the sensual part of the soul. And now I proceed to explain how the soul is to depart from its house in the obscure night of sense, in order to be united with God.

Detachment
may ac-
company
possession.

CHAPTER IV.

The necessity of passing truly through the obscure night of sense,
which is the mortification of the desire.

THE soul must of necessity—if we would attain to the Divine union of God—pass through the obscure night of mortification of the desires, and self-denial in all things. The reason is that all the love we bestow on creatures is in the eyes of God mere darkness, and that while we are involved therein, the soul is incapable of being enlightened and possessed by the pure and simple light of God, unless we first cast it away. Light hath no fellowship with dark-

The soul
cannot have
two masters.

* Psal. lxxxvii. 16.

BOOK
I.

ness, for as St. John saith, 'The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*' Two contrary qualities, as the philosophers say, cannot co-exist in the same subject. Darkness, which is the love of creatures, and light, which is God, are contrary to one another, for 'What fellowship hath light with darkness?†' The light of the Divine union cannot, therefore, dwell in the soul if these affections are not cast away.

Love begets
likeness.

The affection and attachment which the soul feels for the creature renders the soul its equal and its like, and the greater the affection the greater will be the likeness. Love begets a likeness between the lover and the object of his love, and so the Psalmist, speaking of those who set their heart upon idols, says, 'Let them that make them become like unto them, and all such as trust in them.‡' Thus, he then who loves the creature 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.

The creature
is nothing
in compa-
rison with
the Creator.

He, therefore, who loveth anything beside God renders his soul incapable of the Divine union and transformation in God, for the vileness of the creature is much less capable of the dignity of the Creator than darkness is of light. All things in heaven and earth are nothing in comparison with God. 'I beheld the earth,' saith he, 'and lo, it was void and nothing, and the heavens, and there was no light in them.‡' The earth 'void and nothing,' signifies that the earth and all it contains are nothing, and the heavens without light, that all the lights of heaven, in comparison with God, are perfect darkness. Thus all created things, with the affections bestowed upon them, are nothing, because they are a hindrance, and the privation of our transformation in God, just as darkness is nothing, and less than nothing, being the

* S. John i. 5.
† Ps. cxiii. 8.‡ 2 Cor. vi. 14.
§ Jerem. iv. 23.CHAP.
IV.

absence of light. And as he who is in darkness comprehends not the light, so the soul whose affections are given to the creature shall never comprehend God. Until our soul is purged of these affections we shall not possess God in this life in the pure transformation of love, nor in the life to come in the beatific vision. To make this more clear I shall enter into some particulars.

The whole creation, compared with the infinite Being of God, is nothing; and so the soul whose affections are set on created things is nothing, and even less than nothing before God, because love begets equality and likeness, and even inferiority to the object beloved. Such a soul, therefore, cannot by any possibility be united to the infinite Being of God, because that which is not can have no communion with that which is. All the beauty of the creation, in comparison with the infinite Beauty of God, is supreme deformity, for 'Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain,*' and so the soul whose affections are set on the beauty of any created thing whatever shows before God nothing but deformity, and can never be transformed in Beauty, which is God, because deformity cannot attain unto beauty. All the grace and comeliness of creation, compared with the Grace of God, is supreme disgrace and supreme disfavour, and that soul, therefore, which is captivated by the grace and comeliness of created things is in the eyes of God in disfavour and disgrace, incapable of the infinite grace and beauty, for that which is ill-favoured is far removed from that which is infinitely gracious.

All the goodness of the whole world together, in comparison with the infinite Goodness of God, is wickedness rather than goodness, for 'None is good but God alone,†' and that soul is, therefore, wicked before God, whose affections are set on the things of this world. And as wickedness can have no

* Prov. xxxi. 30.

† S. Luke xviii. 19.

BOOK
I.

fellowship with goodness, so that soul cannot be united in perfect union with God, who is the supreme Goodness.

4. Wisdom.

All the wisdom of the world, and all human cunning, compared with the infinite Wisdom of God, is simple and supreme ignorance, 'for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.'* He, therefore, who shall labour to attain to union with the Wisdom of God, in reliance on his own wisdom and skill, is supremely ignorant, and infinitely distant therefrom: for ignorance knoweth not what wisdom is. They who consider themselves gifted with knowledge are in the eyes of God most ignorant, 'professing themselves to be wise, they become fools.'† They alone attain to the Divine Wisdom who, like children and ignorant ones, lay aside their own wisdom, and serve God in love. This is the wisdom to which the Apostle refers, saying, 'Let no man deceive himself; if any man among you seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.'‡ Ignorance, therefore, and not knowledge, becomes that soul which strives after union with the Wisdom of God.

5. Liberty
and Power.

All the liberty and power of the world, compared with the Power and Liberty of the Spirit of God, is but supreme slavery, wretchedness, and captivity; and so he who loves superiority and dignities, and the indulgence of his desires, stands before God, not as a son who is free, but as a person of mean condition, the slave of his passions, because he submits not to the holy teaching, which saith, 'He that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger.'§ Such an one will never attain to the true liberty of spirit attainable in the Divine union, because slavery has no fellowship with liberty, liberty dwelleth not in a heart subject to desires, for that heart is in captivity, but in that which is free, the heart of a son. It

* 1 Cor. iii. 19.

† 1 Cor. iii. 18, 19.

† Rom. i. 22.

§ S. Luke xxii. 26.

was for this reason that Sara said unto Abraham: 'Cast out this bond-woman and her son, for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac.'*

CHAP.
IV.

All the sweetness and all the pleasures which all the things of this world furnish to the will are, in comparison with the sweetness and pleasure which is God, supreme pain, torment, and bitterness. He, therefore, who shall set his heart upon them is, in the eyes of God, worthy of pain, torment, and bitterness, and can never attain to those delights with which the Divine union abounds.

6. Happiness.

All the riches and glory of the whole creation compared with the true riches, which is God, is supreme poverty and meanness, and he who sets his heart upon them is, in God's sight, supremely poor and mean, and can never attain to the blessed estate of riches and glory, which is the transformation of the soul in God; for that which is mean and poor is infinitely distant from that which is supremely rich and glorious.

7. Riches and
honour.

For this cause, then, the Divine Wisdom bewails men; namely, because they make themselves loathsome, mean, wretched and poor, through their love for that which is beautiful, rich, and noble in the eyes of the world. 'O ye men, to you I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. O little ones, understand subtlety, and ye unwise take notice. Hear, for I will speak of great things. . . . With me are riches and glory, glorious riches and justice. For my fruit is better than gold and the precious stone, and my blossoms than choice silver. I walk in the way of justice, in the midst of the paths of judgment, that I may enrich them that love me, and may fill their treasures.'† Here God addresses Himself to those who set their affections on the things of this world; He calls them little ones, because they make themselves

* Gen. xxi. 10.

† Prov. viii. 4-6, 18-21.

little, like the object of their love. He bids them 'understand subtlety,' and 'take notice,' because He is speaking of great things, and not of little things, such as they are. He tells them that great riches and glory, objects of their love, are with Him and in Him, and not where they think they shall find them. 'Glorious riches and justice' are with wisdom. For though the things of this world may seem to men to be something, yet let them take notice, the things of God are more. The fruit of wisdom is better than gold and precious stones, and that which wisdom produces in the soul is preferable to the choice silver which men covet. This is applicable to every kind of affection to which we are liable in this life.

CHAPTER V.

Continuation of the same subject. Proofs from Scripture.

I HAVE now explained how great is the distance between created things and God, and how souls which set their affections thereon are equally distant from Him, because — as I have said — love begets equality and likeness. This was well understood by S. Augustine when, considering his own inclination towards the creature, he thus spoke unto God: 'Miserable man that I am, what fellowship hath my perverseness with Thy uprightness? Thou art truly good, I wicked; Thou full of compassion, I impious; Thou holy, I miserable; Thou just, I unjust; Thou art light, I am blind; Thou art life, and I am dead; Thou art medicine, I am sick; Thou supreme truth, and I utter vanity.'*

It is, therefore, supreme ignorance for any one to think that he can ever attain to the high estate of union with

* Soliloq. c. ii. Opp. Ed. Ben. tom. vi. App. p. 86.

God before he casts away from him the desire of natural things, and of supernatural also, so far as it concerns self-love, because the distance between them and the state of perfection is the very greatest. For Christ our Lord hath said, 'Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be My disciple.* The doctrine of Christ which He came into the world to teach, is contempt of all things, that we may thereby have power to receive the reward of the Spirit of God. For he who does not withdraw himself from the things of the world, is not qualified to receive the Spirit of God in the pure transformation.

This truth is foreshadowed in the book of Exodus,† where we read that God did not give the manna to the people of Israel till the corn they had brought from Egypt had failed them, for the bread of angels is not given to, neither is it meant for, that palate which is pleased with the bread of man. He who feeds on strange meats, and is delighted therewith, not only disqualifies himself for the reception of the Holy Ghost, but also provokes God to anger exceedingly, as all do who, while they seek spiritual food, are not content with God only, but intermingle therewith carnal and earthly satisfactions. This appears from the same history, where it is said that the people cried, 'Who will give us flesh to eat?‡ They were not satisfied with food so pure, for they desired and demanded the flesh of beasts. God was grievously offended because they would mingle flesh, so vile and coarse, with the pure and heavenly bread which, though always the same, had in it 'the sweetness of every taste,§ for while 'their meat was in their mouth the wrath of God came upon them, and He slew the fat ones amongst them, and brought down the chosen men of Israel.¶ God regarded it as an evil wish to desire other food when He was giving them the bread of heaven.

The manna
a type of
God.

* S. Luke, xiv. 33. † Ex. xvi. 4. ‡ Num. xi. 4.
§ Wisd. xvi. 20. ¶ Ps. lxxvii. 30, 31.

Oh, would that spiritual persons knew how they are losing the good things of the Spirit, abundantly furnished, 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 if they would only forego them. But as they will not, so they shall not have such sweetness. The people of Israel perceived not the sweetness of every taste in the manna, though it was there, because they would not limit their desires to it alone. The sweetness and strength of the manna was not for them, not because it was not there, but because they longed for other meats beside it. He who loves any other thing with God makes light of Him, because he puts into the balance with Him that which is infinitely beneath Him. We know by experience that the will, when set on a particular object, magnifies it above all others, if it has no pleasure in them, though they may be of greater importance than what it desires. And if it should desire two things together, it does wrong to the chief of the two, because it establishes an unjust equality between them. There is nothing in the whole world to be compared with God; and, therefore, he who loves anything together with Him, wrongs Him. And if this be true, what does he do who loves anything more than God?

Mount Sinai
a type of
perfection.

This truth is set before us in the book of Exodus. When God commanded Moses to go up into Mount Sinai, He bade him go up alone; the children of Israel were to remain below, and even the cattle were not to feed in sight of the mountain. 'Thou shalt stand with Me on the top of the mount. Let no man go up with thee, and let not any man be seen throughout all the mount: neither let the oxen nor the sheep feed over against it.*' He, therefore, that will go up into the mount of perfection and hold communion with God,

* Ex. xxxiv. 2, 3.

must not only abandon everything, but restrain even his desires, the sheep and the cattle from feeding in sight of the mount—that is, upon anything which is not simply God, in Whom, in the estate of perfection, every desire must cease. This journey or ascent must therefore be a perpetual struggle with our desires to make them cease, and the more earnest we are the sooner shall we reach the summit. But until the desires cease we can never reach it, notwithstanding our many virtues, for virtue is not perfectly acquired before our souls are empty, detached, and purified from all desire.

Of this truth we have a lively figure in the history of the patriarch Jacob. When he was on his way to Bethel to build an altar for sacrifice unto God, he commanded his household the observance of three things: the casting away of strange gods, self-purification, and the changing of their garments. 'Jacob having called together all his household, said, Cast away the strange gods that are among you, and be cleansed and change your garments.*' He, therefore, who will ascend to the mount of perfection, to build an altar there, whereon to offer unto God the sacrifice of pure love, praise, and adoration, must first of all perfectly fulfil the three commandments of Jacob. He must cast away the strange gods, the earthly affections and attachments. He must purify himself from the impressions which the desires have made on the soul, in the obscure night of sense, denying them and doing penance for their past indulgence, and, in the third place, he must change his garments. This God himself will do during the observance of the first two commandments; He will change them from old into new, by infusing into the soul a new understanding of God in God, the human understanding being set aside, and a new love of God in God, the will being detached from its old desires and human satisfactions, by

Three commandments
of Jacob:
1. Renun-
ciation.
2. Purifi-
cation.
3. Change of
heart.

* Gen. xxxv. 2.

BOOK
I.

bringing the soul into a state of new knowledge and of deep delight, all other knowledge and old imaginings being cast away; and, finally, by causing that which is of the old man to cease, which is our natural aptitudes, and investing us with a new supernatural aptitude corresponding with the powers of the soul, so that all that is human in the action of the soul may become divine. This is the object gained in the estate of union, in which the soul is nothing else but an altar of God whereon the sacrifice of praise and love is offered, and where He alone dwells.

The altar of
God to be
pure.

This is the reason why, under the old law, the altar of sacrifice was to be hollow within. 'Thou shalt not make it solid, but empty and hollow in the inside.'* It is the will of God that the soul should be empty of all created things, so that it may become a fitting altar of His Majesty. He would not endure strange fires on the altar, nor that His own should fail. 'Nadab and Abiu, the sons of Aaron, taking their censers, put fire therein, and incense on it, offering before the Lord strange fire: which was not commanded them, and fire coming out from the Lord destroyed them, and they died before the Lord.'† Because Nadab and Abiu, sons of Aaron the high priest, offered strange fire on the altar, God in His anger slew them before it. That soul, therefore, which would become a fitting altar, must not be without the love of God, nor mingle therewith any other and strange love. God will never dwell there where aught is present beside Himself. Thus, when the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the temple of Dagon, their idol was thrown to the ground, and at last broken to pieces.‡

The royal
road of the
Holy Cross.

One desire only doth God allow, and suffer, in His presence, that of perfectly observing His law, and of carrying the cross of Christ. We do not know that He commanded anything

* Ex. xxvii. 8.

† Levit. x. 1, 2.

‡ 1 Kings v. 1-5.

CHAP.
V.

except the book of the law, to be laid up with the ark where the manna was preserved.—'Take this book, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God'*—and the rod of Aaron, type of the cross. 'Take back the rod of Aaron into the tabernacle of the testimony.'† That soul which has no other aim than the perfect observance of the law of God, and the carrying of the cross of Christ, will be a true ark containing the true manna, which is God.

CHAPTER VI.

Two great evils of the desires: negative and positive. Proofs from Scripture.

To make this matter clear, it is advisable here to explain how the desires inflict these two great evils on the soul. These evils are, the privation of the Spirit of God, and the fatigue, torture, darkness, defilement, and weakness of that soul which indulges them. 'My people have done two evils,' saith God, 'They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.'‡ These two evils flow from one single act of desire; for it is clear that the instant we set our affections upon any one created thing, our capacity for union with God is diminished in proportion to the intensity of that act of affection. For, as I said before,§ two contrary qualities cannot coexist in the same subject; the love of God and the love of the creature are contrary, the one to the other, and so cannot dwell together in the same heart. What connection is there between the creature and the Creator? Between the sensual and the spiritual? The seen and the unseen? The temporal and the eternal?

I. Privation
of God.

* Deut. xxxi. 26; Ex. xvi. 33.

† Jerem. ii. 13.

‡ Numb. xvii. 10.

§ Ch. IV.

Between the heavenly food, pure and spiritual, and the food of the flesh, simply sensual? Between the poverty of Christ and selfish attachments? As in natural generation, no new form results without the corruption of the one previously existing—for this obstructs the former by reason of the contrariety between them—so while our souls are under the dominion of the sensual and animal spirit, the pure and heavenly spirit can never enter within them.

God and not
creatures,
the end of
man.

This explains those words of our Lord, 'It is not good to take the bread of children, and to cast it to the dogs;'^{*} and 'Give not that which is holy to dogs.'[†] Our Lord compares those who, renouncing all earthly desires, prepare themselves in simplicity for the graces of the Holy Ghost, with children, and those who satisfy their desires in earthly things, with dogs: children are admitted to the Father's table, and nourished by the Spirit, but only the crumbs which fall from it are given to the dogs. All created things are but the crumbs which fall from the table of God. Thus they who go about feeding on the creature are rightly called dogs; the children's bread is withheld from such, because they will not rise from the crumbs of the creature to the table of the uncreated Spirit of their Father. These are always hungry like dogs, and justly so, because crumbs excite the appetite rather than appease hunger. These are they of whom it is written, 'They shall suffer hunger like dogs; and shall go round about the city—and shall murmur if they be not filled.'[‡] They who gratify their desires are always morose and discontented, like hungry persons: for what is there in common between the hunger which the creature occasions, and the fulness which proceeds from the Spirit of God? The fulness of God cannot enter into the soul before we drive away the hunger of desire, for two contrary qualities, such as hunger and fulness, cannot dwell

^{*} S. Matt. xv. 26.

[†] Ib. vii. 6.

[‡] Ps. lviii. 15, 16.

together in the same subject. We may see from this how much greater is the work of God in purifying the soul from these contrarieties, than it was when He first created it out of nothing. For these rebellious desires and opposing affections seem to resist God more than nothing: that which is not, cannot resist His Majesty, but not so the love of the creature. Let this suffice for the first great evil which desires inflict on the soul, namely, resistance to the Spirit of God.

Let us now proceed to the second, which is manifold in its operations. The desires fatigue, torment, darken, defile and weaken the soul. Of these five forms of evil, I shall discuss each separately. As to the first, it is evident that the desires weary the soul, because they resemble little children, restless and dissatisfied, who always begging of their mother, now one thing, now another, are never content. As one given to covetousness fatigues himself digging for gold, so the soul wearies itself in the pursuit of those things which the desires demand, and though we may obtain them, yet the end is weariness, because we are never satisfied. We have recourse to broken cisterns, which can hold no water to quench our thirst, as it is written, 'Faint with thirst and his soul is empty.'^{*} The soul which yields to its desires, is weary and faint, like one ill of a burning fever, never at rest, and whose thirst increases while the fever lasts. It is written in the book of Job, 'When he shall be filled, he shall be straitened, he shall burn, and every sorrow shall fall upon him.'[†] Thus is it with the soul, wearied and afflicted by the desires: they wound it, agitate and disturb it, as wind does water, harassing it, so that it can never repose on anything, or in any place.

II. Five
wounds of
the soul.

1. Weariness.

Of such souls is it written, 'The wicked are like the

^{*} Is. xxix. 8.

[†] Job xx. 22.

raging sea which cannot rest.* The heart of the wicked is like the raging sea, and he is wicked who does not subdue his desires. That soul which seeks to satisfy them wearies and torments itself, and is like one who, in the pains of hunger, opens his mouth to be filled with the wind, and who, instead of being satisfied therewith, becomes still more hungry, for wind is not his meat and drink. Of such it is written, 'In the desire of his heart, he snuffed up the wind of his love,'† and again warning the soul against the increasing dryness towards which it tends: 'Keep thy foot,' that is thy thoughts, 'from being bare, and thy throat from thirst,'‡—that is, thy will from the gratification of the desire which is the occasion of greater dryness. As the ambitious man is wearied in the day of disappointed expectations, so the soul with its desires and their fulfilment, for they make it more empty and hungry than it was before. The desires are, as it is commonly said, like fire which burns when supplied with fuel, but which, when the fuel is consumed, immediately dies away. In truth, the desire is in a much worse condition: the fire is quenched when the fuel fails, but the desire ceases not with the matter on which it fed while it raged, even though that be utterly consumed; for instead of ceasing, like fire when the fuel is burnt out, the desire pines away in weariness, for hunger is increased, and food diminished.

A soul in this condition is thus described by the prophet, 'He shall turn to the right hand, and shall be hungry, and shall eat on the left hand, and shall not be filled.'§ They who mortify not their desires are justly punished with hunger when they 'turn to the right hand,' that is, when they swerve from the way of God; for they do not deserve the fulness of

* Is. lvii. 20.
† Jerem. ii. 25.

† Jerem. ii. 24.
§ Is. ix. 20.

His sweet Spirit, and justly also shall they 'not be filled,' when they 'eat on the left hand,' that is, when they satisfy their desire with created things; for then abandoning that which can alone satisfy them they feed on that which is the source of greater hunger. Thus, then, is it clear that the desires weary and fatigue the soul.

CHAPTER VII.

The desires torment the soul. Proofs and illustrations.

THE second positive evil which the desires inflict is a certain 2. Torment. torment and affliction of soul, so that he who suffers therefrom is like one in torture, bound with chains, finding no rest until released. 'The cords of my sins,' that is, my desires, saith the Psalmist, 'have encompassed me.* As a man who lies naked amid thorns and briars, so is the soul in the power of its desires; for they pierce, torture, and tear it painfully, as it is written, 'They surrounded me like bees, and they burned like fire among thorns.† The desires, which are as thorns, increase the fire of affliction and trouble. As the husbandman, greedy of the harvest, goads the oxen at the plough, so concupiscence goads the soul harnessed to its desires, till it shall obtain its will. Such was the desire of Dalila to know the secret of the strength of Samson; she 'pressed him—giving him no time to rest,' so that 'his soul fainted away, and was wearied even unto death.‡

The desire tortures the soul in proportion to its intensity, so that the pain equals the desires, and the more numerous the desires the greater the pain: for the words which the apostle heard are fulfilled even in this life.

* Ps. cxviii. 61. † Ib. cxvii. 12. ‡ Judg. xvi. 16.

BOOK
I.Example of
Samson.Invitation of
God.

'As much as she hath glorified herself, and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her.*' As he is tormented who falls into the hands of his enemies, so is the soul carried away by its desires. This truth is foreshadowed in the history of Samson, who was once so strong and free, the judge of Israel. But when he had fallen into the hands of his enemies, they robbed him of his great strength, plucked out his eyes, imprisoned him in a mill, and 'made him grind,' torturing and afflicting him. So is it with the soul, whose enemies, its own desires, live and triumph: their first act is to weaken and blind the soul, then to torment it, imprisoning it in the mill of concupiscence, and the cords that bind it are its own desires themselves.

God, therefore, compassionating those who, with so much toil and cost, go about to satisfy the hunger and thirst of their desires in created things, thus speaks to them by the mouth of His prophet: 'All you that thirst' and desire 'come to the waters, and you that have no money,' self-will, 'make haste, buy and eat, come, buy wine and milk,' peace and spiritual sweetness, 'without money' of self-will, and 'without price,' without that labour which your desires demand. 'Why do you spend money' of self-will 'for that which is not bread,' that is, the Spirit of God, and the 'labour' of your desires 'for that which doth not satisfy you?' 'Hearken diligently unto Me and eat that which is good,' and which you desire, 'and your soul shall be delighted in fatness.†' We attain to this fatness when we abandon all created satisfactions, for pain and sorrow flow from the creature, and refreshment from the Spirit of God.

'Come to Me,' saith our Lord, 'all you that labour and

* Apoc. xviii. 7.

† Is. lv. 1, 2.

CHAP.
VII.

are burdened, and I will refresh you.* All you who are tormented and afflicted; labouring beneath the burden of anxiety and desire, cast it aside, by coming unto Me, and I will refresh you; and your souls shall find that rest of which your desires rob you, for they 'as a heavy burden are become heavy upon Me.†'

CHAPTER VIII.

The desires darken the soul. Proofs and illustrations.

THE third evil which the desires inflict is darkness and blindness of soul. For as vapours darken the air, and hide the light of the sun, or as a stained mirror cannot clearly receive an image, or as muddy water cannot distinctly reflect his face who looks into it, so the soul, stained by its desires, is intellectually blind, so that neither the understanding itself nor the sun of natural reason, nor that of the supernatural wisdom of God, can inform and enlighten it. To this the Psalmist referred when he said, 'My iniquities have overtaken me, and I was not able to see.‡' And thus, while the soul is intellectually blind, the will becomes torpid, the memory fails, and every lawful function is disordered. These faculties depend on the intellect, and it is therefore clear that, when the intellect is embarrassed, they must all be thrown into confusion and disorder. 'My soul,' saith the Psalmist, 'is troubled exceedingly,§' that is, all my faculties are in disorder; for, as I have said, the intellect in this state cannot receive the illumination of the Divine Wisdom, just as the obscured air cannot reflect the brightness of the sun. The will cannot embrace God in pure love, just as the stained mirror cannot represent an object

* S. Matt. xi. 28.

† Ps. xxxix. 13.

‡ Ps. xxxvii. 5.

§ Ib. vi. 4.

BOOK
I.Reason and
not desire
the guide of
man.

placed before it. The memory overclouded by desires cannot calmly dwell on the Image of God, just as muddy water cannot reflect the face of him who looks into it.

The desire also blinds and darkens the soul, for the desire, as such, is blind and unreasonable, and reason is that which ever guides the soul aright in its several acts. Hence it is that the soul becomes blind whenever the desires guide it, because it is as if one who saw were led by one who saw not: the result being the same as if both were blind. This is what our Lord referred to when He said, 'If the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit.'* Eyes are of little service to the moth, whose desire for the beauty of the light leads it dazzled into the midst of the flame. He who gives the rein to his desires may be likened to the fish dazzled by the light which the fishermen throw over the water, that the nets may not be seen: in this case, light serves but to increase the obscurity.

This is the meaning of the Psalmist when he said, 'Fire hath fallen upon them, and they have not seen the sun,'† for the desire is like fire, warming with its heat, and dazzling with its light, and the effect of the desire in the soul is, that it enkindles concupiscence, and dazzles the intellect, so that it cannot see. The cause of this dazzling obscurity is, the interposition of another light between the object and the eye, whereon the eye rests, so as to see nothing beyond. Thus the desire comes so close to the soul, and within the range of its vision, that we are dazzled, and satisfied with the light it gives, and so it hides from us the clear light of the intellect, which we do not, and never shall see, until the glare of the desire shall have ceased.

This renders so deplorable their case who burden themselves with indiscreet penances, and other imprudent methods

* S. Matt. xv. 14.

† Ps. lvii. 9.

CHAP.
VIII.Inward mor-
tification
more neces-
sary than
outward.

of devotion—voluntary certainly—on which they rely, thinking such alone, without mortifying their desires in other matters, to be sufficient to lead them on to the union of the Divine Wisdom. But this can never be, if the desires be not diligently mortified. If these persons bestowed but half their labour on this, they would make greater progress in a month than they can now make in many years, if they persevere in their present ways. As it is necessary to till the earth that it may bring forth fruit—for otherwise nothing will grow therein but weeds—so also is it necessary to mortify our desires, if we are to make progress towards perfection. Without mortification, I say it boldly, we shall make no progress whatever in the knowledge of God and of ourselves, notwithstanding all our efforts, any more than the seed will grow which is thrown away on uncultivated ground. Neither can the darkness and ignorance of our souls be removed, if the desires are not extinguished: for they are like a mote or cataract in the natural eye, obstructing the vision, until it be taken away.

The Psalmist, considering the blindness of those souls which are under the power of their desires, the impossibility of their clearly beholding the truth, and the greatness of God's anger with them, said, 'Before your thorns could know the briar, He swalloweth them up, as alive, in His wrath.'* Before your thorns, your desires, harden and grow into a thicket, shutting out the sight of God, as the thread of life is frequently broken in the midst thereof, so will God swallow them up in His anger. Those persons in whom their desires live, and hinder the knowledge of God, God will swallow up in His wrath, either in the next life, in the purifying pains of Purgatory, or in this, in afflictions and sufferings, sent to detach them from their desires, or in the mortification of

Necessity,
and design of
suffering.

* Ps. lvii. 10.

BOOK
I.

those very desires voluntarily undergone. God doeth this to take away the false light of desire between Himself and us, which dazzles us, and hinders us from knowing Him; and that, the intellect becoming clear, the ravage of desire may be repaired.

Oh that men knew how great a blessing, that of the Divine Light, this their blindness, the result of their desires, robs them of, and how great the evils they daily fall into, because they do not mortify them. We are not to rely on a clear intellect, or on the gifts received from God, and then imagine that any affections or desires we may indulge in will not blind us, nor cause us to fall into a worse state, little by little. Who would have thought that a man of perfect wisdom, filled with the gifts of God, as Solomon was, could have fallen away in his old age into such blindness and torpor of the will, as to build altars to idols and worship them? His affection for his wives, and his negligence in controlling his desires and the satisfactions of his heart, were alone sufficient to reduce him to this. So he tells us himself, saying, 'Whatsoever my eyes desired, I refused them not, and I withheld not my heart from enjoying every pleasure.'* Such was the effect upon Solomon of unbridled desires, and their gratification, though at first he was cautious; they soon blinded his understanding, and at last put out the light of wisdom within him, so that in his old age he forsook God. And if unmortified desires could produce such a disaster in the case of Solomon, who knew so well the difference between good and evil, what shall they not produce in us who are so ignorant? We are like the people of Ninive, of whom God said, 'They know not how to distinguish between their right hand and their left,'† since, at every step, we take good for evil, and evil for good; and this is as

Example of
Solomon.

* Eccles. ii. 10.

† Jon. iv. 11.

CHAP.
VIII.

it were natural to us. What, then, must it be when our desires are added to our natural blindness, but that which the prophet bewailed, speaking of those who love to follow after their desires: 'We have groped for the wall, and like the blind, we have groped as if we had no eyes, we have stumbled at noon as if in darkness.'* Such is he who is blinded by his desires, for in the presence of the truth and his real interests he cannot see them any more than if he had been utterly blind.

CHAPTER IX.

The desires pollute the soul. Proofs from Scripture.

THE fourth evil which the desires inflict on the soul is that they pollute and defile it, as it is written, 'He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled with it.'† He, then, toucheth pitch who satisfies the desires of the will in any created thing. Observe here that the wise man compareth the creature with pitch: for there is a greater distance between the excellence of the soul and the noblest creature than there is between the glittering diamond or fine gold and pitch. As a diamond or a piece of gold, if placed, heated, in contact with pitch becomes foul and stained in proportion to the heat, so the soul inflamed by the desire it may entertain for the creature, draws corruption therefrom and defilement. And there is a greater difference between the soul and all other created corporeal things than there is between the most pellucid water and the foulest mud. So, then, as such water mingled with mud becomes foul, so the soul whose affections are set on created things becomes polluted; for then it resembles them. As soot defiles the most beautiful face, so the unruly desires of the soul, if indulged in, defile

4. Defile-
ment.

* Is. lix. 10.

† Eccles. xiii. 1.

BOOK
I.

and pollute that soul, which is in itself the most beautiful and perfect image of God.

The prophet Jeremias, bewailing the ravages of corruption produced by these unruly desires, first of all describes the beauty of the soul and then its defilement: 'Her Nazarites were whiter than snow, purer than milk, more ruddy than the old ivory, fairer than the sapphire; their face is now made blacker than coals, and they are not known in the streets.* The hair of the Nazarites signify the thoughts and affections of the soul, which, ordered according to the law of God, that is referred all to Him, are 'whiter than snow, purer than milk, more ruddy than the old ivory, fairer than the sapphire.' The whole physical creation in all its beauty and magnificence is signified by these four things, and higher than all is the soul of man and its operations—that is, the Nazarites with their long hair—which, when ordered, not according to the commandments of God, that is, when occupied with created things, is now made blacker than coals. All this and far greater ruin befalls the soul's beauty from the indulgence of unruly desires.

Man nobler
than the
universe.

Corruptio
optimi pes-
sima.

So, then, 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. For though the disordered soul in its natural substance be as perfect as God has made it, its reasonable substance is foul, filthy, and dark, overladen with all these evils and even more. Even one unruly desire—as I shall hereafter explain—though not a mortal sin, sullies and deforms the soul, and indisposes it for the perfect union with God, until it be cast away. What, then, must be the corruption of that soul which is wholly disordered, which has abandoned itself to

* Lam. iv. 7, 8.

CHAP.
IX.

the sway of its desires, and how far removed from the purity of God! No language can describe, no understanding can comprehend, the diverse impurities which diverse desires produce in the soul.

If, indeed, any description of this could be given, so that men might understand it, it would be a matter for wonder and for great pity: for each desire, according to its nature and intensity, deposits the filth and sediment of corruption and uncleanness in the soul, everyone in its own way. For as the soul of the just man, in one single perfection, which is the justice thereof, possesses innumerable most rich gifts, and many virtues of exceeding beauty; everyone of them lovely, different from each other according to the multitude and variety of the acts of the love of God; so the disordered soul in the same way, according to the multitude of the desires, the object of which are created things, contracts a miserable diversity of vileness and impurity, with which these desires pollute it.

Love in order
is virtue, or
justice;

Desire in dis-
order is vice.

These diverse pollutions are described by the prophet Ezechiel, when God showed him the interior of the temple with its walls painted round about with the likenesses of creeping things, and all abominable and unclean beasts: 'I went in,' saith the prophet, 'and saw, and behold every form of creeping things, and of living creatures, the abomination and all the idols of the house of Israel were painted on the wall round about.*' When the prophet had seen this, God said to him, 'Surely thou seest, O son of man, what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, everyone in private in his chamber. Turn thee again; thou shalt see greater abominations.' The prophet turned, and 'behold women sat there mourning for Adonis.' 'Turn thee again,' said God to the prophet, 'and thou shalt see greater abomi-

Vision of
the prophet
Ezechiel.

* Ezech. viii. 10.

BOOK
I.

nations than these.' And then the prophet saw 'at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, five and twenty men having their backs to the temple of the Lord.*

Interpreta-
tion. Three
faculties of
the soul ;
1. Intellect.

The various creeping things and unclean beasts painted on the walls of the temple within are the thoughts and conceptions of the intellect derived from the vile things of earth and of other created things, which, because contrary to those that are eternal, defile the temple of the soul; and the soul by means thereof, embarrasses the intellect, which is its first court. The women in the second court. 'Mourning for Adonis' are the desires of the will, the second faculty of the soul; these weep, as it were, when they covet that on which the will is bent, that is, the unclean things painted on the understanding. The men in the third court are the fancies and imaginations resulting from created objects which the third faculty of the soul, the memory, preserves and dwells on. These had their backs to the temple of the Lord: for when the faculties of the soul have been completely occupied with any object of earth, the soul itself may be said to have turned its back upon God's temple, which is right reason, and which tolerates nothing that is in opposition to God.

Three hin-
drances to
the Divine
Union.
1. Voluntary
imperfec-
tion.

2. Venial sin.

3. Mortal
sin.

Let this suffice for the present to give us some insight into the foul disorder which desires engender in the soul. For were I to treat separately of the impediment to the Divine union which these imperfections and their varieties occasion; of that of venial sin, which is much greater than that of imperfections, and of its varieties; and also of mortal sin, which is complete defilement, and of its various forms, I should never come to an end. What I say — and it is to the purpose — is, that every single desire, though it be but the slightest imperfection, darkens the soul, and hinders its perfect union with God.

* Ezech. viii. 14, 16.

CHAPTER X.

The desires make the soul lukewarm, and enfeeble virtue.
Proofs and illustrations.

THE fifth evil inflicted on the soul by its desires is lukewarmness and feebleness, so that it has no strength to follow after virtue nor to persevere therein. As the strength of desire is diminished when it is applied to many objects, instead of being concentrated upon one, and the more numerous the objects embraced, the less is the energy with which each is sought, so, philosophers say, is it with virtue, which is more vigorous when united than when it is dispersed. It is, therefore, clear that if the desire of the will be directed to other objects than virtue it must be most ineffectual in the pursuit thereof. The soul whose will is divided among trifles, is like water which never rises, because it has an outlet below, and is therefore profitless. Thus it was that the patriarch Jacob compared Ruben his son to 'water poured out,' because he had given way to his desires in a certain sin: 'Thou art poured out as water, grow thou not;*' that is, because thou art poured out as water in thy desires thou shalt not grow in virtues. As boiling water left uncovered quickly loses its heat, and 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. This truth was well understood by the Psalmist when he said, 'I will keep my strength to Thee,†' that is, I will concentrate the strength of my affections on Thee alone.

The desires enfeeble the soul, for they are like the little twigs and suckers which grow on a tree, sapping its strength so that it shall not be so fruitful. Of such souls our Saviour says: 'Woe unto them that are with child, and that give

CHAP.
X.

5. Weakness.

* Gen. xlix. 4.

† Ps. lviii. 10.

suck in those days.* This signifies the desires, which, if not cut off, will continually lessen the strength of the soul, and grow to be its ruin, like the suckers on a tree. Our Lord, therefore, warns us, saying, 'Let your loins be girt.'† The loins are the desires; they are also like leeches sucking the blood from the veins, for so the wise man calls them, saying, 'The horse leech hath two daughters,' the desires, 'that say, bring, bring.'‡

It is, therefore, evident that the desires bring no good at all to the soul, but rather deprive it of what it has, and if we do not mortify them, they will not rest until they have done what the young vipers are said to do to their mother: these, as they grow in the womb, devour the entrails of their mother, and kill her, preserving their own life at the cost of hers. Thus the unmortified desires grow and devour the soul, killing the life of God within it. They alone live in that soul, because that soul has not destroyed them first. This it is that made the wise man pray: 'Take from me the greediness of the belly.'§

The joy of
self-restraint.

But even if the desires do not issue in this great calamity, it is lamentable to see how they torture the poor soul in which they dwell—how hateful to itself they render it, how profitless to its neighbours, how dull and slothful in the things of God. There are no corrupt humours which can so bow down a sick man, enfeeble him in his gait, and make him loathe his proper food, as the desire of the creature bows down the soul in sadness, and indisposes it for the practice of virtue. And, in general, the reason why many souls have no love or inclination for virtue is, that they entertain affections and desires which are not innocent nor directed towards our Lord God.

* S. Matt. xxiv. 19.

† Prov. xxx. 15.

‡ S. Luke xii. 35.

§ Eccles. xxiii. 6.

CHAPTER XI.

The necessity of freedom from all desires, however slight, for the Divine union.

It seems reasonable here for the reader to ask, whether it be necessary to mortify completely every desire, small and great, before perfection can be reached, or whether it will be enough to have mortified some of them, overlooking others—at least those which seem of less moment—because it is a matter most difficult to attain to such pureness and detachment, as to have no affection for anything remaining in the will.

To this I reply: in the first place, it is true that all the desires are not equally hurtful, neither do they perplex the soul in the same degree. I am speaking of those which are voluntary: for the natural desires, when we do not consent to them, and when they do not pass beyond the first movements, do but slightly or not at all stand in the way of union. By natural and first movements I mean all those in which the natural will had no share, either before or after they arose: for to banish and mortify these completely is, in this life, impossible. The hindrance which these create is not such as to prevent the Divine union, though they may not be wholly mortified; they may remain in our nature, and yet the soul in its spiritual part may be most free from them. For it will sometimes happen that the soul enjoys the profound union of quiet in the will, while these remain in the sensual portion of man's nature, but having no communication with the spiritual portion occupied in prayer.

But all the other voluntary desires, whether mortal sins, which are the most grievous, or of venial sins, which are less so, or imperfections only, which are still less so, must be banished away, and the soul which would attain to perfect union must be delivered from them all, however slight they

CHAP.
XI.

Must every
desire be
mortified?

Answer.

1. Involuntary natural desires harmless.

2. All unruly desires not equally hurtful;

3. Yet all must be banished.

BOOK
I.

Because perfect union requires identity of will.

Knowledge and consent necessary for a moral act.

One act does not make a habit.

may be. The reason is this: the estate of Divine union consists in the total transformation of the will into the will of God, in such a way that every movement of the will shall be always the movement of the will of God only. This is the reason why, in this state, two wills are said to be one—my will and God's will—so that the will of God is also that of the soul. But if the soul then cleaves to any imperfection, contrary to the will of God, His will is not done, for the soul wills that which God wills not. It is clear, therefore, that, if the soul is to be united in love and will with God, every desire of the will must first of all be cast away, however slight it may be; that is, we must not deliberately and knowingly assent with the will to any imperfection, and we must have such power over it, and such liberty, as to reject every such desire the moment we are aware of it. I say knowingly, for without deliberation and a clear perception of what we are doing, or because it is not wholly in our power, we may easily give way to imperfections and venial sins, and to those natural desires of which I have just spoken. It is of such sins as these, not so entirely voluntary, that it is written: 'A just man shall fall seven times, and shall rise again.'*

But as to those voluntary and perfectly deliberate desires, how slight soever their objects may be, any one of them, not overcome, is sufficient to prevent this union. I am speaking of the unmortified habit thereof, because certain acts occasionally have not so much power, for the habit of them is not settled; still we must get rid of them, for they, too, proceed from habitual imperfection. Some habits of voluntary imperfections, so far as they are never perfectly overcome, impede not only the Divine union but our progress towards perfection.

These habitual imperfections are, for instance, much

* Prov. xxiv. 16.

CHAP.
XI.

Perfection measured by habits.

talking, certain attachments, which we never resolve to break through—such as to individuals, to a book or a cell, to a particular food, to certain society, the satisfaction of one's taste, science, news, and such things. Everyone of these imperfections, if the soul is attached and habituated to them, results in such serious injuries to our growth and progress in perfection. Yea, even if we fall daily into many other imperfections greater than these, provided they are not the result of the habitual indulgence of any evil inclination, we should not be so much hindered in our spiritual course as we are by this selfish attachment of the soul to particular objects; for while the soul entertains it, it is useless to hope that we can ever attain to perfection, even though the object of our attachment be but of the slightest importance possible.

Does it make any difference whether a bird be held by a slender thread or by a rope, while the bird is bound and cannot fly till the cord that holds it is broken? It is true that a slender thread is more easily broken, still, notwithstanding, if it is not broken the bird cannot fly. This is the state of a soul with particular attachments: it never can attain to the liberty of the Divine union, whatever virtues it may possess. Desires and attachments affect the soul as the remora is said to affect a ship; that is but a little fish, yet when it adheres to the vessel it effectually prevents its progress.

How sad it is to see certain souls, like vessels richly freighted, full of good works, of spiritual exercises, virtues and gifts of God, which, because they have not the courage to break with certain tastes, attachments, or affections—these are all one—never reach the haven of perfect union. And yet it would cost them but a single vigorous flight to break the thread of their attachment or to shake off the remora of desire. It is a matter of deep regret, when God has given

The remora of selfish attachments.

BOOK
I.

them strength to burst other and stronger bonds — those of vanity and sins — merely because they will not detach themselves from trifles, which God has left for them to break away from for love of Him, and which are no more than a single thread — that they should for this neglect their own advancement and the attainment of so great a blessing. And what is still more deplorable, because of such attachments, not only do they not advance, but, so far as perfection is concerned, they fall back, losing in some measure what they had already gained with so much labour. For it is well known that on the spiritual road not to go on overcoming self is to go backwards, and not to increase our gain is to lose.

Not to advance is to fall back.

This is what our Lord would teach us when He says, 'He that gathereth not with me scattereth.'* He who will neglect to repair the vessel that is but slightly cracked, will at last lose all the liquor it may hold; for 'he that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little:'† and 'of one spark cometh a great fire.‡ One imperfection is enough to beget another, and this other, others again. We shall never see a soul, negligent in overcoming a single desire, which has not also many other desires arising out of the weakness and imperfection from which the first proceeds. There have been many persons who, by the grace of God, had made great progress in detachment and freedom, and yet because they gave way, under the pretence of some good — as of society and friendship — to petty attachments, have thereby lost the spirit and sweetness of God, holy solitude, and cheerfulness, and have injured the integrity of their spiritual exercises, so as to be unable to stop before all was gone. All this has befallen them because they did not root out the principle of pleasure and of the sensual desires, keeping themselves in solitude for God.

* S. Matt. xiii. 30.

† Eccles. xix. 1.

‡ Ibid. xi. 34.

CHAP.
XI.

We must ever walk on this road so as to reach the end; that is, in the constant repression of our desires, and not in their indulgence: and if we do not perfectly repress them we shall never perfectly reach the end. As wood can never be transformed into fire if but one degree of heat necessary for that end be wanting, so the soul that has but one imperfection can never be perfectly transformed in God, as I shall hereafter explain when speaking of the Night of Faith. The soul has but one will; and if this will be occupied or embarrassed, it is not free, perfect, solitary, and pure, as it ought to be for this Divine transformation. This truth is foreshadowed in the Book of Judges, where we read that an angel of the Lord came to the children of Israel and told them that, because they had not destroyed the inhabitants of the land, but had made a league with some of them, those, therefore, would be left among them as their enemies, and an occasion to them of their fall and destruction: 'Wherefore I would not destroy them from before your face, that you may have enemies, and their gods may be your ruin.'*

The soul has but one will.

God is just in thus dealing with those souls whom He has led forth out of the Egypt of this world, for whom he has slain the giants of their sins, and whose enemies he has destroyed, which are the occasions of sin which they meet with in the world, and all this for the sole purpose of their entrance into the promised land of the Divine union. He is just, I say, in thus dealing with them, when he sees them form friendships, and become confederate with the heathen, which are their imperfections; when they do not mortify themselves wholly, but are negligent and slothful in their lives: for this, then, He becomes angry with them, and suffers them to fall through their desires from bad to worse.

This truth is also shadowed forth in the command of God

* Judges ii. 3.

to Josue when the children of Israel were about to enter into the land of promise. The city of Jericho was to be utterly destroyed and all that was within, man and woman, young and old, together with the cattle; and the people were not to take, nor even to touch any of the spoil thereof.* He, therefore, that will enter into the Divine union must put to death all that lives in his soul, whether small or great, many or few; he must abstain from all desire thereof, and be completely detached therefrom, as if neither existed for the other.

S. Paul, also writing to the Corinthians, says the same thing: 'This therefore I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that they also who have wives be as if they had none, and they that weep, as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as if they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this world as if they used it not.' † The apostle teaches here that we must be detached in spirit from the world if we would walk so as to attain unto God.

CHAPTER XII.

The nature of those desires which suffice to injure the soul.

I MIGHT have entered at greater length on the night of sense according to the extent of evil which the desires occasion, not only in the way described, but in many others as well, but this is enough for my purpose, because it is now clear why the mortification of them is called night, and how necessary it is to enter into this night in order to draw near unto God.

Summary.

One thing only remains for discussion before I speak of

* Josue vi. 18, 21.

† 1 Cor. vii. 29-31.

the way by which this night is entered upon, and so conclude this book—namely, a doubt which might be suggested to the reader by the matter in hand. It might be asked, in the first place, whether any desire be enough to produce in the soul these positive and negative evils of which I have spoken, and, in the second place, whether any desire, however slight, and of whatever kind, be enough to produce all these evils together, or whether each desire produces a distinct evil, as one desire weariness, another pain, and another darkness.

To this I reply as follows:—In the first place, if we are speaking of the negative evil, which consists in the soul's being deprived of God, it is only those voluntary desires which are the matter of mortal sin that can, and do, result in this: for these rob the soul in this life of grace, and in the next of glory, which is the fruition of God. And in the second place that all these desires, those which are the matter of mortal sin, and those voluntary desires, which are matter of venial sin, and those which are imperfections, are, every-one of them, enough to inflict on the soul the positive evils. These evils, though in one sense negative, are here called positive, because they correspond to a turning towards the creature, as the negative evils correspond to a turning away from God.

There is, however, this difference: those desires which are matter of mortal sin produce complete blindness, pain, impureness, and weakness. But those other desires, matter of venial sin, or known imperfection, do not produce these evils in this perfect and supreme degree, seeing that they do not cast the soul out of the state of grace: for the loss of grace is concurrent with their dominion over the soul, because their life consists in the death of grace. Still they occasion somewhat of these evils, though but remissly, proportional to that weakness and remissness which they generate in the soul; so that the particular desire which most weakens the

What evils in the soul does even one sin produce?

Answer.

1. One mortal sin inflicts all the negative evils;

2. Any sin the positive evils.

But in different degrees.

BOOK
I.

a. Some sins
specific evils,
e. g. (1) Sen-
suality.

(2) Avarice.

(3) Vain-
glory.

(4) Gluttony.

Fruits of
Virtue.

The force of
habit.

soul is most fruitful in pain, blindness, and impureness. But it is to be remarked that, though every desire generates all these evils, which we here call positive, there are some which chiefly and directly produce particular evils, and other evils incidentally. For though it is true that one sensual desire produces all these evils, yet its chief and proper fruit is the defilement of soul and body. Though one avaricious desire also produces all these evils, yet its principal and direct result is trouble. Though one vainglorious desire, precisely like the rest, produces all these evils, yet its chief and immediate effect is darkness and blindness. And, though one gluttonous desire issues in the same evils, yet still its primary direct result is weakness in those things that pertain to virtue. The same may be said of all other desires.

The reason why any act of voluntary desire produces all these evils in the soul together, is that contrariety which subsists directly between it and those acts of virtue which result in opposite effects. As an act of virtue produces and generates in the soul sweetness, peace, consolation, light, pureness, and fortitude together, so an unruly desire begets pain, fatigue, weariness, blindness, and weakness. All virtues increase by the practice of each; so also vices thrive and grow, and their effects are magnified in the soul in the same way. Though all these evils are not visible then when the desire is gratified, because the satisfaction thereof furnishes at the time no opportunity for them, yet afterwards the evil results become clearly visible. For the desire, when it is fulfilled, is sweet, and appears good, but afterwards the effects thereof are found to be bitter, which is the experience of everyone who has suffered himself to be led away thereby. I am not ignorant, however, that there are some so blind and so insensible as not to feel this: they do not walk in the ways of God, and therefore see not that which hinders their drawing near unto Him.

I am not speaking here of those other natural desires which are involuntary, nor of thoughts which do not go beyond the first movements, nor of other temptations to which we consent not, because none of these produce any of the evils I describe. Though a person liable to these trials may imagine that the passion and disturbance thus occasioned darken and defile his soul, in reality it is not so—yea, rather the contrary effects are sometimes the result of them. Because, in proportion to the resistance offered, such an one gains strength, pureness, light, consolation, and many other good things, according to the words of our Lord to S. Paul: 'Virtue is made perfect in infirmity.*' But voluntary desires produce these and more evils. For this cause the chief solicitude of spiritual directors is to mortify the desires of their penitents, and to make them deny themselves in all that is pleasing to them, so as to deliver them from so great misery.

CHAP.
XII.

How trials
give
strength.

CHAPTER XIII.

How the soul enters by faith into the night of sense.

It now remains for me to give some directions by which the soul may be able to enter on this night of sense. Ordinarily, the soul enters in two ways on this night: one is the active way, the other is the passive. The active way is that by which the soul is able to make, and does make, efforts of its own to enter in, assisted by divine grace. Of this I shall speak in the instructions that follow. The passive way is that in which the soul doeth nothing as of itself, neither does it make therein any efforts of its own; but it is God who works in it, giving special aids, and the soul is, as it were,

Two ways.

1. Active.

2. Passive.

* 2 Cor. xii. 9.

BOOK
I.

patient, freely consenting thereto. Of this I shall speak when treating of the obscure night, when I shall have to describe those who are beginners. And as I shall have then to give many counsels to such with reference to the many imperfections to which they are liable on this road, I shall not enlarge on that question now. Besides, this is not the place to do so, for I am now concerned only with the reasons why this journey is called night, with the nature and divisions of the same. But as it seems a defect, and not so profitable as it should be, to abstain here from furnishing some help or instructions proper for this night of the desires, I have determined to lay down the brief instruction following. I shall adopt the same course at the conclusion of each of these divisions or causes of this night, of which by the help of our Lord I undertake to speak.

Instructions.

These instructions for the subduing of our desires are, in my opinion, though brief and few, as profitable and effectual as they are brief. He who will reduce them to practice will need none others, for they include everything.

Imitation of
Christ.

1. Be continually careful and earnest in imitating Christ in everything, conforming thyself to His life: for this end thou must meditate thereon, that thou mayest know how to imitate it, and conduct thyself in all things as He would have done Himself.

Self-denial.

2. To do this well, every satisfaction offered to the senses, which is not for God's honour and glory, must be renounced and rejected for the love of Jesus Christ, who in this life had, and sought, no other pleasure than doing the will of His Father, which was His meat,* as He tells us Himself. For instance, if the pleasure of listening to anything which tends not to the service of God presents itself, seek not that pleasure, neither give ear to what is said. If thou art offered

* S. John iv. 34.

CHAP.
XIII.

the sight, pleasurable in itself, of things which do not tend to God's honour, seek not that pleasure, and abstain from that sight. Do the same also in conversation and every other commerce of society. Practise the same mortification with respect to the other senses, as far as possible; and if it be not possible, it will be enough not to seek the pleasure that is offered. Thus the mortification of the senses and the absence of all pleasure must be striven after, so that the soul may be as in darkness. The practice of this counsel will bring with it great profit in a short time.

In order to mortify and calm the four natural passions of joy, hope, fear, and grief, from the concord and tranquillity of which result these and other great advantages, the following instructions are a perfect means of great merit and the source of great virtues: —

Strive always, not after that which is most easy, but that which is most difficult. Mortification
of

Not after that which is most pleasant, but that which is most unpleasant. 1. Joy.

Not after that which giveth pleasure, but after that which giveth none.

Not after that which is consoling, but that which is afflictive. 2. Grief.

Not after that which ministers repose, but after that which ministers labour.

Not after great things, but after little things. 3. Hope.

Not after that which is elevated and precious, but after that which is vile and despised.

Strive not to desire anything, but rather nothing. 4. Fear.

Seek not after that which is better, but that which is worse, and desire to be detached from all things, empty and poor for Christ's sake. This state is to be embraced with a perfect heart, and the will must conform thereto. Because if our heart be truly engaged herein, we shall in a short time

BOOK
I.

attain to great joy and consolation, doing our work orderly with discretion.

These instructions, well acted upon, are sufficient for our entrance on the night of sense. But still, out of the abundance of the matter, I will give another method of devotion, which teaches us how to mortify truly the desire of honour, from which so many others proceed.

Humility in

1. Deed.

1. Do those things which bring thee into contempt, and desire that others also may do them.

2. Word.

2. Speak disparagingly of thyself, and contrive that others may do so too.

3. Thought.

3. Think humbly and contemptuously of thyself, and desire that others may do so also.

I think it fitting, in conclusion, to insert here certain instructions for ascending to the summit of Mount Carmel, which is the high estate of union. Though the doctrine they contain is spiritual and interior, it relates also to the spirit of imperfection in sensible and exterior things, which may be met in the two roads on either side of the way of perfection. We shall, therefore, take these sentences in this sense, namely, as referring to sensible things, and afterwards, in the second division of the night, we shall take them as referring to that which is spiritual.

Instructions
how to enjoy,
know, possess,
and be like the All,
which is God.1. What to
seek.

1. That thou mayest have pleasure in everything, seek pleasure in nothing.

2. That thou mayest know everything, seek to know nothing.

3. That thou mayest possess all things, seek to possess nothing.

4. That thou mayest be everything, seek to be nothing.

2. What to do.

5. That thou mayest attain to that of which thou hast no present perception, thou must walk there where thou hast no perception.

6. That thou mayest attain to that thou knowest not, thou must go through that thou knowest not.

7. That thou mayest attain to that thou possessest not, thou must go through that thou possessest not.

8. That thou mayest attain to that which thou art not, thou must go through that which thou art not.

CHAP.
XIII.

Desires for
1. Happiness,
2. Knowledge,
3. Gain, and
4. Glory only
satisfied in
God, who is
the All.

3. What to
avoid.

The creature
in itself is
nothing, and
cannot fill
the heart of
man.

Deus meus et
omnia.

Instructions how not to impede the All.

1. When thou dwellest upon anything, thou hast ceased to cast thyself upon the All.

2. Because in order to arrive from all to the All, thou hast to deny thyself wholly in all.

3. And when thou comest to attain the All, thou must keep it without desiring anything.

4. Because if thou wilt keep anything with the All, thou hast not thy treasure simply in God.

In detachment the spirit finds quiet and repose, for coveting nothing, nothing wearies it by elation, and nothing oppresses it by dejection, because it stands in the centre of its own humility; for as soon as it covets anything it is immediately fatigued thereby.

CHAPTER XIV.

Explanation of the second line of the stanza.

With anxious love inflamed.

Now that I have explained the first line of the stanza, which relates to the sensual night, and described what the night of sense is, and why it is called night, and that I have also taught how we are to enter on it in the active way, it remains for me here to treat of its wonderful properties and effects. These are comprised in the following lines of this stanza. I touch but lightly upon them, as I promised in the prologue,

Recapitulation.

BOOK
I.The effects
of the night
of privation.1. Love of
God.

and pass on at once to the second book, which describes the other, the spiritual, division of this night.

The words of the soul then are 'with anxious love inflamed.' The soul has passed out and gone forth in the obscure night of sense to the union of the Beloved. For, in order to overcome our desires, and to deny ourselves in all things, our love and inclination for which are wont so to inflame the will that it delights therein, we require another and greater fire of another and nobler love—that of the Bridegroom—so that having all our joy in Him, and deriving from Him all our strength, we may gain such resolution and courage as shall enable us easily to abandon and deny all besides. It was necessary, in order to subdue our sensual desires, not only to have this love for the Bridegroom, but also to be on fire therewith, and that with anxiety. For the fact is, that our sensual nature is influenced by such vehement desires, and attracted by sensible objects, that if our spiritual nature were not on fire with other and nobler anxieties — anxieties for that which is spiritual — we should never overcome our natural and sensible satisfactions, nor be able to enter on the night of sense, neither should we have the courage to remain in the darkness, in the denial of every desire.

The nature and varieties of these anxieties of love, which the soul feels in the beginning of the way of union, the carefulness and the contrivances it employs that it may go forth out of its own house, which is self-will, into the night of the mortification of the senses; how easy, and even pleasant, these anxieties make the toils and dangers of that night—this is not the place to explain, neither, indeed, can it be done; for these things are rather to be felt and meditated upon than matters for description: so I shall pass on to the explanation of the other lines in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

Explanation of the last lines.

'O HAPPY lot! I departed unobserved, my house being now at rest.' This is a metaphor derived from the miserable condition of slaves. He who is delivered therefrom, pronounces his own a happy lot when none of his jailers hinder his release. The soul, because of original sin, is truly a prisoner in this mortal body, in the power of natural passions and desires, and therefore counts it a happy lot when it has gone forth unobserved from this slavery and subjection, that is, unimpeded and unembarrassed by all its desires. To effect this, it was advantageous for the soul to have departed in an obscure night, in the denial of every pleasure, and in the mortification of every desire.

'My house being now at rest,' that is, the sensual part of the soul, the house of the desires being now at rest, because those desires are overcome and lulled to sleep. For until the desires be lulled to sleep by the mortification of sensuality, and sensuality itself be mortified in them, so that it shall be contrary to the spirit no more, the soul cannot go forth in perfect liberty to the fruition of the union with the Beloved.

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XV.2. Peace of
mind.

BOOK II.

PROXIMATE MEANS OF UNION, FAITH. THE SECOND NIGHT
OF THE SPIRIT.

CHAPTER I.

STANZA II.

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

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II.
Second part,
Purgation of
the spirit.

HERE the soul sings of that happy lot, attained by detachment of spirit from all spiritual imperfections, and selfish desires in spiritual things. This was a happiness so much the greater, because of the greatness of the difficulty which the soul had to encounter in tranquillizing the house of the spiritual part, and in effecting an entrance into the interior darkness, which is spiritual detachment from all things, as well sensual as spiritual, leaning only on a living faith—it is of this I speak ordinarily, because I have to do with those who are walking in the way of perfection—and by it ascending upwards unto God.

Explanation
of second
stanza.

This is here called a secret ladder, because all the steps and divisions of it are secret, hidden from sense and the intellect. Thus the soul is in darkness as to all natural light of sense and intellect, going forth beyond the limits of nature and of reason, that it may ascend by this Divine ladder of the faith which reaches and penetrates into the heights of God. The soul is said to have gone forth in disguise, because its natural condition was Divinely changed, ascending upwards by faith. And this disguise was the

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I.

cause why it was unobserved, unimpeded by the things of time or reason, and by the devil himself: for none of these can hurt the soul while travelling onwards by living faith.

This is not all: the soul travels in such secrecy and concealment, and the devil with his wiles is so ignorant of its way, that it journeys truly, as it is here said, 'in darkness and concealment,' so far as the evil one is concerned, to whom the light of the faith is more than darkness. Thus the soul, which thus walks, may be said to walk in darkness, hidden from the devil, as I shall more clearly explain hereafter.

This is the reason why it is said that the soul went forth 'in darkness and in safety.' For he to whom is granted the happiness of walking in the darkness of the faith, having faith for his guide, walks in the utmost security when he goeth forth beyond all natural imaginations and spiritual reasonings. And so it is added, that the soul went forth in the spiritual night, 'my house being now at rest,' that is, the rational and spiritual parts. When the soul attains to the Divine union, its natural powers, impulses, and sensible anxieties in the spiritual part, are at rest. It is, therefore, not said here that the soul went forth anxiously, as in the first night of sense, because the anxieties of sensible love were necessary for a perfect departure then, so as to journey in the night of sense, and to be detached from all objects of the same. But in order to perfect the tranquillity of the house of the spirit, no more is required than the confirmation of all the powers of the soul, all its pleasures and spiritual desires, in pure faith. This done, the soul is united with the Beloved in a certain union of simplicity, pureness, love, and resemblance.

In the first stanza, speaking of the sensual part, the soul went forth 'in an obscure night;' and here, speaking of the spiritual part, 'in darkness,' because the darkness of the

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II.

spiritual part is greater, as this darkness is greater than that of the night; for, however obscure the night may be, still something is visible, but in this darkness nothing is visible. Thus, in the night of sense, there remains still some light, because the understanding remains, and the reason also, which are not blind. But in this spiritual night, the night of faith, all is darkness, both in the understanding and the sense. The soul says that it went forth 'in darkness and in safety,' which it said not in the first stanza, and the reason is that the soul, when it makes the least usage of its own proper ability, travels most securely, because it walks most by faith.

I shall explain this matter at great length in the present book, to which I request the benevolent attention of the devout reader, because it will contain things most important to the truly spiritual man. Though they are somewhat obscure, yet one question will open the way to another, so that, as I believe, all will be well understood.

CHAPTER II.

The second part, or cause of this night—Faith. Two reasons why it is darker than the first and third.

I HAVE now to treat of the second part of this night—Faith—which is that wonderful means of reaching the goal, which is God, who is also to the soul, naturally, the third cause or division of this night. Faith, which is the mean, is compared to midnight, and thus it may be said, that faith is to the soul darker than the first part, and in a way also darker than the third: for the first part, that of the senses, is like the beginning of night, when sensible objects cease to be visible, and is not so far removed from light as midnight is. The third part, that which immediately precedes daybreak, is

II. Faith; the middle and darkest part of the obscure night.

CHAP.
II.

not so dark as midnight, because the clear light of morning is at hand: this is compared with God.

Though it is true, speaking after the manner of men, that God is as dark a night to the soul as faith, yet because God Himself, when the three divisions of this night are over—which are naturally the night of the soul—illuminates it supernaturally with the rays of the Divine Light in a higher and nobler way, experimentally—which is the commencement of the perfect union which ensues when the third night is past—He may be said to be less dark. It is also more obscure than the first part, which relates to the lower, the sensual, nature of man, and consequently the more exterior. The second night, of faith, relates to the higher, to the rational, nature of man, and is therefore more interior and obscure, because it deprives us of the light of reason, or rather, to speak more clearly, makes it blind. Thus the comparison between it and midnight is made good: for that is the most obscure and most perfect portion of the night.

I have now to show how this second division—the night of faith—is the night of the spirit, as the first division is the night of sense, and then what those things are which are contrary to it, and how the soul is to be disposed actively for entering into it. For as to the passive way, which is the work of God, I reserve it for another opportunity—for the third book of this treatise.

God in Himself is Light.

Three points in the second division:
1. Faith, the night of the soul.
2. What contrary to it.
3. Dispositions for it.

CHAPTER III.

Faith, the dark night of the soul. Proofs from reason and the Holy Scriptures.

FAITH, according to theologians, is a habit of the soul, certain and obscure. The reason why it is an obscure habit is that it makes us believe the truths which God Himself

First point. Faith; its definition.

BOOK
II.An excess of
light.Faith sur-
passes
1. Intellect.
2. Know-
ledge.
3. Expe-
rience.Two analo-
gies.

has revealed — truths surpassing the light of reason, and beyond the reach of all human understanding. Hence it is that the excessive light of the faith is obscure darkness to the soul, because it subdues that which is great, and destroys that which is little, as the light of the sun puts out all other lights so that they appear not, and subdues our power of vision. As the sun blinds the eyes and robs them of the vision which it gives, because its own light is out of proportion with, and stronger than, our power of sight, so the light of faith, by reason of its greatness and the mode in which God communicates it, transcends our understanding, which in itself reaches only to natural knowledge, though gifted with the power of obeying in that which is supernatural when it is the will of our Lord to bring it to a supernatural action. The intellect, therefore, can of itself know nothing but in a natural way, the beginning of which is in the senses, and in no other way. For this end it retains the forms and species of objects either in themselves or in their resemblances: for as the philosophers say, knowledge results from an object and the faculty. *Ab objecto et potentia paritur notitia.*

If a man were told of things he knows nothing of, and the like of which he has never seen, no light could be thrown on them, so far as he is concerned, any more than if they had never been spoken of in his presence. For instance, if you were told that there is in a certain island an animal which you have never seen, and no description of it were given you, so that you might compare it with other animals, your knowledge of it, or what it resembles, is not greater than it would have been if you had never been told of it. I will give another illustration which will make the matter still more clear: if you tell a person blind from his birth that one object is white, another yellow, he would never understand what you mean, though you may speak to him for

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III.

ever, because he has never seen such colours or anything like them, so as to have any opinion on the subject. The word colour only will remain with him, because that reaches him through the ear, but the form and figure thereof escape him because he has never seen them.

Such is faith to the soul, though the resemblance is not exact in all points; faith tells us of things we have never seen, of things of which we had no previous knowledge, either in themselves or in aught resembling them, and to which we never could have attained but by revelation. The light of natural knowledge cannot inform us of these things, because they are out of proportion with our natural senses. We know them because we have heard of them, believing that which the faith teaches us, subjecting thereto our natural light, and making ourselves blind before it: for 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ.'* Faith is not knowledge that entereth in by any of the senses, but only the assent of the soul to that which cometh by hearing. Faith, therefore, far transcends the foregoing illustrations: for not only does it not produce evidence or knowledge, but, as I have said, it transcends and surpasses all other knowledge whatever, so that perfect contemplation alone may judge of it. Other sciences are acquired by the light of the understanding, but that of faith is acquired without it, by rejecting it for faith, and it is lost in its own light. Therefore is it said, 'If you will not believe you shall not understand.'†

It is evident that the faith is a dark night to the soul, and it is thus that it gives it light; the more it darkens the soul the more does it enlighten it. It is by darkening that it gives light, according to the words of the prophet, 'If you will not believe,' that is, 'if you do not make yourselves

Faith though
dark en-
lightens the
soul.

* Rom. x. 17.

† Is. vii. 9, according to the Sept.

BOOK
II.

Three illustrations from
Holy
Scripture.

blind you shall not understand'—that is, you shall have no light, the high and supernatural knowledge.

The faith was foreshadowed by the cloud which divided the Egyptians from the children of Israel at the entrance of the Red Sea. 'It was a dark cloud enlightening the night.'* How wonderful a cloud!—its darkness illumines the night. Faith, then, which is a dark cloud, obscure to the soul—and night also, for in the presence of faith the soul is blind, without its own natural light—enlightens with its own obscurity, and illumines the darkness of the soul, so that the master becomes like the disciple. For man who is in darkness cannot be rightly enlightened except by darkness, as the Psalmist saith, 'Day to day uttereth speech, and night to night showeth knowledge.'† The 'day' is God in everlasting bliss, where it is perpetual day, who communicates and reveals His Word, the Son, to the blessed angels and the holy souls, who are also now day, so that they may know Him and rejoice in Him. 'Night,' which is the faith in the Church militant, where it is still night, showeth knowledge to the Church, and consequently to every soul, which is also night, because it does not as yet enjoy the clear beatific vision, and because in the presence of faith its natural light is extinguished. The teaching set before us here then is, that the faith, which is obscure night, illumines the soul which is in darkness, according to the words of the Psalmist, 'Night shall be my light in my pleasures,‡ that is, in the pleasures of pure contemplation and of union with God. The night of faith shall guide me. The soul, therefore, must be in darkness that it may have light, and be able to journey on the spiritual road.

* Ex. xiv. 20.

† Ps. xviii. 3.

‡ Ps. cxxxviii. 11.

CHAPTER IV.

How the soul must be in darkness, in order to be duly guided by faith to the highest contemplation.

I BELIEVE that I have now in some measure explained how faith is the obscure night of the soul, and how also the soul must be obscured, or deprived of its natural light, that it may be guided by faith to this high end of union. But that the soul may know how to effect this, it is necessary that I should explain somewhat more minutely this obscurity, which it must observe that it may enter into the abyss of faith. I shall, therefore, in this chapter, speak of that in general, and by and by, with the favour of God, more particularly of the way which the soul must keep, that it may not go astray in that obscurity, nor put obstacles before its guide.

I say, then, that the soul, to be rightly guided by faith to this estate, must be in darkness, not only as to that part thereof—the sensual and the inferior, of which I have already spoken—which regards temporal and created things, but also as to that part thereof, the rational and the superior, of which I am now speaking, which regards God and spiritual things. Because it is clearly necessary for the soul, aiming at its own supernatural transformation, to be in darkness and far removed from all that relates to its natural condition, the sensual and rational parts. The supernatural is that which transcends nature, and, therefore, that which is natural remains below. Inasmuch as this union and transformation are not cognisable by sense or any human power, the soul must be completely and voluntarily empty of all that can enter into it, of every affection and inclination, so far as it concerns itself. Who shall hinder God from doing His own will in a soul that is resigned, detached, and self-annihilated? The soul, therefore, must be emptied of all such feelings; and,

CHAP.
IV.

Detachment from natural and supernatural goods of the spirit, necessary for Perfection.

Second point.
What to shun.

In this life union with God is not 1. by the senses;

BOOK
II.

however great may be its supernatural endowments, it must be as it were detached from them, in darkness like a blind man, leaning on the obscure faith, and taking it for its light and guide; not trusting to anything it understands, tastes, feels, or imagines—for all this is darkness, which will lead it astray, or keep it back; and faith is above all understanding, taste, and sense.

2. Not by
intellectual
vision;

If the soul be not blind herein, and in total darkness as to all such things, it will never reach to those higher things which faith teaches. A blind man, if he be not totally blind, will not commit himself wholly to his guide, but because he sees a little he thinks a certain road secure, not seeing another which is better. Such an one leads his guide astray, because he acts as if he saw, and has more authority in the matter than his guide: so the soul, if it leans upon any understanding, sense, or feeling of its own—all this, whatever it may be, is very little and very unlike to God—in order to travel along this road, is most easily led astray or impeded, because it is not perfectly blind in faith, which is its true guide. This is the meaning of S. Paul when he said, 'He that cometh to God must believe that He is.'* He that will draw near and unite himself unto God, must believe that He is. This is saying in effect, He that will attain to the union of God must not rely on his own understanding, nor lean upon his own imagination, sense, or feeling, but must believe in the perfection of the Divine Essence, which is not cognisable by the understanding, desire, imagination, nor any sense of man, and which in this life can never be known as it is. Yea, in this life, our highest knowledge and deepest sense, perception, and understanding of God is infinitely distant from what He is, and from the pure fruition of His Presence.

3. But by
Faith.Two proofs
from Holy
Scripture.

* Heb. xi. 6.

CHAP.
IV.

Thus the Prophet cries out, 'The eye hath not seen, O God, besides Thee, what things Thou hast prepared for them that wait for Thee;'^{*} and S. Paul repeats his words, '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.'[†] How much soever, then, the soul may desire to be perfectly united by grace in this life to that whereunto it is to be united in glory in the next, which as S. Paul saith, eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which hath not entered into the heart of man in the flesh, it is evident, that in order to be perfectly united in this life in grace and love, it must live in utter darkness as to all that can enter by the eye, all that the ear receives, all that the fancy may imagine, or the heart conceive, which here signifies the soul. Greatly embarrassed, then, is the soul, on the road of the Divine union, when it leans at all on its own understanding, sense, imagination, judgment, will, or any other habits of its own, or anything peculiar to itself, not knowing how to release and detach itself therefrom. For, as I have said, the goal to which it tends is beyond this, though this may be the highest thing it may know or feel, and it must, therefore, go beyond, passing on to that which it knows not.

Self-reliance
hinders the
Divine
Union.

On this road, therefore, to abandon one's own way is to enter on the true way, or, to speak more correctly, to pass onwards to the goal; and to forsake one's own way is to enter on that which has none, namely God. For the soul that attains to this estate has no ways or methods of its own, neither does it, nor can it, lean upon anything of the kind. I mean ways of understanding, perceiving, or feeling, though it has all ways at the same time, as one who, possessing nothing, yet possesseth everything. For the soul courageously resolved on passing, interiorly and exteriorly,

* Is. lxiv. 4.

† 1 Cor. ii. 9.

beyond the limits of its own nature, enters illimitably within the supernatural, which has no measure, but contains all measure eminently within itself. To arrive there is to depart hence, going away, out of oneself, as far as possible, from this vile estate to that which is the highest of all. Therefore, rising above all that may be known and understood, temporally and spiritually, the soul must earnestly desire to reach that which in this life cannot be known, and which the heart cannot conceive; and, leaving behind all actual and possible taste and feeling of sense and spirit, must desire earnestly to arrive at that which transcends all sense and all feeling.

The flesh and
the spirit
both to be
mortified.

In order that the soul may be free and unembarrassed for this end, it must in no wise attach itself—as I shall presently explain when I treat of this point—to anything it may receive in the sense or spirit, but esteem such as of much less importance. For the more importance the soul attributes to what it understands, feels, and imagines, and the greater the estimation it holds it in, whether it be spiritual or not, the more it detracts from the Supreme Good, and the greater will be its delay in attaining to it. On the other hand, the less it esteems all that it may have in comparison with the Supreme Good, the more does it magnify and esteem the Supreme Good, and consequently the greater the progress towards it.

In this way the soul draws nearer and nearer to the Divine union, in darkness, by the way of faith which, though it be also obscure, yet sends forth a marvellous light. Certainly, if the soul will see, it thereby becomes instantly more blind than he who should attempt to gaze upon the sun shining in its strength. On this road, therefore, to have our own faculties in darkness is to see the light, according to the words of our Lord: 'For judgment I am come into this world, that they who see not may see, and

they who see may become blind.* This relates to the spiritual road: he who is in darkness, blind as to his own proper and natural light, shall see supernaturally, and he who shall rely on any light of his own, the greater will be his blindness, and the more he shall be hindered on the way of the Divine union.

I think it necessary now, in order to avoid confusion, to explain the nature of the soul's union with God. This I intend to do in the following chapter, for if this be clearly understood, a great light will be thrown on what is to follow. This, therefore, seems to me a fit place for the subject. For though it breaks in on the course of the present matter, still it is not beside the question, because it will help us to understand the subject before us. The next chapter then will be a sort of parenthesis, after which I shall return to the special discussion of the three powers of the soul in their relations to the three theological virtues with reference to the second night of the spirit.

 CHAPTER V.

The union of the soul with God. A comparison.

(WHAT I have hitherto written will, in some degree, explain the nature of that estate which I have called the union of the soul with God, and therefore, what now follows will be so much the more intelligible. It is not my intention at present to describe, in particulars, what is the union of the intellect, of the will, and of the memory; what is the transient, and what the permanent union of these faculties, and what also is the perfect union: of this I shall speak hereafter, and the matter will be more clear when I come to discuss it in its

Chapter in
parenthesis.

* S. John ix. 39.

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II.

proper place, having before me a vivid example of it; then the matter will be clear, each particular observed and susceptible of a better decision. Now I am speaking only of the perfect and permanent union in the substance of the soul and its powers, so far as the union is a habit. Because, in reference to actual union, I shall explain hereafter how there is not, and cannot be, any permanent union in this life in the faculties of the soul, but only that which is transient.

Two kinds of
union :1. Substan-
tial.

In order then to understand what this union is, we must remember that in every soul, even that of the greatest sinner in the world, God dwells, and is substantially present. This union or presence of God, in the order of nature, subsists between Him and all His creatures. By this He preserves them in being, and if He withdraws it they immediately perish and cease to be. And so when I speak of the union of the soul with God, I do not mean this substantial presence which is in every creature, but that union and transformation of the soul in God by love which is only then accomplished when there subsists the likeness which love begets. For this reason shall this union be called the union of likeness, as the other is essential or substantial union; this latter one is natural, the other is supernatural, which takes effect when two wills, the will of God and the will of the soul, are conformed together, neither desiring aught repugnant to the other. Thus the soul, when it shall have driven away from itself all that is contrary to the divine will, becomes transformed in God by love.

Its definition.

This is to be understood not only of that which is contrary in act but also in habit, so that not only voluntary acts of imperfection must be got rid of, but the habit thereof as well. And because no creature can, by any actions or capabilities of its own, attain to that which is God, the soul must be therefore detached from all created things, from all actions and capabilities of its own, that is from its own

understanding, taste, and feeling, so that passing by everything which is unlike to, and not in conformity with God, it may attain to the receiving of His likeness, and resting upon nothing which is not His will, it may be so transformed in Him. Though it be true, as I have said, that God is always in every soul, bestowing upon it, and preserving to it, by His presence, its natural being, yet for all this He does not always communicate the supernatural life. For this is given only by love and grace, to which all souls do not attain; and those who do, do not in the same degree, for some arise to higher degrees of love than others. That soul, therefore, has greater communion with God, which is most advanced in love, that is, whose will is most conformable to the will of God. And that soul which has reached perfect conformity and resemblance is perfectly united and supernaturally transformed in God. For which cause, therefore, as I have already explained, the more the soul cleaves to created things, relying on its own strength, by habit and inclination, the less is it disposed for this union, because it does not completely resign itself into the hands of God, that He may transform it supernaturally. The soul has need, therefore, to be detached from these natural contrarieties and dissimilarities, that God, who communicates Himself to it naturally, in the order of nature, may also communicate Himself supernaturally, in the order of grace.

This is the meaning of S. John when he said, 'born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*' It is as if he had said, 'He gave power to be made the sons of God,' that is, to be transformed in God, only to those who are 'born, not of blood,' not of natural temperaments and constitutions, 'nor of the will of the flesh,' nor of our natural free will and capacities, and

CHAP.
V.Concursus
Del.

* S. John i. 13.

BOOK
II.

still less of the will of man, which includes every form of intellectual judgment and comprehension. To none of these gave He power to be made sons of God in all perfection, but only to those who are born of God; to those regenerated by grace, first of all dead to all that is of the old man, rising above themselves to that which is supernatural, and receiving from God their new birth and sonship, surpassing every thought of man. For as our Lord saith, 'Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'* He who shall not have been born again of the Holy Ghost shall not see the kingdom of God, which is the estate of perfection. To be born again of the Holy Ghost in this life perfectly, is to be a soul most like unto God in purity without any stain of imperfection. Thus the pure transformation by participation of union may be effected, though not essentially.

Illustration.

In order that we may have a clearer notion of the one and the other, let us consider the following illustration: the sun, with its rays, strikes a window; but if that window be stained and unclean, the sun cannot shine throughout nor transform it perfectly into itself, as it would have done, had it been clean and unsullied. This depends not on the sun but on the window, so that if the latter were perfectly clean, the rays of the sun would so shine through it, and so transform it as to make it seem identical with the rays and to give forth the light thereof, though in truth the window, while it appears one with the rays of the sun, preserves still its own separate and distinct substance. In this case we might say that the window is a ray or light by participation.

Thus the soul resembles the window; the divine light of the presence of God in the order of nature, perpetually

* S. John iii. 5.

CHAP.
V. ✓

strikes upon it, or rather dwells within it. The soul then by resigning itself—in removing from itself every spot and stain of the creature, which is to keep the will perfectly united to the will of God; for to love Him is to labour to detach ourselves from, and to divest ourselves of, everything which is not God, for God's sake—becomes immediately enlightened by, and transformed in, God; because He communicates His own supernatural Being in such a way that the soul seems to be God Himself and to possess the things of God. Such an union is then wrought when God bestows on the soul that supreme grace which makes the things of God and the soul one by the transformation which renders the one a partaker of the other. The soul seems to be God rather than itself, and indeed is God by participation, though in reality preserving its own natural substance as distinct from God as it did before, although transformed in Him, as the window preserves its own substance distinct from that of the rays of the sun shining through it and making it light.

Hence it becomes more evident that the fitting disposition for this union is, not that the soul should understand, taste, feel, or imagine anything on the subject of the nature of God, or any other thing whatever, but only that pureness and love which is perfect resignation, and complete detachment from all things for God alone. And as there cannot be any perfect transformation without perfect pureness, so in proportion to that pureness will be the enlightenment, illumination, and union of the soul with God, yet not wholly perfect if the soul be not wholly purified and clean. The following illustration will make this plain: conceive a picture painted with exquisite taste and delicate finish, the lines of which are so admirably formed that by reason of their singular fineness they can with difficulty be observed. Now, he whose vision is imperfect will see only the less

Dispositions
for union;
Purity of
heart and
love.

An analogy.

BOOK
II.

perfect portions of the picture, and he whose vision is clearer will see more of its beauties, and another with still better eyesight will see more, and, finally, he whose vision is the most perfect will see the most delicate excellencies of it, for the painting has so much beauty that the more it is observed the more remains to be seen. All this is applicable to those souls who are enlightened by God and in Him transformed. For, though it be true that every soul, according to its measure, great or little, may attain to this union, yet all do not in an equal degree, but only as our Lord shall give unto each; as it is with the blessed in heaven, there some see God more perfectly than others, and yet all see Him and all are satisfied and happy, for each one is filled with the vision according to his merits, greater or less. Hence it comes to pass, that though souls in this life enjoy equal peace and tranquillity in their state of perfection, everyone being satisfied, nevertheless some of them may be more advanced than the rest, in a higher degree of union, and yet all equally satisfied according to their several dispositions, and the knowledge they have of God. But that soul which does not attain to that degree of purity corresponding with the light and vocation it has received from God, will never obtain true peace and contentment, because it has not attained to that detachment, and emptiness of its powers, which are requisite for this pure union.)

Different
degrees of
perfect
beatitude.

CHAPTER VI.

The three Theological virtues perfect the powers of the soul, and bring them into a state of emptiness and darkness. Proofs from S. Luke and Isaías.

Third point
of the second
division.
Active dispo-
sitions for
the spiritual
night.

HAVING now to explain how the three powers of the soul, intellect, memory, and will, are to be brought into this spiritual night, which is the means of the Divine union, it becomes

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VI.

necessary, in the first place, to discuss in this chapter how the three theological virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity — through the instrumentality of which the soul is united to God in its powers — effect this emptiness and darkness, each one in its own power: Faith in the intellect, Hope in the memory, and Charity in the will. Afterwards, I shall show how the intellect is made perfect in the obscurity of Faith, how the memory is made empty in Hope, and how, also, the will is to withdraw and detach itself from every affection that it may ascend upwards unto God. This done, we shall see clearly how necessary it is for the soul, if it will travel securely along the spiritual road, to journey in the obscure night, leaning on these three virtues, which make it empty of all things and blind. For, as I have said, the soul is not united to God in this life by the understanding or feeling or imagination, or any other sense whatever, but only by Faith, in the intellect; by Hope, which may be referred to the memory — though also to the will — in so far as Hope relates to that emptiness and forgetfulness of every temporal and perishable thing which it causes, the soul preserving itself entire for the Supreme Good which it hopes for; and by Love, in the will.

These three virtues render empty all the powers of the soul: Faith makes the intellect empty and blind; Hope takes everything away from the memory, and Charity detaches the will from every pleasure and affection which are not God. Faith teaches us what the intellect cannot reach by the light of nature and of reason, being, as the Apostle saith, 'the substance of things to be hoped for.'* And though the intellect firmly and certainly assents to them, yet it cannot discover them; for if the intellect had discovered them, there would be no room for Faith. And though the

Union with
God by
1. Faith in
the intellect.

* Hebr. xi. 1.

BOOK
II.2. Hope in
the memory.

intellect derives certainty from Faith, yet it does not derive clearness but rather obscurity. As to Hope, there is no doubt that it renders the memory empty, and brings darkness over it as to all surrounding objects, for hope is ever conversant with that which is not in possession, for if it were already possessed there would be no place for hope; because, as the Apostle saith, 'hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth why doth he hope for?''* This virtue, then, makes empty also, for it is the virtue of that which is not in possession, and not of that which is. Charity, too, in the same way empties the will of all things, for it compels us to love God above all, which we cannot do without withdrawing our affections from every object, to fix them wholly upon God. Christ our Lord hath said, 'Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be My disciple.'† Thus these virtues bring darkness over the soul, and empty it of all created things.

Two illustrations from
Holy Scripture.

Consider that parable of our Lord recorded by S. Luke,‡ of the friend who went out at midnight asking for three loaves. These loaves are the three theological virtues. They were asked for at midnight, to teach us that the soul must dispose itself for perfection in these virtues in darkness as to all its powers, and that perfection is to be acquired in this night of the spirit.

The prophet Isaias saw in a vision two seraphim on either side of God, each of them with six wings. With two of their wings they covered their feet. This signifies the quenching and subduing of the will in everything for the sake of God. With two of their wings they covered their faces; this signifies the blindness of the intellect in the presence of God. With two of their wings they flew; this signifies the flight of hope towards those things which we possess not; lifted up on high

* Rom. viii. 24.

† S. Luke xiv. 33.

‡ S. Luke xi. 5.

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above all possession short of God. 'Upon it stood the seraphim: the one had six wings, and the other had six wings; with two each covered his face, and with two each covered his feet, and with two they flew.'*

We have, therefore, to lead these three powers of the soul unto these three virtues; informing the intellect by Faith, stripping the memory of all that it possesses by Hope, and informing the will by Charity, detaching them from, and making them blind to, all that is beside these three virtues.

This is the spiritual night which I have called the active night; because the soul labours, on its own part, to enter into it. When I was treating of the night of sense, I explained how that the sensual powers of the soul are to be emptied of all sensible objects in the desire, so that the soul may go forth from the beginning of its course to the middle, which is faith; so now, while speaking of the night of the spirit, I shall also explain, by the help of God, how that the spiritual powers of the soul are to be emptied and purified of all that is not God, and remain in the darkness of these three virtues, which are the means and dispositions by which the soul becomes united with God. Herein is found every security against the cunning of the devil and the craftiness of self-love with all its ramifications, which is wont most deeply to deceive and hinder the progress of spiritual persons, because they do not know how to be detached, and to guide their steps by these virtues. For this cause they never perfectly reach the substance and pureness of spiritual good, neither do they journey, as they might do, by the straightest and the shortest road. Keep in mind, however, that I am now speaking specially of those who have begun to enter the state of contemplation. For, as to beginners, this must be discussed at greater length, which I shall do when I shall have to treat of what is peculiar to them.

Purity of
heart to be
obtained in
the spiritual
night.

* Is. vi. 2.

CHAPTER VII.

The straitness of the way of life. The detachment and freedom necessary for those who walk in it. The detachment of the intellect.

BOOK
II.

THE pureness and detachment of the three powers of the soul require, for their discussion, greater knowledge and abilities than mine, so as to enable spiritual persons to comprehend how strait the way is that leadeth unto life, and that, convinced of this, they may not wonder at the emptiness and detachment wherein we must abandon, in this night, the three powers of the soul. For this end we must ponder well the words of our Lord, applied here to the obscure night, and the way of perfection. Our Lord saith, 'How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life; and few there are that find it.'* Consider the great and significant import of the word 'how.' It is as if He had said, 'In truth it is very narrow, much narrower than you think.' Consider, also, that He began by saying, 'How narrow is the gate.' By this He teaches us that the soul that will enter in by the gate of Christ, which is the beginning of the road, must first of all constrain itself, and detach the will from the things of time and sense, loving God above them all. This refers to the night of the senses.

Perfection
requires
labour.

Our Lord immediately adds, 'Strait is the way,' that is of perfection. By this He teaches us that He who will walk in the way of perfection must not only enter through the narrow gate, emptying himself of everything that relates to sense, but must also renounce all that he possesses, laying a constraint upon himself, and releasing himself entirely from all attachment even to spiritual things. Thus the narrow gate refers to the sensual nature of man, and the strait way to his spiritual or rational nature.

* S. Matth. vii. 14.

He says also, 'Few there are that find it.' Mark here the reason of this, which is that there are but few who understand how, and desire, to enter into this supreme detachment and emptiness of spirit. For this pathway up the lofty mountain of perfection, in that it ascends upwards and is strait, requires that those who climb it should carry nothing with them which shall press them downwards, or embarrass them in their ascent upwards. And as this is a matter in which we should seek and aim after God alone; so God only ought to be the sole object of our efforts.

This clearly shows that the soul must be not only disentangled from all that belongs to the creature, but also detached and annihilated in the things of the spirit. And so our Lord teaching us, and guiding us into this road, gives us this wonderful doctrine, and which is, if I may so say, the less practised by spiritual persons the more it is necessary for them. I shall transcribe it here, because it is so necessary and so much to the purpose, and then explain its real and spiritual meaning. 'If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake . . . shall save it.'* O that some one would teach us how to understand, practise, and feel what is involved in this profound lesson of self-denial given us by our Lord Himself, that spiritual persons may perceive how different, on this road, their conduct ought to be from that which many of them think to be right! Some consider any kind of retirement from the world, and any correction of excesses to be sufficient; others are content with a certain degree of virtue, persevere in prayer and practise mortification, but they do not rise to this detachment, and poverty, or self-denial, or spiritual pureness—all these are one—which

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VII.

In the way of
the Cross
Christ is
1. Our
Teacher.

* S. Mark viii. 34, 35.

our Saviour here recommends, because they nourish and clothe their natural self with consolations, instead of detaching themselves therefrom, and denying themselves in all things for God. They think it enough to deny themselves in the things of this world, without annihilating themselves, and purging away all self-seeking in spiritual things. Hence it comes to pass, that when any of this solid devotion presents itself to them, which consists in the annihilation of all sweetness in God, in dryness, in distaste, in trouble, which is the real spiritual cross, and the nakedness of the spiritual poverty of Christ, they run away from it as from death itself. They seek only for delights, for sweet communications, and satisfactions in God, but this is not self-denial, nor detachment of spirit, but rather spiritual gluttony. They render themselves spiritually enemies of the cross of Christ, for true spirituality seeks for bitterness rather than sweetness in God, inclines to suffering more than to consolation, and to be in want of everything for God rather than to possess; to dryness and afflictions rather than to sweet communications, knowing well that this is to follow Christ and deny self, while the other course is perhaps nothing but to seek oneself in God, which is the very opposite of love. For to seek self in God is to seek for comfort and refreshment from God. But to seek God in Himself is not only to be willingly deprived of this thing and of that for God, but to incline ourselves to will and choose for Christ's sake whatever is most disagreeable, whether proceeding from God or from the world; this is to love God.

O who can tell us how far God wills that this self-renunciation should reach! In truth it should be as death, a temporal, natural, and spiritual annihilation in all things which the will esteems; herein is all our gain. This is the meaning of our Saviour when He said, 'Whosoever will save

Spiritual
gluttony;—
what.

his life shall lose it;'^{*} that is, whosoever will possess, or seek anything for himself, he shall lose it. 'Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake, shall save it;' that is, whosoever shall renounce for the sake of Christ whatever is pleasing to his own will, choosing rather the cross—to which our Lord referred when He said, 'He that hateth his life'—he shall gain it.

Our Lord taught this same truth to the two disciples who asked that they might be admitted to sit on His right hand and on His left. He gave no encouragement to them in the matter of their petition, but offered them the chalice which He was about to drink Himself, as something more safe and more precious on earth than the dignity which they sought. This chalice is the death of our natural self by detachment from all that relates to sense, as I have already said, and from all that relates to the spirit, as I shall explain hereafter, so that we may journey onwards on this strait way, that is, detachment from our own understanding, sense, and feelings, and in such a manner that the soul shall renounce itself both in sense and spirit, and more, so that it may not be impeded even by the things of the spirit on the narrow road. For this road admits only of self-denial—as our Lord declares—and the cross, which is our staff to lean on, and which lightens the road and makes it easy. Thus our Lord hath said: 'My yoke is sweet, and My burden light.'[†] This burden is the cross. For if we are determined to submit ourselves, and to carry the cross—this is nothing else but an earnest resolution to seek and endure it in everything for God—we shall find great refreshment and sweetness therein to enable us to travel along this road, thus detached from all things, desiring nothing. But if we cling to anything whatever, whether it come from God or from the world, we

2. Our
Companion.

3. Our
Reward.

^{*} S. Mark viii. 35.

[†] S. Matth. xi. 30.

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II.

are not journeying in detachment and self-denial, and so we shall miss our way, and never be able to ascend the narrow path.

True perfection;—what.

Would that I could persuade spiritual persons that the way of God consisteth not in the multiplicity of meditations, ways of devotion or sweetness, though these may be necessary for beginners, but in one necessary thing only, in knowing how to deny themselves in earnest, inwardly and outwardly, giving themselves up to suffer for Christ's sake, and annihilating themselves utterly. He who shall exercise himself herein, will then find all this and much more. And if he be deficient at all in this exercise, which is the sum and root of all virtue, all he may do will be but beating the air—utterly profitless, notwithstanding great meditations and communications. There is no progress but in the imitation of Christ, Who is the way, the truth, and the life. 'I am the way,' saith He, 'and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by Me.'* And again, 'I am the door. By Me if any man enter in he shall be saved.† That spirituality, therefore, which would travel in sweetness at its ease, shunning the imitation of Christ, is, in my opinion, nothing worth.

No spiritual progress but in the imitation of Christ.

4. Our Model.

And now, having said that Christ is the way, and that the way is to die to our natural self in all that relates to sense and spirit, I proceed to explain how it is to be done in imitation of Christ, for He is our light and our example. In the first place, it is certain that He died spiritually while on earth to all things belonging to sense, and naturally at His death; 'The Son of man,' saith He, 'hath not where to lay His head.‡ And when He died it was the same. In the second place, it is certain that at the hour of death His soul was desolate and, as it were, brought to nothing, forsaken of

* S. John xiv. 6.

† Ib. x. 9.

‡ S. Matth. viii. 20.

His Father, left without comfort in the most distressing dryness, so that He cried out on the cross, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?*' This was the greatest sensible abandonment of His whole life; and it was then that He wrought the greatest work of His whole life of miracles and of wonders, the reconciliation and union with God by grace of all mankind. This He accomplished at that very moment when He was most annihilated in all things, brought lowest in the estimation of men, for when they saw Him dying on the ignominious tree, they showed Him no reverence, yea, rather they stood by and derided Him. Then, too, was He brought lowest in His very nature, for that was as it were annihilated when He died; and as to the protection and consolation of His Father also, for He was then forsaken that He might pay our debt to the utmost, and unite us with God, being Himself annihilated and, as it were, brought to nothing. Therefore it is that the Psalmist saith of Him, 'I am brought to nothing, and I knew not.† This is for the instruction of the truly spiritual man, in the mystery of the gate and way of Christ, that he may become united with God, and also to teach him that the more he annihilates self for God, in sense and spirit, the more will he be united with God, and the greater the work he will accomplish. And when he shall have been brought to nothing, when his humility is perfect, then will take place the union of the soul and God, which is the highest and noblest estate attainable in this life. This consisteth not in spiritual refreshments, tastes, or sentiments, but in the living death of the cross, sensually and spiritually, outwardly and inwardly.

I will not proceed further with this subject, though I could pursue it indefinitely; for I see that Jesus Christ is but little known by those who consider themselves His friends.

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VII.

Mental sorrows of our Saviour.

Salvation and Perfection only in the Cross.

* S. Matth. xxvii. 46.

† Ps. lxxii. 22.

BOOK
II.

Jesus has few
lovers of His
Cross.

These, loving themselves very much, seek in Him their own comfort and satisfaction, and not His sufferings and death for love of Him. I am now speaking of those who think themselves His friends, not of those who live at a great distance from Him; men of learning and of dignity, and others who live in the world, slaves of ambition and of honours—of these, we may say, they know not Christ; and their end, however good, will be full of anguish. I am not speaking of these, but they will be remembered in the Day of Judgment, for 'to them it behoveth us first to speak the word of God,'* as to persons whom He has set up as guides to others, by reason of their learning and exalted rank.

But let me now address myself to the intellect of the spiritual man, and in an especial manner of him whom God in His goodness has raised up to the state of contemplation—for I address myself now particularly to him—and instruct him how he is to direct himself in the way of God by faith, and purify himself from all contrary things, girding up his loins that he may enter on this narrow path of obscure contemplation.

CHAPTER VIII.

No creature, no knowledge, comprehensible by the intellect, can subserve as proximate means of union with God.

BEFORE I discuss the proper and fitting means of union with God, which is faith, it is right that I should show how that no created, or imagined, thing can subserve the intellect as a proper means for its union with God; and how everything which the intellect embraces, if it does but cleave to it, becomes a hindrance instead of help. In this chapter I shall show this in general, and afterwards I shall do so in parti-

* Acts xiii. 46.

cular, going through all sorts of knowledge which the intellect may receive through the senses, both exterior and interior; and then the inconveniences and losses it may sustain through all such knowledge, because it does not proceed in reliance on the proper means, which is Faith.

It is a principle of philosophy that all means must be proportionate to the end, having a certain fitness, and resemblance to it, such as shall be sufficient for the object in view. For instance, a person wishes to reach a certain city: he must necessarily travel along the road, which is the means, leading to it. Likewise, if you wish to combine and unite together wood and fire, in that case, it is requisite that heat, that is the means, should so dispose the wood, and raise it to such a degree of heat that it shall have a great resemblance and proportion to fire. If you attempt this by any other than the proper means, which is heat, as, for instance, by air, water, or earth, it will be impossible to unite wood with fire. So, therefore, if the intellect is to be united with God, so far as that is possible in this life, it must, of necessity, make use of those means which can effect that union, and which are most like unto God.

But remember, among all creatures, the highest and the lowest, there is not one that comes near unto God, or that bears any likeness to His Substance. For, though it be true, as theologians tell us, that all creatures bear a certain relation to God, and are tokens of His Being, some more, some less, according to the greater or less perfection of their nature, yet there is no essential likeness or communion between them and Him; yea, rather the distance between His Divine Nature and their nature is infinite. Hence, then, it is impossible for the intellect to attain perfectly unto God, by means of created things, whether of heaven or of earth, because there is no proportion of similitude between them. Thus David, speaking of the heavenly host, cries out:

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VIII.

Proportion-
ate means
necessary to
gain an end.

What means
proportion-
ate to God?

Answer.
1. Not crea-
tures.

'There is none among the gods like unto Thee, O Lord.'* The 'gods' are the holy Angels and the souls of the Saints. And again, 'Thy way, O God, is in the holy place; who is the great God like our God?' † That is, the way to Thee, O God, is a holy way, namely, pureness of faith. 'Who is the great God like our God?' Who is the Saint so high in glory, or the Angel so exalted by nature, that can be a way proportionate and sufficient for us to attain unto God? The same Prophet speaking of the things of heaven and earth together, saith, 'The Lord is high and looketh on the low, and the high he knoweth afar off.' ‡ That is, God high in His own Being, seeth that the things of the earth are in themselves most vile and low, in comparison with Himself; and 'the high,' the heavenly host, He knoweth to be far distant from Him. No creature, therefore, can be a proportionate means of perfect union with God.

2. Not intellectual perception,

(1.) Natural;

So also nothing that the imagination may conceive or the intellect comprehend, in this life, is, or can be a proximate means of union with God. For if we speak of natural knowledge; the intellect is incapable of comprehending anything unless it be presented to it under forms and images by the bodily senses; and these forms of things, as I have already said, cannot serve as means, and no natural acts of the intellect can in any way contribute thereto.

(2.) Or supernatural.

Again, if we speak of supernatural acts—as far as possible in this life—the intellect in its bodily prison has neither the disposition nor the capacity requisite for the reception of the clear knowledge of God. This knowledge is not of this life, for we must either die, or remain without it. Thus God said to Moses, 'Man shall not see me and live.' § And S. John saith the same, 'No man hath seen God at any time.' || S. Paul, too, repeats the words of Isaias, 'Eye hath not seen,

* Ps. lxxxv. 8.

† Ibid. lxxvi. 14.

‡ Ibid. cxxxvii. 6.

§ Exod. xxxiii. 20.

|| S. John i. 18.

nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man.* This is the reason why Moses at the bush 'durst not behold,' † God being there present. He knew that his intellect could not proportionately contemplate God, though this sprung from the deep sense he had of God. Elias, our father, covered his face on the mountain, in the presence of God. ‡ By that action he taught us that he made his intellect blind, not venturing to apply an instrument so vile to a matter so high; and that he perceived clearly, that however much he saw or understood, all would be most unlike unto God, and far distant from Him.

No knowledge, therefore, and no understanding in this mortal life can serve as proximate means of this high union of the love of God. All that the intellect may comprehend; all that the will may be satisfied with; and all that the imagination may conceive, is most unlike unto God, and most disproportionate to Him. This truth is admirably expressed by the Prophet: 'To whom then have you likened God? or what image will you make for Him? Hath the workman cast a graven statue? or hath the goldsmith formed it with gold, or the silversmith with plates of silver?' § The workman is the intellect, which fashions our knowledge, and cleanses it from the iron of sensitive impressions and fancy. The goldsmith is the will, which is capable of receiving the forms and figures of pleasure caused by the gold of love where-with it loves. The silversmith which cannot represent God with plates of silver, is the memory with the imagination, the notions and conceptions of which are well described as plates of silver. The Prophet then says, in other words: The intellect, by speculation, cannot comprehend anything which is like unto God; no delight or satisfaction of the will can resemble that which is God; nor can the memory furnish

Quis sicut
Deus?

* 1 Cor. ii. 9; Is. lxiv. 4.

† Acts vii. 32; Ex. iii. 6.

‡ 3 Kings xix. 13.

§ Is. xl. 18, 19.

BOOK
II.

the imagination with any notions or images to represent Him. It is evident, then, from this that the intellect cannot be immediately directed in the way of God by any knowledge such as this, and that, if it is to draw near unto God, it must do so by not understanding rather than by seeking to understand; yea, rather it must be by making itself blind, covering itself with darkness, and not by opening its eyes, that it can attain to the Divine enlightening. Hence it is that Contemplation, by which God enlightens the intellect, is called Mystical Theology, that is, the secret Wisdom of God, because it is a secret even to the intellect which receives it. S. Dionysius calls it a ray of darkness. And the prophet Baruch thus speaks of it: 'The way of wisdom they have not known, neither have they remembered her paths.*' It is therefore clear that the intellect must be blind, as to every path along which it has to travel, in order to be united with God.

Aristotle.

Aristotle says, that as the eyes of the bat are with regard to the sun, which wholly blinds them, so is our intellect with regard to the greater Light of God which is to us perfect darkness. He further says, that the more profound and the clearer the things of God are in themselves, the less intelligible and the more obscure they are to us. The Apostle says the same thing, when he teaches us that the deep things of God are not known unto men. I should never end were I to bring forward here all the authorities and reasons which show that, among all created things of which the intellect takes cognisance, there is nothing which can serve as a ladder whereby it may ascend unto God, who is so high. Yea, rather we must acknowledge that all and each of these things, if the intellect will use them as proximate means of union, will prove not only a hindrance,

* Baruch iii. 23.

but the source of many errors and delusions, in the ascent of this mountain.

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VIII.

CHAPTER IX.

Faith is the proximate and proportionate means of the intellect by which the soul may attain to the Divine union of love. Proofs from the Holy Scriptures.

It appears then from what I have written that the intellect, if rightly disposed for the Divine union, must be pure, and empty of all sensible objects, disengaged from all clear intellectual perceptions, interiorly tranquil and at rest, reposing on Faith; for faith is the sole proximate and proportionate means of the soul's union with God, seeing that there is no other alternative, but that God is either seen, or believed in. For as God is infinite, so faith proposes Him as infinite; and as He is Three and One, so faith proposes Him to us as Three and One. And thus by this means alone, that is faith, God manifests Himself to the soul in the Divine light, which surpasses all understanding, and therefore the greater the faith of the soul the more is that soul united to God. This is the meaning of S. Paul when he said, 'He that cometh to God must believe that He is.*' Such an one must walk by faith, with his understanding in darkness, and in the obscurity of faith only; for in this darkness God unites Himself to the intellect, being Himself hidden beneath it, as it is written: 'Darkness was under His feet, and He ascended upon the cherubim, and He flew upon the wings of the winds. And He made darkness His covert, His pavilion round about Him, dark waters in the clouds of the air.†' The darkness 'under His feet,' serving for 'His covert' and 'His pavilion,' and 'the dark waters,' signify the obscurity of faith, which

* Hebr. xi. 6.

† Ps. xvii. 10—12.

BOOK
II.

conceals Him. His 'ascending on the cherubim,' and His flying 'on the wings of the winds,' signify that He transcends all understanding. The 'cherubim' mean those who understand or contemplate; the 'wings of the winds' are the sublime and lofty notions or conceptions of the mind, above which His Divine Being is, and which no man can ever comprehend.

In this life the intellect can know God only in the obscurity of Faith. Illustrated by the history of Solomon, Moses,

Job,

This truth is shadowed forth in the Holy Scriptures, where we read that, when Solomon had finished the Temple, God came down in a cloud, which filled it, so that the people could not see. 'Then Solomon said: The Lord said that He would dwell in a cloud.* Moses also, on the mount, saw a cloud wherein God was hidden.† And at all times, when God communicated with men, He appeared through a cloud. We read in the Book of Job, that God spoke out of the darkened air: 'The Lord answered Job out of a whirlwind.‡ These clouds signify the obscurity of faith, in which God is hidden when He communicates Himself to the soul. This will be removed at that time to which S. Paul referred when he said, 'When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away;§ when 'that which is in part,' the obscurity of faith, shall be done away, and when 'that which is perfect,' the Divine light, shall come.

Gideon.

This is prefigured in the army of Gideon: the soldiers had lamps in their hands, which they saw not, because they were 'within the pitchers.' But when they had broken the pitchers the lamps gave light. Gideon 'gave them trumpets in their hands, and empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.¶ So faith, of which these pitchers were a figure, contains the Divine light, that is, the Truth which God is; and at the end of this mortal life, when the work of faith is

* 3 Kings viii. 10—12. † Exod. xix. 9. ‡ Job xxxviii. 1; xl. 1.
§ 1 Cor. xiii. 10. ¶ Judg. vii. 16.

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IX.

over, and the pitchers are broken, the Light and Glory of God will then shine forth.

It is therefore plain that the soul, which would in this life be united with God and commune immediately with Him, must unite itself to Him in the cloud where, according to Solomon, He has promised to dwell; and in the obscure air, wherein He was pleased to reveal His secrets to Job; and take up the pitchers of Gideon, that it may hold in its hands, in the acts of the will, that light which is the union of love—though in the obscurity of faith—so that, as soon as the pitcher of life be broken, it may see God face to face in glory.

It remains for me now to describe particularly those notions and apprehensions which the intellect admits; the hindrance and the injury they may inflict upon us in the way of faith; and how the soul must be disposed with respect to them, so that they may be profitable rather than hurtful, both those which proceed from the sense as well as those which proceed from the spirit.

CHAPTER X.

The divisions of the apprehensions and acts of the intellect.

In order to describe specially the profit and the loss, which the notions and apprehensions of the intellect occasion in the soul with respect to Faith, the means of this Divine union, it is necessary to distinguish here between all these apprehensions, natural and supernatural, so that the intellect may be directed with greater accuracy into the night and obscurity of faith. This I shall do with the utmost brevity possible.

There are two ways by which these notions and intelligent

Two kinds of knowledge;
I. Natural:
1. Senses.
2. Reflection.
II. Supernatural.

BOOK
II.Supernatural
knowledge
divided into,1. Corporeal.
2. Spiritual.
Corporeal
into
(1) Sensa-
tions.
(2.) Mental
images.Spiritual into
(1) Distinct.
a. Visions.
β. Revela-
tions.
γ. Interior
voices.
δ. Impres-
sions.(2) Obscure ;
i. e. The Con-
templation of
Faith.

acts enter into the understanding: one is natural, the other supernatural. The first includes all the means by which the intellect receives knowledge, whether through the channel of the bodily senses, or by reflection. The second comprises all that is beyond the natural powers and capacity of the intellect. Some supernatural knowledge is corporeal, and some spiritual. The former is of two kinds: one of them enters the intellect through the exterior bodily senses; and the other through the interior bodily senses, comprehending all that the imagination may grasp, form, and conceive. The spiritual supernatural knowledge is also of two kinds; one distinct and special; the other confused, obscure, and general. The first kind comprises four particular apprehensions, communicated to the mind without the intervention of any one of the bodily senses. These are visions, revelations, interior voices, and spiritual impressions. The second kind, which is obscure and general, has but one form, that of contemplation, which is the work of faith. The soul is to be led into this by directing it thereto through all the rest. I shall begin my instructions with the first of these, showing how the soul is to be detached from them.

CHAPTER XI.

Of the hurt and hindrance resulting from intellectual apprehensions supernaturally produced through the instrumentality of the exterior senses. How the soul is to be guided under such circumstances.

First source
of superna-
tural corpo-
real know-
ledge,—sensi-
tive percep-
tion.

THE first notions, mentioned in the foregoing chapter, are those which relate to the intellect in the order of nature. I shall not speak of them now, because I have discussed them in the first book, while showing how the soul is to be led into the night of sense, where I have given fitting directions concerning them. And therefore the subject of the present

chapter will be those notions and apprehensions which relate to the intellect solely in the supernatural order, in the way of the outward bodily senses of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching. With respect to these, spiritual men are occasionally liable to representations and objects, set before them in a supernatural way. They sometimes see the forms and figures of those of another life, Saints, or Angels good and evil, or certain extraordinary lights and brightness. They hear strange words, sometimes seeing those who utter them, and sometimes not. They have a sensible perception at times of most sweet odours, without knowing whence they proceed. Their sense of taste is also deliciously affected; and that of the touch so sweetly caressed at times that the bones and the marrow exult and rejoice, bathed, as it were, in joy. This delight is like to that which we call the Union of the Spirit, flowing from Him through all the senses of simple souls. And this sensible sweetness is wont to affect spiritual persons, because of that sensible devotion, more or less, which they feel, every one in his own measure.

Still, though the bodily senses may be thus affected in the way of God, we must never rely on these emotions, nor encourage them; yea, rather we must fly from them, without examining whether they be good or evil. For, inasmuch as they are exterior and in the body, there is the less certainty of their being from God. It is more natural that God should communicate Himself through the spirit—wherein there is greater security and profit for the soul—than through the senses, wherein there is usually much danger and delusion, because the bodily sense decides upon, and judges, spiritual things, thinking them to be what itself feels them to be, when in reality they are as different as body and soul, sensuality and reason. The bodily sense is as ignorant of spiritual things, as a beast of the field is of the

CHAP.
XI.Supernatural
phenomena
of,

Sight.

Hearing.

Smell.

Taste, and
touch.Reasons for
repelling
them.1. Less like-
lihood of
their being
from God.

BOOK
II.2. Danger of
self-decep-
tion.3. Probabil-
ity of their
being from
the devil.4. Loss of
Faith as a
guide.5. Subtlety of
Pride.

things of reason. He who makes much of these emotions mistakes his way, and exposes himself to the great danger of delusions; and, at least, places a great obstacle on his road to true spirituality. For all these bodily sensations bear no proportion to spiritual things.

There is always ground for fear that these proceed from the devil rather than from God; for the devil has more influence in that which is exterior and corporeal, and can more easily deceive us therein than in what is more interior. And these bodily forms and objects, the more exterior they are, the less do they profit the interior spiritual man, by reason of the great distance and disproportion subsisting between the corporeal and the spiritual. For, although these things communicate some spirituality, as is always the case when they proceed from God, yet it is much less than it would have been, had they been more spiritual and interior; and thus they become more easily and readily occasions of error, presumption, and vanity. As they are so palpable and so material they excite the senses greatly, and the soul is led to consider them the more important, the more they are felt. It runs after them and abandons the secure guidance of Faith, thinking that the light they give is a guide and means to that which it desires, union with God. Thus the soul, the more it makes of such things, the more it strays from the perfect way and means, that is, Faith. Besides, when the soul perceives itself subject to these extraordinary visitations, self-esteem very frequently enters in, and it thinks itself to be something in the eyes of God, which is contrary to humility. The devil also knows too well how to insinuate into the soul a secret, and sometimes an open, self-satisfaction. For this end he frequently presents to the eyes the forms of Saints, and most beautiful lights; he causes voices well dissembled to strike the ear, and delicious odours the smell; he produces sweetness in the mouth, and thrills of pleasure in the sense of touch;

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XI.

and all to make us long for such things that he may lead us astray into many evils.

For this reason, then, we must always reject and disregard these representations and sensations. For even if some of them were from God, no wrong is offered to Him, because the effect and fruit, which He desires to bring forth in the soul, is not the less accomplished when that soul rejects them and seeks them not. The reason is this: all corporeal visions or emotions of the senses — the same is true of all other interior communications — if from God, effect their chief object at the moment of their presence, before the soul has time to deliberate whether it shall entertain or reject them. For as God begins them in a supernatural way without effort on the part of the soul, and without respect to any capacity for them; so the effect, which He desires to produce by means of them, is wrought without reference to any effort or capacity of the soul; for it is perfected and brought to pass in the spirit passively without its free consent, and therefore does not depend on the will in any way. It is as if a person quite naked came into contact with fire: it matters not whether he wills to be burned or not, the fire necessarily performs its own proper functions.

This is the case with good visions and apparitions: even if the soul wills it not, they produce their effects, chiefly and specially in the soul rather than in the body. So also the visions, which are the work of the devil — without the consent of the soul — bring forth trouble or dryness of spirit, vanity, or presumption, although they are not so effectual for evil, as the visions of God are for good. Diabolic visions do not proceed beyond the primary motions, neither can they influence the will, provided it seeks them not; and the disquiet which they occasion does not last long, unless the soul be negligent and irresolute when they occur. But the visions of God penetrate into the inmost parts of the soul,

No wrong
thereby done
to God; or to
the soul.

BOOK
II.

Without detachment even from Divine favours, the soul weakens its Faith;

Prefers the gifts to the Giver;

Becomes selfish;

Loses their fruit;

And the gifts themselves;

and produce their effects, a quickened zeal and overpowering joy, which enable and dispose it to assent freely and lovingly to good. Still, even when these outward visions and impressions come from God, if the soul cleaves to them and accepts them readily, six inconveniences follow.

1. The perfect guidance of faith is lessened; because the experience of sense derogates from faith; for faith, as I have said, surpasseth all sense, and thus the soul, by not closing its eyes against every object of sense, turns away from the means of union with God.

2. They are hindrances in the way of the spirit, if they are not rejected; for the soul rests upon them, and does not regard the invisible. This, too, was one of those causes, of which our Lord spoke to His disciples, that it was expedient for them that He should go away that the Spirit might come. Neither did He permit Mary Magdalene to kiss His feet, after His resurrection, that she, as well as the disciples in the former case, might be the more grounded in faith.

3. The soul clings selfishly to them, and does not advance to true resignation and detachment of spirit.

4. The soul loses the good effect of them and the interior spirit they produce, because it has regard to the sensible part of them, which is the least important. Thus the spirit, which is the proper fruit, is not so abundantly received; because it is most deeply impressed in the soul when we deny ourselves in all things of sense, as they are most at variance with the pure spirit.

5. The soul loses the gifts of God, because it assumes them for its own, and does not profit rightly by them. To assume them for our own and not to profit by them, is to seek them and to occupy ourselves with them. God does not send them for this end; neither should we easily believe that they come from God.

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And is easily deceived by the devil.

6. The ready admission of them opens the door to the devil, that he may deceive us by others like them; he knows well how to dissemble and disguise his own visions so that they shall seem to be good; for Satan transformeth himself 'into an angel of light.'* I shall treat this question hereafter, by the grace of God, when I come to describe spiritual gluttony in the first book of the *Obscure Night*.

It is therefore expedient that the soul should close its eyes and reject them, come they whence they may. For unless we do so we shall make way for those of the devil, and give him so much power over us, that not only will the evil visions come in the place of those which are Divine, but, when the latter cease, they will also become so numerous, that the devil will have every influence over us, and God none, as it has happened to many incautious and ignorant souls. They so relied on their visions, that many of them had great difficulty in returning to God in pureness of faith, and many never returned at all; so widely and so deeply had the roots of the devil grown within them. For this reason it is good to shut our eyes against these visions and to fear them all. By withdrawing from the evil visions we escape the delusions of the devil; and by withdrawing from those which are good we put no obstacles in the way of faith, and the spirit still derives fruit from them.

When the soul gives admission readily to these visions God withholds them, because it cleaves to them and does not duly profit by them; the devil also insinuates himself and multiplies his own visions, because the soul makes room for them. But when the soul is resigned and not attached to such visions the devil retires, seeing that he cannot injure us then; and, on the other hand, God multiplies His graces in the humble and detached soul, placing it over many

* 2 Cor. xi. 14.

BOOK
II.

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* 2 Cor. xi. 14.

things, like the good and faithful servant to whom it is said, 'Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things.'* The soul that is faithful amid these visitations God will not leave, till He shall raise it up, step by step, to the Divine union and transformation. This is the way our Lord tests and elevates the soul: He visits it first in the senses according to its capacity; so that, having conducted itself then as it ought to do, receiving in all temperance these first morsels for its own strength and nourishment, He may admit it to the better and more abundant feast. If the soul shall overcome the devil in the first combat it shall then pass on to the second; and if it shall be victorious there also, it shall then pass on to the third; and then through the seven mansions, the seven degrees of love, until the Bridegroom shall bring it to 'the cellar of wine'† of perfect Charity.

The spiritual
combat.

Blessed is that soul which knoweth how to fight against the beast with seven heads,‡ which he opposes to the seven degrees of love. The beast fighteth against each of these degrees with his seven heads; and with each one of them against the soul in all the seven mansions, wherein the soul is tried and gains each degree of the love of God. And, beyond all doubt, if the soul shall faithfully fight against every one of these heads and obtain the victory, it will deserve to pass on from one degree to another, or from one mansion to the next, until it shall have reached the highest, having destroyed the seven heads by which the beast waged so furious a war against it. So fearful is this war that the Apostle says, 'It was given unto him to make war with the Saints and to overcome them,'§ arraying his weapons and munitions of war over against each of these degrees of love.

* S. Matth. xxv. 21.

† Apoc. xiii. 1.

‡ Cant. ii. 4.

§ Ibid. 7.

Many, alas, there are who enter the battle of the spiritual life against the beast, who do not cut off even the first head, by self-denial in the sensible objects of this world. Others, more successful, cut off the first, but not the second—the visions of sense—of which I am speaking. But what is more painful still is, that some who, having cut off not only the first and second, but the third head also, which relates to the interior senses and the passage from the state of meditation into a higher one, are overcome by the beast, when they should enter into the purity of the spirit. Then it is that he returns to the assault with his heads restored to life, and renders 'their latter state worse than the first,' for he bringeth with him 'seven other spirits more wicked than himself.* The spiritual man must therefore reject all these apprehensions, together with the corporeal satisfactions to which the exterior senses are liable, if he will destroy the first and second head of this beast, by entering into the first and second mansion of love by a living faith, not laying hold of, nor being embarrassed by, the impressions of the exterior senses; for these present the greatest impediment to the spiritual night of Faith.

It is now clear that these visions and apprehensions of sense cannot be the means of the Divine union, for they bear no proportion to God. And this is one of the reasons why Christ would not suffer Mary Magdalene to touch Him, and yet allowed it, as the better and more perfect course, in S. Thomas. The devil greatly rejoices when a soul seeks after revelations and is ready to accept them; for such conduct furnishes him with many opportunities of insinuating delusions, and derogating from faith as much as he possibly can; for such a soul becomes rough and rude, and falls frequently into many temptations and unseemly habits.

* S. Luke xi. 26.

BOOK
II.

Conclusion.

I have dwelt at some length on these exterior communications in order to throw greater light on the others, which I have soon to discuss. But I have so much to say on this matter that it appears impossible to have done with it. I might sum up what I have said in this single sentence; that these visions should never be admitted, unless in certain rare instances, after examination by a learned, spiritual, and experienced director, and even then there must be no desire for them.

CHAPTER XII.

Of natural and imaginary apprehensions. Their nature. They cannot be proportionate means of union. The evil results of not knowing how to detach oneself from them in time.

Second source
of natural
knowledge.—
Reflection on
mental
images.

BEFORE discussing the imaginary visions which are wont to be represented supernaturally to the interior sense, the imagination and the fancy, it is expedient that I should now—to proceed orderly—speak of the natural apprehensions incident to the same interior bodily sense. I adopt this course that we may advance from the less to the greater—from that which is more outward to that which is more inward—to that most interior recollection wherein the soul is united unto God. This too is the course I have hitherto observed. In the first place, I treated of the detachment of the soul from the natural apprehensions of exterior objects, and, consequently, from the natural powers of the desires. This I did in the first book, while speaking of the night of sense. I then treated in detail of detachment from exterior supernatural apprehensions, to which the exterior senses are liable—as in the preceding chapter—so that I may guide the steps of the soul into the night of the spirit in this second book.

Now the first subject of discussion is the interior bodily

CHAP.
XII.

sense, the imagination and fancy, out of which we must cast all imaginary forms and apprehensions naturally incident thereto, and show how impossible it is for the soul to attain to union with God until their operations shall have ceased, because they can never be the proper and proximate means of union.

The senses of which I am now speaking particularly are two, bodily and interior, called imagination and fancy, which in their order subserve each other. In the one there is something of reasoning, though imperfect and in an imperfect way; the other, the imagination, forms the image. For our purpose the discussion of either is equivalent to that of the other, and therefore when I do not mention them both let it be understood that what is said of the one is applicable to the other also, and that I am speaking indifferently of both, without distinguishing between them.

All, therefore, that the senses perceive and fashion are called imaginations and fancies—that is, forms represented to the senses in bodily shape and likeness. These may take place in two ways—supernaturally when, without the action of the senses, they may and do become present passively before them. These are imaginary visions wrought supernaturally, of which I shall speak hereafter. The other way is natural, when the senses actively effect them by their own operation, through forms, figures, and images. These two powers serve for meditation, which is a discursive act by means of imagery, forms, and figures, wrought and fashioned in the senses. We picture to ourselves Christ on the cross, or bound to the pillar, or God sitting on His Throne in great majesty. So also we imagine glory as a most beautiful light, and represent before ourselves any other object, human or Divine, of which the faculty of imagination is capable.

All these imaginations and apprehensions are to be emptied out of the soul, which must remain in darkness so far as it

VOL. I.

H

Imagination
not a proximate, but a
remote means of
union with
God.

Its two
sources:
1. Natural.
2. Super-
natural.

Meditation,
—what.

BOOK
II.

concerns the senses, in order that we may attain to the Divine union, because they bear no proportion to the proximate means of union with God; as neither do corporeal things, the objects of the five exterior senses.

Imagination
can only
recombine
sensitive
perceptions.

The reason is, that nothing enters the imagination but through the exterior senses. The eye must have seen, or the ear must have heard, or the other senses must first have become cognisant of all that is in it. Or at the utmost, we can only form pictures of what we have seen, heard, or felt; and these forms are not more excellent than what the imagination has received through the senses. Though we picture in our imagination palaces of pearls and mountains of gold, because we have seen gold and pearls, yet after all this is nothing more than one piece of gold or a single pearl, even though the imagination ranges them in a certain order. And as all created things cannot have any proportion with the Being of God, it follows that all the conceptions of the imagination, which must resemble them, cannot serve as proximate means of union with Him. Those persons, therefore, who represent God to their minds under any sort of figure, or as a great fire or light, or anything else, thinking Him to be like them, are very far from drawing near unto Him. For though such considerations, forms, and methods of meditation may be necessary for beginners, in order to inflame and fill their souls with love, through the instrumentality of sense, as I shall explain hereafter—and though they may serve as remote means of union, through which souls must usually pass to the goal and resting-place of spiritual repose—still they must so make use of them as to pass beyond them, and not dwell upon them for ever.

No image or
picture of
God.

If we dwell upon them we shall never reach the goal, which is not like the remote means, neither has it any proximate relation with them. The steps of a ladder have no proximate relation with the goal and place to which we ascend by it,

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XII.

towards which they are but means; so if he who climbs does not leave behind all the steps so that none remain, or if he rests upon one of them, he will never ascend to the summit, to the peaceful resting of the goal. The soul, therefore, that will ascend in this life to the Supreme Good and Rest must pass beyond all these steps of considerations, forms, and notions, because they bear no likeness or proportion to the end, which is God, towards which it tends. 'We must not suppose,' saith the Apostle, 'the Divinity to be like unto gold, or silver, or stone, the graving of art and device of man.'*

Great, therefore, is the mistake of those spiritual persons who, having laboured to draw near unto God by means of imagery, forms, and meditations, such as become beginners—while God would attract them to more spiritual, interior, and unseen good, by depriving them of the sweetness of discursive meditation—do not accept the guidance, neither venture nor know how to detach themselves from these palpable methods to which they have been accustomed. They retain these methods still, seeking to advance by them and by meditation upon exterior forms, as before, thinking that it must be so always. They take great pains in the matter, but find very little sweetness or none—yea, rather dryness, weariness, and disquiet of soul increase and grow the more they search after the sweetness they had before—it being now impossible for them to have it as they had it at first. The soul has no more pleasure in its first food, which was of the senses, but requires another of greater delicacy, interior, and less cognisable by the senses, consisting, not in the travail of the imagination, but in the repose of the soul, and in that quietness thereof, which is more spiritual. The more the soul advances in spirituality, the more it ceases from the operations of its faculties on particular objects; for it then gives itself up to

Imagination
useful for
beginners.

* Acts xvii. 29.

one sole, pure, and general act; and so its powers cease from the practice of that method by which they once travelled towards the point to which the soul was tending; as the feet cease from movement and are at rest when the journey is over; for if all were movement, there would be no goal to reach, and if all things are means, where or when shall we enjoy the end?

Peace found
only in fol-
lowing the
guidance of
the Holy
Spirit.

How sad it is to see men who, when the soul would be at peace in the repose of interior quiet, where God fills it with refreshment and peace, disturb it, draw it away to outward things, compel it to travel again along the road it had passed, and to abandon the goal, where it reposes, for the sake of the means and considerations which guided it to its rest. This is not effected without loathing and repugnance on the part of the soul, which would repose in this tranquillity as in its proper place—as it happens to him who after toilsome labour has attained repose; for when he is made to return to his work he feels it painfully. And as they do not understand the secret of their new condition, they imagine themselves to be idle, doing nothing; and so do not suffer themselves to be at rest, but strive to reproduce their former reflections and discursive acts. They are therefore full of dryness and trouble, because they seek there for sweetness where there is no longer sweetness for them. To them the proverb applies, 'the more it freezes the more it binds;' the more obstinately they cling to this way the worse it becomes for them, because they lead their soul further away from spiritual peace. This is to abandon what is greatest for what is least, to travel backwards along the road they came, and do again what they have done before.

To these my counsel is—learn to abide with attention in loving waiting upon God in the state of quiet; give no heed to your imagination, nor to its operations, for now, as I have said, the powers of the soul are at rest, and are not exercised,

except in the sweet and pure waiting of love. If at times they are excited, it is not violently, nor with meditation elaborately prepared, but by the sweetness of love, more under the influence of God than by the ability of the soul, as I shall hereafter clearly explain.

Let this, for the present, suffice to show how necessary it is for those who would make progress, to abandon these methods and ways of the imagination at the proper time, when their growth, in that state wherein they are, requires it. And that we may know when this time is come, I shall describe certain signs which the spiritual man is to observe, that he may thereby recognise the time when he may freely avail himself of the goal already mentioned, and leave behind him all intellectual reflections and all the acts of the imagination.

CHAPTER XIII.

The signs to be observed by the spiritual man that he may know when to withdraw the intellect from imaginary forms and discursive meditations.

To avoid confusion in my teaching, I find it necessary in this chapter to explain when the spiritual man should abstain from the meditation which rests on imaginary forms and mental representations, in order that he may not abstain from it sooner or later than the Spirit calls him. For as it is necessary to abstain from it at the proper time, in order to draw near unto God, that we may not be hindered by it; so also must we not cease from it before the time, lest we go backwards: for though all that the powers of the soul may apprehend cannot be proximate means of union for those who have made some spiritual progress, still they serve, as remote means, to dispose and habituate the minds of beginners to that which is spiritual by means of the senses, and to clear the way of all other low forms and images,

When should
Meditation
give place to
Contempla-
tion?

BOOK
II.Answer.—
By observing
three signs.1. Dryness of
spirit.

temporal, worldly, and natural. With this view I will mention here certain signs and evidences, three in number, by observing which the spiritual man may know whether the time is come for him to cease from meditation or not.

1. When he finds that he cannot meditate nor exert his imagination, nor derive any satisfaction from it, as he was wont to do—when he finds dryness there, where he was accustomed to fix the senses and draw forth sweetness—then the time is come. But while he finds sweetness, and is able to meditate as usual, let him not cease therefrom, except when his soul is in peace, of which I shall speak when describing the third sign.

2. No play of
Imagination.

2. When he sees that he has no inclination to fix the imagination or the senses on particular objects, exterior or interior. I do not mean when the imagination neither comes nor goes—for it is disorderly even in the most complete self-recollection—but only when the soul derives no pleasure from tying it down deliberately to other matters.

3. Desire of
repose in
God.

3. The third sign is the most certain of the three, namely, when the soul delights to be alone, waiting lovingly on God, without any particular considerations, in interior peace, quiet, and repose, when the acts and exercises of the intellect, memory, and will, at least discursively—which is the going from one subject to another—have ceased; nothing remaining except that knowledge and attention, general and loving, of which I have spoken, without the particular perception of aught else.

Cautions.

The spiritual man must have observed these three signs together, at least, before he can venture with safety to abandon the state of meditation for that of the way of spiritual contemplation. It is not enough for him to observe the first without the second, for it may happen that he cannot meditate on the things of God, as before, because of distractions and the absence of due preparation. He must

CHAP.
XIII.

therefore have regard to the second sign, and see whether he has no inclination or desire to think of other things. For when this inability to fix the imagination and the senses on the things of God proceeds from distraction or lukewarmness, the soul readily inclines to other matters, and these lead it away from God.

Neither is it sufficient to have observed the first and second sign if we do not also discern the third. For though we cannot meditate or think on the things of God, and have no pleasure either in dwelling upon anything else; yet this may be the effect of melancholy or some other oppression of the brain or the heart, which is wont to produce a certain suspension of our faculties, so that we think upon nothing, nor desire to do so, nor have any inclination thereto, but rather remain in a kind of soothing astonishment. By way of defence against this, we must be sure of the third sign, which is a loving knowledge and attention in peace, as I have said. It is, however, true that in the commencement of this estate this loving knowledge is, as it were, imperceptible, because it is then wont to be, in the first place, most subtile and delicate, and as it were, unfelt; and because, in the second place, the soul, having been accustomed to meditation, which is more cognisable by sense, does not perceive, and, as it were, does not feel this new condition, not subject to sense, and which is purely spiritual.

This is the case especially when, through not understanding his condition, the spiritual man will not allow himself to rest therein, but will strive after that which is cognisable by sense. This striving, notwithstanding the abundance of loving interior peace, disturbs him in the consciousness and enjoyment of it. But the more the soul is disposed for this tranquillity, the more will it grow therein continually; and the more conscious it will be of this general loving knowledge of God, which is sweeter to it than all besides,

Physical
causes may
blunt our
faculties,and produce
a deceitful
softness.

because it brings with it peace and rest, sweetness and delight without trouble. To make this matter more clear, I shall explain in the following chapter why these signs are necessary for the direction of the soul.

CHAPTER XIV.

The fitness of these signs.

The necessity of observing them for spiritual progress.

Two reasons
for the first
sign.

As to the first sign, it is to be observed that there are two reasons, comprised as it were in one, why the spiritual man — if he is to enter on the life of the spirit, which is that of contemplation — must abandon the way of the imagination and sensible meditation, when he has no pleasure in it and is no longer able to make his wonted discourse. The first is, that all the spiritual good to be found, by way of meditation in the things of God, has been already in a manner bestowed upon him. This is shown by the fact that he cannot now make his former meditations and reflections, and that he has no pleasure or satisfaction therein as he had before, because he had not then attained to the spiritual life. And, in general, whenever the soul receives a fresh spiritual grace it receives it with pleasure, at least in spirit, in the means whereby it comes, and it profits by it; otherwise its profiting would be miraculous. This is in accordance with the philosophical saying, What is palatable nourishes; and also with the words of Job, 'Can an unsavoury thing be eaten that is not seasoned with salt?*' The reason, then, why meditation is no longer possible, is the little pleasure and profit which the mind now derives from it.

2. End at-
tained, the
means cease.

The second reason is this: the soul has now attained substantially and habitually to the spirit of meditation. For the end of meditation and reflection on the things of God

* Job vi. 6.

is to elicit the knowledge and the love of Him. Each time the soul elicits this, it is an act, and as acts often repeated produce habits, so, many acts of loving knowledge continuously elicited by the soul, beget the habit thereof in the course of time. God is wont at times to effect this without these acts of meditation — at least without many of them — leading souls at once into the state of contemplation. Thus, what the soul elicited before, at intervals, by dint of meditation, in particular acts of knowledge, is now by practice converted into the habit and substance of knowledge, loving, general, not distinct or particular, as before. And, therefore, such a soul betaking itself to prayer — like a man with water before him — drinks sweetly without effort, without the necessity of drawing it through the channel of previous reflections, forms, and figures. And the moment such a soul places itself in the presence of God, it elicits an act of knowledge, confused, loving, peaceful, and tranquil, wherein it drinks in wisdom, love, and sweetness.

This is the reason why the soul is troubled and disgusted when compelled, in this state, to make meditations and to labour after particular acts of knowledge. Its condition, then, is like that of an infant at the breast, withdrawn from it while it was sucking it, and bidden to procure its nourishment by efforts of its own; or of one who, having removed the rind, is tasting the fruit it contained, and is bidden to cease therefrom and to peel away the rind already removed, and then finds no rind and loses the fruit he had in his hand — like one who loses a prize already in his power. This is the case with many who have begun to enter upon this state. They think that the whole matter consists in discursive meditations, in the understanding of particulars by means of forms and images, which are the rind of the spiritual life. When they do not find these in that loving and substantial quiet, where the soul desires to dwell, and where nothing distinct reaches

Meditation
painful,—
why.

BOOK
II.

the intellect, they suppose themselves to be going astray, wasting their time, and so go in quest of the rind of images and discursive meditation, not now to be found, because long ago taken away. Thus they do not enjoy the substance, neither can they meditate; and so they vex themselves, thinking that they are going backwards, and that they are lost. This is certainly true, but not in the way they mean: they are lost to their own sense, to their first perceptions and understanding, which is nothing else but to gain the spiritual life which is given unto them; for the less they understand, the further do they enter into the night of the spirit, through which they have to pass in order to be united with God, in a way that surpasses all understanding.

Second sign.

There is but little for me to say of the second sign, because it is evident that the soul has necessarily no pleasure at that time in other imaginary representations, those of the world, seeing that it has none, for the reasons already given, in those which are most befitting it, as those of the things of God. Only, as I have said before, the imaginative faculty, in this state of recollection, is wont to come, and go, and vary, but without the consent of the soul and without giving it any pleasure; yea, rather, the soul is then afflicted thereby, because of the interruption of its peace and sweetness.

Involuntary
distract'ons
painful.

Third sign.

Nor do I think it necessary here to speak at all of the fitness and necessity of the third sign, whereby we may discern when we are to cease from meditation. That sign is a knowledge of, and attention to, God, general and loving. I have explained this in some degree while speaking of the first sign; and I have to treat of it again directly, when I speak of that general, confused knowledge, after discussing the particular apprehensions of the intellect. But I propose now to mention one reason only, which will make it clear why this attention, or general loving knowledge of God, is

necessary, when the spiritual man passes from the state of meditation to that of contemplation.

CHAP.
XIV.

That reason is this: if the soul were without this knowledge or sense of God's presence at that time, the result would be that it would have nothing, and do nothing; for having ceased from meditation, wherein the soul acts discursively, by means of its intellectual faculties — and contemplation not yet attained to, which is that general knowledge, wherein the spiritual powers of the soul, memory, intellect, and will, are exerted, and united in this knowledge, which is as it were effected and received in them — every act of the worship of God must of necessity be wanting; for the soul cannot act at all, nor receive impressions, nor persevere in the work it has before it, but by the action of its intellectual and spiritual faculties. It is through the intellectual faculties that the soul reflects, searches out, and effects the knowledge of things; and through the spiritual faculties that it rejoices in the knowledge thus attained without further labour, search, or reflection. The difference between these two conditions of the soul is like the difference between working, and the enjoyment of the fruit of our work; between receiving a gift, and profiting by it; between the toil of travelling, and the rest at our journey's end; between the preparation of our food, and the eating or enjoyment of it. If the soul be idle, not occupied, either with its intellectual faculties in meditation and reflection, or with its spiritual faculties in contemplation and pure knowledge, it is impossible to say that it is occupied at all. This knowledge is therefore necessary for the abandonment of the way of meditation and reflection.

Without
Meditation
or Contem-
plation, the
soul idle.Contempla-
tion,—what.

But it is to be remembered that this general knowledge, of which I am speaking, is at times so subtile and delicate — particularly when most pure, simple, perfect, spiritual, and interior — that the soul, though in the practice thereof, is not observant or conscious of it. This is the case when that

BOOK.
II.The soul in
pure Con-
templation,1. Uncon-
scious of
particular
thoughts.

knowledge is most pure, clear, and simple, which it is when it enters into a soul most pure and detached from all other acts of knowledge and special perceptions, to which the intellect or the sense may cling. Such a soul, because freed from all those things which were actually and habitually objects of the intellect or of the sense, is not aware of them, because the accustomed objects of sense have failed it. This is the reason why this knowledge, when most pure, perfect, and simple, is the less perceived by the intellect, and the more obscure. On the other hand, when this knowledge is less pure and simple the more clear and the more important it seems to the intellect; because it is mixed up with, clothed in, or involved in, certain intelligible forms, of which the intellect most easily takes cognisance, to its hurt.

Illustrated
by the
analogy of
light.

The following comparison will make this more intelligible. When the rays of the sun penetrate through a crevice into a dark room, the atmosphere of which is full of atoms and particles of dust, they are then more palpable, and more visible to the eye; and yet those rays are then less pure, simple, and perfect, because mixed up with so much impurity: also, when they are most pure and most free from dust, the less are they cognisable by the material eye; and the more pure they are the less are they seen and apprehended. If, again, these rays were altogether pure, clear of every atom, and of the minutest particle of dust, they would be utterly invisible, by reason of the absence of all objects whereon the eye could rest; for pure and simple light is not properly the object of vision, but the means whereby we discern visible things; and so, if there be no visible objects present to reflect the light, nothing can be seen. Hence, then, a ray of light entering in by one crevice and going out by another, unaffected by any material object, cannot be seen; and yet that ray is more pure and clear than when it is most distinctly seen through being mixed up with visible objects.

CHAP.
XIV.

Such are the conditions of the spiritual light with regard to the eye of the soul, which is the intellect, against which this knowledge and supernatural light strikes so purely and so plainly. So clear is it of all intelligible forms, which are the adequate objects of the intellect, that the intellect is not conscious of its presence. Sometimes, indeed—when it is most pure—it creates darkness, because it withdraws the intellect from its accustomed lights, forms, and fantasies, and then the darkness becomes palpable and visible.

At other times, also, the Divine Light strikes the soul with such force that the darkness is unfelt and the light unheeded; the soul seems unconscious of all it knows, and is therefore lost, as it were, in forgetfulness, knowing not where it is, nor what has happened to it, unaware of the lapse of time. It may and does occur that many hours pass while it is in this state of forgetfulness; all seem but a moment when it again returns to itself. The cause of this forgetfulness is the pureness and simplicity of this knowledge. This knowledge, being itself pure and clear, cleanses the soul while it fills it, and purifies it of all the apprehensions and forms of sense and memory through which the soul once acted, and thus brings it to a state of forgetfulness, and unconsciousness of the flight of time. This prayer of the soul, though in reality long, seems to last but for a moment, because it is an act of pure intelligence; for it is that prayer which is said to 'pierce the clouds,'* time being unheeded while it lasts: it pierces the clouds because the soul is then in union with the heavenly Intelligence. This knowledge leaves behind it in the soul, when awake, all the effects it then wrought, without any consciousness on the part of the soul that they were wrought. These effects are the lifting up of the soul to the heavenly Intelligence, the withdrawal and estrangement of it from all things, and from the forms and figures of them.

2. Uncon-
scious of
time, and
place.

* Eccles. xxxv. 21.

BOOK
II.

Three illustrations from Holy Scripture.

Thus it befell David, who, when he returned to himself, said, 'I have watched, and am become as a sparrow, all alone on the housetop.*' 'Alone' expresses his estrangement and detachment from all things; and the 'housetop' the lifting up of the soul on high. The soul is now, as it were, ignorant of all things, because it knows God only, without knowing how. The Bride also speaks of this ignorance as one of the effects of this sleep or forgetfulness, saying, 'I knew not:† that is, I knew not how. Though he to whose soul is given this knowledge seems to be doing nothing and to be wholly unoccupied, because the imagination has ceased to act, he still believes that the time has not been lost or uselessly spent: for though the harmonious correspondence of the powers of the soul has ceased, the understanding thereof abides as I say. The Bride in her wisdom answers herself this question, when she says, 'I sleep, and my heart watcheth:‡ though I sleep in my natural state, and cease from all exertion, my heart watcheth supernaturally, lifted up in supernatural knowledge. A sign by which we may discern whether the soul is occupied in this secret intelligence is, that it has no pleasure in the thought of anything high or low.

God may suspend the faculties of the soul.

Still we are not to suppose that this knowledge necessarily induces this forgetfulness; the reality of it does not depend on this. This forgetfulness occurs when God in a special way suspends the faculties of the soul. This does not often occur, for this knowledge does not always fill the whole soul. It is sufficient for our purpose that the intellect should be abstracted from all particular knowledge, whether temporal or spiritual, and that the will should have no inclination to dwell upon either. This sign serves to show that the soul is in this state of forgetfulness, when this know-

* Ps. ci. 8.

† Cant. vi. 11.

‡ Cant. v. 2.

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XIV.

3. Yet not idle, because conscious of God by love.

ledge is furnished and communicated to the intellect only. But when it is communicated to the will also, which is almost always the case in a greater or less degree, the soul cannot but see, if it will reflect thereon, that it is occupied by this knowledge; because it is then conscious of the sweetness of love therein, without any particular knowledge or perception of what it loves. This is the reason why this knowledge is called loving and general; for as it communicates itself obscurely to the intellect, so also to the will, infusing therein love and sweetness confusedly, without the soul's knowing distinctly the object of its love. Let this suffice to show how necessary it is for the soul to be occupied by this knowledge, in order that it may leave the way of meditation, and to feel assured, notwithstanding the appearance of doing nothing, that it is well employed, if it observes the signs of which I am speaking. It appears, also, from the illustration drawn from the shining of the sun's rays, full of atoms, that the soul is not to imagine this light to be then most pure, subtle, and clear, when it presents itself to the intellect more palpably and more comprehensibly. For it is certain, according to Aristotle and theologians, that the more pure and sublime the Divine Light is, the more obscure it is to our understanding.

I have much to say of this Divine Knowledge, both as it is in itself, and in its effects upon contemplatives; but I reserve it for its proper place. The present discussion would not have been so long had it not been requisite that the subject should be left in somewhat less confusion than it is at present, which I must admit to be the case. Over and above the fact that this subject is rarely treated in this way, whether in writing or by word of mouth, because it is in itself strange and obscure, comes also my poor method and little knowledge. I am without confidence in my own capacity to explain it, and therefore grow prolix and wearisome,

exceeding the just limits required for the explanation of this division of the subject. I admit that I have done this occasionally on purpose; for a subject that cannot be explained by one view of it may be by another; and also because I consider that I have in this way thrown more light on what is to follow. For this reason, in order to conclude this part of the subject, I think I ought to solve one question concerning the duration of this knowledge, which I propose to do in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

Of the occasional necessity of meditating and exerting the natural faculties on the part of those who begin to enter on the contemplative state.

HERE it may be asked, whether proficient, those whom God has begun to lead into this supernatural knowledge of contemplation, are, in virtue of this commencement, never again to return to the way of meditation, reflections, and natural forms? To this I answer, that it is not to be supposed that those who have begun to have this pure and loving knowledge are never to meditate again or attempt it. For in the beginning of their advancement the habit of this is not so perfect as that they should be able at pleasure to perform the acts of it. Neither are they so far advanced beyond the state of meditation as to be unable to meditate and make their reflections as before, and to find therein something new. Yea, rather, at first, when we see, by the help of these signs, that our soul is not occupied in this quiet, or knowledge, it will be necessary to have recourse to reflections, until we attain to the habit of it in some degree of perfection. Such will be the case when, as often as we apply ourselves to meditation, the soul reposes in this peaceful knowledge,

Meditation,
—when to be
resumed.

without the power or the inclination to meditate; because, until we arrive at this, sometimes one, sometimes the other, occurs in this time of proficiency in such a way that very often the soul finds itself in this loving or peaceful attendance upon God, with all its faculties in repose; and very often also will find it necessary, for that end, to have recourse to meditation, calmly and with moderation. But when this state is attained to, meditation ceases, and the faculties labour no more; for then we may rather say, that intelligence and sweetness are wrought in the soul, and that it itself abstains from every effort, except only that it attends lovingly upon God, without any desire to feel or see anything further than to be in the hands of God, Who now communicates Himself to the soul, thus passive, as the light of the sun to him whose eyes are open. Only, we must take care, if we wish to receive in pureness and abundance this Divine light, that no other lights of knowledge, or forms, or figures of meditations, of a more palpable kind, intervene, for nothing of this kind bears any resemblance to that serene and clear light. And therefore, if at that time we seek to apprehend and reflect on particular objects, however spiritual they may be, we shall obstruct the pure and limpid light of the Spirit, by interposing these clouds before us, as a man who should place anything before his eyes impedes the vision of things beyond.

It appears, then, from all this that the soul, when it shall have purified and emptied itself from all these intelligible forms and images, will then dwell in this pure and simple light, transformed thereto in the state of perfection. This light is ever ready to be communicated to the soul, but does not flow in, because of the forms and veils of the creature which infold and embarrass the soul. Take away these hindrances and coverings, as I shall hereafter explain, and the soul in detachment and poverty of spirit will then, being pure and simple, be transformed in the pure and sincere

They who
leave all for
God, find all
in God.

BOOK
II.

Wisdom of God who is the Son. For then that which is natural having failed, that which is Divine flows supernaturally into the enamoured soul; since God leaves nothing empty that He does not fill.

When the spiritual man is unable to meditate, let him learn to remain in loving attention to God, in the quiet of his understanding, though he may seem to be doing nothing. For thus by little and little, and most rapidly, will the Divine tranquillity and peace from this marvellous and deep knowledge of God, involved in the Divine love, be infused into his soul. Let him not intermeddle with forms, imagery, meditations, or reflections of any kind, that he may not disquiet his soul, and drag it out of peace and contentment into that which can only end in bitterness. And if this inactivity should cause scruples to arise, let him remember that it is not a slight matter to possess his soul in peace and rest, without effort or desire. This is what our Lord requires at our hands, saying, 'Be still, and see that I am God.*' Learn to be interiorly empty of all things, and you will see with delight that I am God.

CHAPTER XVI.

Of imaginary apprehensions supernaturally represented to the fancy.
They cannot be proximate means of union with God.

Second
means of
supernatural
corporeal
knowledge.—
Imagination.

AND now having treated of those impressions which the soul receives in the order of nature, and which exercise the imagination and the fancy, it is necessary to discuss those which are supernatural, called imaginary visions, and which also, inasmuch as they are images, forms, and figures, appertain to this sense, like those which are in the order of nature. Under the designation of imaginary visions, I include every-

* Ps. xlv. 11.

thing which may be supernaturally represented to the imagination by images, forms, figures, or impressions, and these of the most perfect kind, which represent things, and influence us more vividly and more perfectly than it is possible in the natural order of the senses. For all these impressions and images which the five senses represent to the soul, and which establish themselves within in a natural way, may also have their place there in a way that is supernatural, represented therein without any intervention whatever on the part of the outward senses. The sense of fancy and memory is, as it were, a storehouse of the intellect, where all forms and objects of the intellect are treasured up; and thus the intellect considers them and forms judgments about them.

We must, therefore, remember that as the five outward senses propose and represent to the interior senses the images and pictures of their objects; so in a supernatural way, without the intervention of the outward senses, may be represented the same images and pictures, and that much more vividly and perfectly. And thus by means of images God frequently shows many things to the soul, and teaches it wisdom, as we see throughout the Holy Scriptures. He showed His glory in the cloud which covered the tabernacle;* and between the Seraphim which covered their faces and their feet with their wings.† To Jeremias He showed 'a rod watching;‡ and to Daniel a multitude of visions.

The devil, also, with visions of his own, seemingly good, labours to delude the soul. We have an instance of it in the history of the kings of Israel, where we read that he deceived the prophets of Achab, by representing to them the figure of horns, by which the king was to push Syria till he destroyed it.§ Yet all was a delusion. Such also was the vision of

CHAP.
XVI.Interior
visions,—
what.Presented to
the mind
without sen-
sation.May come
from the
devil.

* Exod. xl. 33.

† Jer. i. 11.

‡ Is. vi. 4.

§ 3 Kings xxii. 11, 12.

BOOK
II.

Pilate's wife concerning the condemnation of Christ, and many others.

In the case of those who have made some spiritual progress, visions of the imagination are of more frequent occurrence than bodily and exterior visions. There is no difference between them and those of the outward senses, considered as images and representations; but there is a great difference in the effect they produce, and in their perfectness: they are more pure, and make a deeper impression on the soul, inasmuch as they are supernatural and at the same time more interior than the exterior supernatural visions, still, notwithstanding, some bodily exterior visions produce a greater effect, for this depends on the will of God; but I am speaking of them as they are in themselves, as being more interior.

The sense of fancy and imagination is ordinarily that to which the devil applies himself with all his cunning, because it is the portal of the soul, and there too the intellect takes up, or leaves, its wares as in a repository. For this reason, therefore, God and the devil too come hither with images and forms to be presented to the intellect; though God does not make use only of this means to instruct the soul, seeing that He dwells substantially within it, and is able to do so directly by Himself, and by other methods. I shall not stop here to explain how it may be known whether certain visions are from God or not, for that is not my object now, my sole purpose being to direct the intellect, so that, in the way of union with the Divine Wisdom, it shall not be embarrassed or impeded by those which are good, nor deluded by those which are evil.

I say therefore with respect to all these impressions and imaginary visions, and others of whatever kind they may be, which present themselves under forms or images, or any particular intelligible forms, whether false as coming from the devil, or known to be true as coming from God, that the

God may
move the soul
immediately.

intellect is not to perplex itself about them, nor feed itself upon them; the soul must not willingly accept them, nor rest upon them, in order that it may be detached, naked, pure, and sincerely simple, which is the condition of the Divine union. The reason of this is that all these forms are never represented so as to be laid hold of but under certain ways and limitations, and the Divine Wisdom to which the intellect is to be united admits of no such limitations or forms, neither can it be comprehended under any particular image, because it is all pureness and simplicity. However, if two extremes are to be united together, such as the soul and the Divine Wisdom, it is necessary that they should meet under a certain kind of mutual resemblance; and hence the soul must be also pure and simple, unlimited, not adhering to any particular intelligence, and unmodified by any forms, figures, or image. As God is not comprehended under any form, or likeness, or particular conception, so the soul also, if it is to be united to Him, must not be under the power of any particular form or conception. God has no form or likeness, as the Holy Ghost tells us: 'You heard the voice of His words, but you saw not any form at all.*' But He also says, 'That there was darkness, and a cloud, and obscurity,† which is the obscure night in which the soul is united to God. He says further on, 'You saw not any similitude in the day that the Lord God spoke to you in Horeb from the midst of the fire.‡'

The soul can never attain to the height of the Divine union, so far as it is possible in this life, through the medium of any forms or figures. This truth is set before us by the same Spirit of God in the book of Numbers, where we read of the rebuking of Aaron and Mary, because they had murmured against their brother. God then would have them

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Visions not a
proximate
means of
union with
God,—why.

Two proofs
from Holy
Scripture.

* Deut. iv. 12.

† Ib. iv. 11.

‡ Ib. iv. 15.

understand the high estate of union and friendship with Himself to which He had raised Moses. 'If there be among you,' said God, 'a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision, or I will speak to him in a dream; but it is not so with My servant Moses who is most faithful in all My house, for I speak to him mouth to mouth and plainly, and not by riddles and figures doth he see the Lord.'* It is evident from this, that in the high estate of the union of love, God does not communicate Himself to the soul under the disguise of imaginary visions, similitudes, or figures, neither is there place for such, but mouth to mouth; that is, it is in the pure and naked Essence of God, which is as it were the mouth of God in love, that He communicates Himself to the pure and naked essence of the soul, through the will which is the mouth of the soul in the love of God.

The will effects the Divine union of love.

The soul, therefore, that will ascend to this perfect union with God, must be careful not to lean upon imaginary visions, forms, figures, and particular intelligible objects, for these things can never serve as proportionate or proximate means towards so great an end: yea, rather they are an obstacle in the way, and therefore to be guarded against and rejected. For if in any case we are to admit these visions and esteem them, that must be for the profit and good effects which true visions have on the soul; but it is not necessary, to secure these good effects, that we should admit the visions; yea, rather it is always necessary to reject them that we may profit the more by them. The fruit of these imaginary visions, and also of the exterior bodily visions, is the communication of intelligence, love, or sweetness, but it is not necessary for this result that we should admit them willingly. For as I have already said, when these visions are present to the imagination they infuse into the

* Num. xii. 6, 7, 8.

soul that intelligence, love, or sweetness, according to the good pleasure of God; and thus the soul passively receives their quickening effects without being able on its own part to hinder them any more than it could acquire them, notwithstanding its previous efforts to dispose itself for that end.

The soul in some respects resembles a window, which cannot repel the rays of the sun striking against it, but which is disposed for the reception thereof, and is passively illuminated thereby, without care or effort on its own part. Thus the soul cannot but receive the influx and communications of these representations, because the will, negatively disposed, cannot, in its state of humble and loving resignation, resist the supernatural influence; though, no doubt, its impureness and imperfections are an impediment, as stains in the glass obscure the light.

It is clear from this, then, that the soul, the more it is detached in will and affections from the stains of impressions, images, and representations, in which the spiritual communications are involved, not only does not deprive itself of these communications, and the blessings of which they are the cause, but is thereby the more disposed for their reception, and that in greater abundance, clearness, liberty of spirit, and singleness of mind; all the impressions, veils, and shadows, which hide the deeper spirituality within, being cast aside. If we feed upon them, sense and spirit are so filled, that spiritual communication cannot freely and in simplicity be made to us; for while we are occupied with the exterior covering, the intellect is not free to receive the substance within. If the soul will admit, and make much of, these impressions, the result will be embarrassment, and resting satisfied with that which is of least importance in them, namely, with all that it can grasp and comprehend, the form, the representation, and the particular conception. The chief part of them, the spiritual part infused, eludes its grasp, and

Fruit of Divine favours in proportion to detachment from them.

is beyond its comprehension; the soul cannot discern or explain it, because it is wholly spiritual. That only can it perceive, which is of least value, namely the sensible forms which are within the reach of its own understanding; and for this cause I maintain that the soul, passively, without any intellectual effort, and without knowing how to make any such effort, receives through these visions what it can neither understand nor imagine.

Faith better
than visions.

For these reasons, therefore, the eyes of the soul must be continually turned aside from these visible and distinctly intelligible things, communicated through the senses, which form neither the foundation nor the security of Faith, and be fixed on the invisible, not on the things of sense but on those of the Spirit which are not cognisable by sense; for it is this that lifts up the soul to union in faith which is the proper medium. And thus these visions will subsequently profit the soul in the attainment of faith when it shall have perfectly renounced all that sense and intellect find in them; and when it shall have duly applied itself to that end which God had in view when He sent them, by detaching itself from them. Because, as I have said before with regard to bodily visions, God does not send them that the soul may admit them and set its affections upon them.

But here arises this doubt; if it be true that these supernatural visions are sent from God, not for the purpose of being received, clung to, and prized by the soul, why then are they sent at all? They are the source of many errors and dangers, and are at least inconveniences, hindering our further advancement. This objection is specially true, for God is able to communicate spiritually to the very substance of the soul that which He thus communicates through the interior senses in visions and sensible forms.

I shall reply to this doubt in the following chapter. The doctrine on this subject is most important, and in my

opinion exceedingly necessary as well for spiritual persons as for those who have the direction of them. I shall therein explain the way of God in them, and the end He has in view, the ignorance of which renders many unable to control themselves, or to guide others through these visions along the road of union. They imagine, the moment they have ascertained the visions to be true and from God, that they may lean upon them and cleave to them; not considering that the soul will find in them that which is natural to itself, that it will set its affections upon them and be embarrassed by them, as by the things of this world, if it does not repel them as it repels these. In this state of mind they will think it right to accept the visions, and to reject worldly things, thereby exposing themselves and the souls they direct to great dangers and vexations in discerning the truth or falsehood of these visions. God does not bid them to undertake this labour, nor to expose simple and sincere souls to this hazard; for He has given them the sound and safe teaching of Faith, whereby to direct their steps, which cannot be followed without shutting our eyes against every object of sense, and of clear and particular perception. S. Peter was perfectly certain of that vision of glory which he saw when our Lord was transfigured, yet after relating it, he bids us walk by faith, saying: 'We have the more firm prophetic word: whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place.*' This comparison involves the doctrine which I am teaching. For in saying that we should look to Faith of which the Prophets spoke, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, he bids us remain in darkness, shutting our eyes to all other light, and tells us that this darkness of faith, which is also obscure, ought to be the only light to which we should trust. For if we rely on other lights, clear

* 2 S. Pet. i. 19.

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and distinct, of the understanding, we have ceased to rely on the obscurity of faith, which has therefore ceased to shine in the dark place of which the Apostle speaks. This place is the intellect, which is the candlestick to hold the light of faith. In this life, the intellect must therefore be dark, until the day of our transformation and union with Him, towards Whom the soul is travelling; or until the day of the clear Vision of God shall have dawned in the next life.

CHAPTER XVII.

Of the ends and way of God in communicating spiritual blessings to the soul through the interior senses. Answer to the question proposed.

Visions are dangerous,—why then are they sent?

I HAVE much to say of the end which God has in view, and of the ways He employs, when He sends visions to raise up the soul from its tepidity to the Divine union with Himself. This is treated of in all spiritual books, and I shall therefore confine myself here to the solution of the question before us. That question is this: Why does God Who is most wise, and ever ready to remove every snare and every stumbling-block from before us, send us these supernatural visions, seeing that they are so full of danger, and so perplexing to us in our further progress?

Answer. Because God observes the natural order which He has made.

To answer this we have three principles to take for granted. The first is thus expressed by S. Paul: 'Those that are, are ordained of God.'* That is, all that is done is done according to the ordinance of God. The second is expressed by the Holy Ghost saying of wisdom that it 'ordereth all things sweetly.'† The third is an axiom of Theology, God moveth all things in harmony with their constitution.‡ Ac-

* Rom. xiii. 1.

† Wisd. viii. 1.

‡ Deus omnia movet secundum modum eorum.

ording to these principles, then, it is evident that God, when He elevates the soul from the depths of its own vileness to the opposite heights of His own dignity in union with Himself, worketh orderly, sweetly, and in harmony with the constitution of the soul. As the process by which the soul acquires knowledge rests on the forms and images of created things, and as the mode of its understanding and perception is that of the senses, it follows that God, in order to raise it up to the highest knowledge, orderly and sweetly, must begin with the lower senses, that He may thus raise it up in harmony with its own constitution to the supreme Wisdom of the Spirit which is not cognisable by sense. For this reason He leads the soul first of all through forms, images, and sensible ways, proportionate to its capacity, whether natural or supernatural, and through reflections, upwards to His own Supreme Spirit. This is the cause of His sending visions and imaginary forms, and other sensible and intelligible means of knowledge. Not because He would not in an instant communicate the substance of the Spirit, provided that the two extremes, the human and Divine, that is, sense and Spirit, were ordinarily able to meet together, and to be united in a single act, without the previous intervention of many disposing acts, which orderly and sweetly concur together, one being the foundation and the preparation for the other, as in natural operations where the first subserves the second, that the next, and so onwards. Thus the way in which God leads man to perfection is the way of his natural constitution, raising him up from what is vile and exterior to that which is interior and noble.

In the first place He perfects him in the bodily senses, moving him to make a right use of good things which in themselves are natural, perfect, and exterior; such as hearing Mass and sermons, veneration of holy things, mortification of the appetite at meals, the maceration of the body by

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Analogy of the natural acquisition of knowledge.

Four ordinary states of spiritual progress.

1. External mortification.

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II.2. Sensible
sweetness.

penance, and the chastening of the sense of touch by holy austerities. And when the senses are in some measure prepared, God is wont to perfect them still more by granting them certain supernatural favours and consolations that they may be confirmed the more in goodness. He sends to them certain supernatural communications, such as visions of Saints or of holy things in bodily form, delicious odours, Divine locutions accompanied by a pure and singular sweetness, whereby the very senses are greatly strengthened in virtue and withdrawn from the desire of evil things. Besides, He perfects also the interior bodily senses, the imagination and the fancy, at the same time; accustoms them to good, through considerations, meditations, and holy reflections, according to the measure of their capacity, and in all teaches and informs the mind. And when the interior senses are disposed by this natural exercise, God is wont to enlighten them, and to spiritualise them, more and more, through the instrumentality of certain supernatural visions, which I have called imaginary; from which the mind at the same time derives great profit, and through the interior and exterior visions casts off its natural rudeness and becomes by degrees refined.

3. Medita-
tion.4. Interior
visions.

God is free
and sovereign
in dispensing
His graces.

This is the way of God in elevating the soul to that which is interior. Not that it is necessary for Him to observe this order and succession of progress, for He occasionally effects one degree without the other, as he sees it expedient for a particular soul, and as it pleases Him to dispense His graces; still His ordinary way is what I have described. This is the ordinary method of God in teaching and spiritualising the soul; He begins by communicating to it spiritual things through things outward, palpable, and appropriate to sense, condescending to its weakness and the slight measure of its powers; so that through the veil of exterior objects, in themselves good, the mind, forming particular acts, and receiving such portions of the spiritual communication, may acquire the habit of

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spirituality and attain to the Substance of the Spirit, to which sense is a stranger, and which the soul could never reach but by little and little in its own way, through the senses, on which it has always rested. And thus in proportion as it approaches spirituality in its converse with God, does it detach itself from, and empty itself of, the ways of sense, that is, of reflections, meditation, and imagination. And when it shall have attained perfectly to converse in spirit with God, it must of necessity have emptied itself of all that relates to that converse which falls under the cognisance of sense.

Thus, when an object is attracted to one extreme, the more it recedes from the other the nearer it approaches; and when it shall have completely reached the point to which it tends, it will then be completely withdrawn from the other. This is the spiritual maxim so generally known: *Gustato Spiritu, desipit omnis caro.* When we have tasted the sweetness of the Spirit, all that is flesh becomes insipid; that is, it profits us no more, and the ways of sense are no longer pleasing. This maxim refers to all the ways in which sense may be employed about spiritual things. This is evident: for if a thing be spiritual it falls not under the cognisance of the senses, and if it be such as is comprehensible by sense, then is it no longer purely spiritual. For the more anything is comprehended by sense and our natural perceptions, the less it has of the Spirit and of the supernatural.

The spiritual man, therefore, having attained to perfection, makes no account of sense, receives nothing through it, does not avail himself of it, neither has he any need of it in his converse with God, as was the case before with him when he had not received the increase of the Spirit. This is the meaning of S. Paul when he said: 'When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away the things of

The full
stature of the
spiritual
man.

a child.* I have already said that the objects of sense and the knowledge which results from them are the occupations of a child. That soul which ever clings to these, and which never detaches itself from them, will never cease to be a child; as a child will it always speak, understand, and think of God, because relying on the outward veil of the senses which is childish, it will never attain to the Substance of the Spirit, which is the perfect man. And so the soul ought not to admit revelations, with a view to its own spiritual growth, even though God should send them; for the infant must abandon the breasts if it is to become accustomed to more solid and substantial food.

Should interior visions be rejected even by a beginner?

Is it necessary then, you will ask, that the soul, in its spiritual infancy, should accept these revelations, and abandon them when it has grown; for the infant must seek its nourishment at the breast to be able to leave it when the time is come? My answer is, that with regard to meditation and natural reflections, through which the soul begins its search after God, it must not, it is true, abandon the breast of the interior senses, to support itself, until the time has come when it may do so. That time is come when God raises the soul to a more spiritual converse with Himself, which is contemplation, and of that I spoke in the thirteenth chapter of this book. Still I maintain that these imaginary visions or other supernatural impressions, to which the senses are subject without the assent of the will, are, upon all occasions and at all times, whether in the perfect or less perfect state, and notwithstanding their coming from God, not to be sought after, nor dwelt upon by the soul; and this for two reasons:—

Answer.
Yes.

Because they then become;
1. More profitable,

First, because these visions produce their effects passively in the soul, without its being able on its own part to

* 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

hinder them, though it may do something towards hindering the manner of the vision; consequently the secondary effects which it is intended to produce are much more substantially wrought, though not in that way. For in renouncing them with humility and fear, there is neither imperfection nor selfishness, but rather "disinterestedness and emptiness of self, which is the best disposition for union with God."

Secondly, because we are thereby delivered from the risk and labour of discerning between good and bad visions, and of ascertaining whether the angel of light or of darkness is at hand. The attempt to do so is not profitable at all, but rather waste of time, an occasion of many imperfections and delay on the spiritual journey. That is not the way to direct a soul in matters which are of real importance, nor to relieve it of the vexation of trifles which are involved in particular apprehensions and perceptions, as I have said with respect to bodily visions and to those of the imagination, and as I shall have to say again. Believe me, our Lord would never have communicated the abundance of the Spirit through these channels, so narrow, of forms and figures and particular perceptions, by which, as if by crumbs, He sustains the soul, if He had not to raise up that soul to Himself in the way appropriate to its own constitution. This is the meaning of the Psalmist when he said: 'He sendeth His crystal like morsels.*' The Wisdom of God is His crystal. How sad it is that the soul, whose capacity is as it were infinite, should be fed by morsels through the senses, because of its want of generosity, and because of its sensual weakness. S. Paul also saw with grief this littleness of mind and absence of good spiritual dispositions, when he said to the Corinthians: 'And I, brethren, could not speak to you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal.'

2. less dangerous and troublesome.

* Ps. cxlvii. 17.

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As unto little ones in Christ, I gave you milk to drink, not meat: for you were not able as yet. But neither indeed are you now able, for you are yet carnal.*

Let us, then, keep in mind that the soul must not regard these figures and objects, which are but the rind, when supernaturally set before it; whether occurring through the exterior senses, as voices and words in the ear, visible visions of the Saints and beautiful lights, odours to the smell, sweetness to the palate, and other delectations of the touch, which are wont to proceed from the Spirit; or through the interior senses as the interior imaginary visions. These things the soul must not regard; yea, rather it must renounce them wholly, having its eyes fixed on that spiritual good alone which they effect, labouring to preserve it in good works, and employing itself in that which is purely for the service of God without reference to these visions, and without seeking for sensible sweetness. In this way we shall reap from these visions that fruit only which God intends and wills, a spirit of devotion, for that is the chief end, and none other, for which He sends them; and we shall also pass by that which He too would have passed by, if we could without it have received the blessings He intends to confer, namely, the usage and appliance of sense.

Conclu-
sion.—Per-
fection con-
sists in doing
the will of
God in self-
denial, faith,
and good
works.

CHAPTER XVIII.

How souls are injured because their spiritual directors do not guide them aright through these visions. How these visions, though from God, become occasions of error.

I CANNOT be so concise with respect to visions as I desire, because of the abundance of the matter. And therefore, though I have said enough, in substance, for the instruction

* 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2.

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of the spiritual man, how he is to order himself when visions occur; and also for the spiritual director who guides him, how he is to demean himself with his penitent: I think it not superfluous to enter further into the details of this doctrine, and to bring into clearer light the evils that may happen to the penitent on the one hand, and his director on the other, should they be too credulous in the matter of visions, even if those visions come from God. What leads me to enlarge upon this subject, is the little discretion which, I think, I have observed among certain spiritual directors, who, having too great a reliance on these supernatural impressions, because they have ascertained them to be good and from God, have fallen, together with their penitents, into great errors, and involved themselves in many difficulties; thereby verifying these words of our Lord, 'If the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit.'*

How visions
are to be
treated.

Our Lord does not say they shall fall, but they fall: for it is not necessary for such a fall that it should be one of manifest delusion; the fall is complete in the venturing upon such a mode of direction, and thus, at least, both the director and the penitent fall together. There are some spiritual directors who fall at once into error, because their instructions to those, who are liable to visions, are such as to lead them astray or perplex them with regard to their visions; or they do not direct them in the way of humility. They suffer their penitents to make much of their visions, which is the reason why they walk not according to the pure and perfect spirit of faith; neither do they build them up nor strengthen them in faith, while they attach so much importance to these visions.

This kind of direction shows that they themselves consider visions matters of importance; and their penitents, observing

* S. Matt. xv. 14.

BOOK
II.Advice to
spiritual di-
rectors.

this, follow their example, dwelling upon these visions, not building themselves up in faith; neither do they withdraw, nor detach themselves from them, so that they may take their flight upwards in the obscurity of faith. All this results from the language and conduct of spiritual directors; for somehow, a certain sense of satisfaction arises from these things—which is not in our own control—that withdraws our eyes from the abyss of faith. The reason why this so easily takes place, must be that the soul is so occupied with them. [For inasmuch as they are objects of sense, to which we are naturally inclined, and as we have had experience of them, and are disposed for the apprehension of things distinct and sensible; it is enough to see our confessor or any other person appreciate them, to induce us not only to do the same, but also to indulge our desire for them, to feed upon them unconsciously, to be more and more inclined to them, and to hold them in greater estimation.

This kind of direction is the source of many imperfections at least, for the soul is no longer humble, but thinks itself to be something good, and that God makes much of it; and so it goes on contented and satisfied with itself, which is contrary to humility. The devil also at once applies himself in secret to foster this feeling, while the soul is not aware of it, and suggests to it thoughts about other people, whether they have these visions or not, or whether they are or are not such as they seem to be: all this is contrary to holy simplicity and spiritual solitude. These evils they cannot avoid, because they do not grow in faith. Besides, if souls do not fall into evils so palpable as these, they fall into others of a more subtle nature, and more hateful in the eyes of God, simply because they are not living in detachment.

For the present, I shall pursue this subject no further, as I shall have to resume it when I have to treat of spiritual gluttony, and the other six capital vices. Then, indeed, I

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shall have much to say of these minute and subtle stains, which defile the mind because of the failure of true direction in detachment. I shall now speak of the method of direction observed by some whose guidance of souls is not good. I wish I could do this well; for, in truth, it is a difficult thing to explain how the mind of the penitent becomes secretly conformed to that of his director. It appears to me that we cannot understand the one without understanding the other. Moreover, as they are spiritual things, the one corresponds with the other.

It seems to me—and I believe it to be true—that, if the spiritual director be a man who has a weakness for revelations, who is impressed by them, and feels in them a sort of pleasurable satisfaction, he must communicate, without intending it, the same feelings to the mind of his penitent, unless the latter be more advanced in spirituality than he is himself. But even if that be the case, he must do his penitent grievous harm if he continues under his direction. Out of this weakness of the director for revelations, and his satisfaction in them, arises a certain kind of appreciation of them, which, without the utmost care on his part, he cannot but make manifest to his penitent; and if the penitent have the same inclination, in my opinion this weakness will be increased in both by their mutual intercourse.

I will not enter into minute details on this subject, and will therefore speak of such a director, who, whether having a weakness for visions or not, is not so cautious in his relations with his penitent as he ought to be, so as to relieve him of his embarrassments, and detach him in desire from these visions; but who on the contrary converses with him on the subject, and makes them the chief matter of his spiritual instructions, teaching him how to distinguish between good visions and evil ones. Though this knowledge be good, yet is it not right to inflict on the penitent the labour, anxiety,

Weakness, or
imprudence
in regard to
visions in-
jures,

1. Faith,
2. Humility,
3. Peace of mind.

and danger which it involves, unless in a case of pressing necessity; seeing that by giving no heed to them all this is avoided, and everything done that ought to be done. This is not all; for some directors, when they see that their penitents have visions from God, bid them pray to Him, to reveal to them such and such things concerning themselves or others, and the simple souls obey them, thinking it lawful to seek information in that way. They suppose it lawful to desire, and even to pray for, a revelation, because it is the good pleasure of God to reveal something to them in a supernatural way, in a particular manner or for a particular end. And if God grants to them their petition, they become more and more confident on other occasions, and imagine God to be pleased with this mode of conversing with Him; when in truth it is not pleasing to Him, and contrary to His will. And if they are much given to this mode of conversing with God, they attach themselves to it, and the will acquiesces naturally in it; for as this naturally pleases them, they also naturally fall down to the level of their own perceptions, and frequently err in what they say: and when they see that events have not answered their expectations they are astonished; and doubts assail them as to whether their visions were from God or not, because the issues correspond not with their impressions.

Folly of praying for, or trusting in visions.

They seem to have presupposed two things—the first, that the visions came from God, because they had made so deep an impression upon them; and this might be simply the effect of their natural tendency to trust in visions. The second, that as the vision came from God, so the event ought to have answered their expectations or impressions. This is a grand delusion, for the revelations and words of God are not always fulfilled as man understands them, or even in their obvious sense. We must, therefore, not rely upon visions, nor accept them at once, even when we know

that they are revelations, answers, or words of God. For though they are certain and true in themselves, it is not of necessity that they should be so in our sense, as I shall show in the next chapter. And I shall further show also that God, though at times supernaturally answering petitions presented to Him, is not pleased with this, and that He is sometimes angry, though He answers.

CHAPTER XIX.

Visions, Revelations, and Locutions, though true and from God, may deceive. Proofs from Holy Scripture.

THERE are two reasons why Divine locutions and visions prove untrue to us, though they are in themselves always true and certain. The first is our defective understanding of them, and the second depends on the cause and ground of them: they are frequently threats, and therefore conditional, depending for their fulfilment on penance done, or abstinence from particular acts; although at the same time expressed in absolute terms. I proceed to illustrate this by certain proofs from the Holy Writings.

First reason why Divine visions may deceive,—Misinterpretation.

In the first place, it is clear that the prophecies do not always mean what we understand by them, and that the issues do not correspond with our expectations. The reason is that God is infinite and most high, and therefore His prophecies, locutions, and revelations, involve other conceptions, other meanings, widely different from those according to which we measure our own perceptions; and they are the more true and the more certain the less they seem so to our intellect. We have instances of this truth in the Holy Scriptures, where we read that many prophecies and Divine locutions disappointed, in their fulfilment, the expectations of many of the ancient people, because they understood them

God higher than man.

BOOK
II.

too much according to the letter in their own way. This will become clear if we consider the following examples.

Examples
from Holy
Scripture.1. Promise to
Abraham.

When God had brought Abraham into the land of Chanaan, He said unto him, 'I brought thee out from Ur of the Chaldees to give thee this land.'* But now that God had said this to Abraham more than once, and as the Patriarch was old, and the land not yet his, he said unto God when the promise was again made, 'Whereby may I know that I shall possess it?'† Then God revealed to Abraham that it was not he, but his children, after the lapse of four hundred years, who were to possess the land. Abraham then understood the promise, which in itself was most true: for God by giving the land to his children, because of the love He bore him, was giving it to him. Thus Abraham deceived himself while he understood the promise in his own sense. And if he had then acted on that understanding, he would have greatly erred, for the time of fulfilment was not come. Those, too, who saw him die before he had entered into possession of the land, knowing the promise which God had made him, would have been put to shame, and would have accounted the prophecy for a false one.

2. Prophecy
to Jacob.

Afterwards, when Jacob his grandson was going to Egypt, whither Joseph had sent for him, because of the famine in the land of Chanaan, God appeared to him on the way, and said, 'Fear not, go down into Egypt. I will bring thee back again from thence.‡ This prophecy was not fulfilled as we should understand it, for the holy old man died in Egypt, and never came back alive. That prophecy was to be fulfilled in his descendants, whom God brought back, after many years, being Himself their Guide. Now anyone who might have heard of this prophecy might have been certain, that as Jacob went down into Egypt by the grace and command of

* Gen. xv. 7.

† Ib. 8.

‡ Ib. xlvi. 3, 4.

God, so would he return thence alive without fail; for the same promise extended to his return and protection. Such an one would have been astonished and deceived when he saw the Patriarch die, and the events not answering to his expectation. Thus, while the promise of God was most certain, men might deceive themselves greatly about it.

The tribes of Israel assembled together to fight against that of Benjamin, because of a certain evil deed which that tribe had sanctioned. God, too, appointed them a leader in the war. Upon this they were so confident of success that, when they were defeated with the loss of two and twenty thousand men, they were filled with astonishment, and wept before God, not knowing the cause of their discomfiture, for they had understood that victory had been promised them. They asked whether they should return to the fight; God answered them, 'Go up against them and join battle.' They went up the second time with great boldness, confident of victory, but were beaten again, and eighteen thousand of them were slain. In consequence of this they were filled with confusion, and knew not what to do. God had commanded them to fight, and they were always beaten, though they surpassed their enemies in courage and in numbers—being themselves four hundred thousand strong, while the tribe of Benjamin only mustered five and twenty thousand and seven hundred men. They deceived themselves by their own interpretation of the word of God, which in itself was true. God had not said to them, go forth and conquer, but go forth and fight. And His purpose was to chastise them in this way for their negligence and presumption, and so to humble them. At last God said unto them, 'Go up, for to-morrow I will deliver them into your hands,' and then by toil and stratagem they obtained the victory.*

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XIX.3. Answer to
the Tribes of
Israel.

* Judg. xx. 23—28.

This is the way in which many souls deceive themselves in the matter of revelations and Divine locutions. They understand them in the letter according to their apparent meaning. For, as I have said, the chief purpose of God in sending visions is to express and communicate the Spirit which is hidden within them, and which is very hard to be understood. This is much more abundant than the letter, more extraordinary, and surpasses the limits thereof. He therefore that will rely on the letter of the Divine locution, or on the intelligible form of the vision, will of necessity fall into a delusion, and be put to shame; for he directs himself therein by sense, and does not yield to the Spirit in detachment from sense. 'The letter killeth,' saith the Apostle, 'but the Spirit quickeneth.'* We must therefore reject the literal sense, and abide in the obscurity of faith, which is the Spirit, incomprehensible by sense.

4. Complaint
of Isaias.

This is the reason why many of the people of Israel came to disregard and to disbelieve the words of their Prophets. They understood them in a particular sense, according to the letter, and were disappointed at their non-fulfilment. To such an extent did this evil grow among them that they had a current proverb in ridicule of the prophecies. Isaias complains of this, saying: 'Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand the hearing? Them that are weaned from the milk, that are drawn away from the breasts. For command, command again; command, command again; wait, wait again; wait, wait again; a little there, a little there. For with the speech of lips, and with another tongue He will speak to this people.'† It is clear from these words, that the people made a jest of the prophecies, and were in the habit of ridiculing them by saying, 'wait, wait again.' Their object was to insinuate

* 2 Cor. iii. 6.

† Is. xxviii. 9—11.

that the prophecies would never be accomplished: for they understood them according to the letter, which is the milk of babes; and in their own sense, which is the 'breasts,' which is in contradiction with the grandeur of the science of the Spirit. The Prophet therefore asks, 'Whom shall he teach the knowledge' of his prophecies, and 'whom shall he make to understand' what they teach? Is it not they who are 'weaned from the milk' of the letter and from 'the breasts' of sense? That nation understood not the prophecies, for it followed after the milk of the letter, and the breasts of sense, saying, 'command, command again; wait, wait again.' For God spoke to them the doctrine of His own mouth, and not of theirs, and that in another tongue than theirs.

We are therefore not to consider Prophecy according to our own understanding and our own speech, knowing that the words of God have a meaning different from ours, and very difficult to ascertain. So much so that Jeremias, himself a Prophet of God, seems to have been deceived when he saw the meaning of the Divine words to be so far removed from the ordinary understanding of men; for he thus complains on behalf of the people, saying, 'Alas, alas, alas! O Lord God, hast Thou then deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, You shall have peace, and behold the sword reacheth even to the soul?''* The peace which God had promised was peace between Himself and man in the Messias, Whom He was to send; but the people understood it of temporal peace; and so, when war and trouble came upon them, they thought God had deceived them, because they were disappointed in their hopes. They then cried out in the words of the Prophet, 'We looked for peace, and no good came.'† It was not possible for them not to be deceived, because they relied on the literal, grammatical sense.

* Jer. iv. 10.

† Ib. viii. 15.

5. Prayer of
Jeremias.

Ref.

BOOK
II.6. Prophecies
relating to
the Messias.

Is it possible for anyone to escape error and confusion, who should understand in the letter the prophecy of the Psalmist concerning Christ, especially that which says of Him, 'He shall rule from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth'?* And again, 'He shall deliver the poor from the mighty, and the needy that hath no helper.'† Now Christ was born in a low estate, lived in poverty, and died in misery: so far was He from ruling over the earth while He lived upon it, that He subjected Himself to the lowest of the people and died under Pontius Pilate. Not only did He not deliver the poor, His own disciples, from the mighty, but He suffered the mighty to persecute them for His name, and to put them to death. The prophecy concerning Christ is to be understood spiritually, for in that sense is it most true. He is not only the Lord of the whole earth, but of Heaven also, for He is God. And the poor, who are to follow Him, are not only redeemed by Him and delivered from the mighty, that is out of the hand of Satan, but also made heirs of the kingdom of Heaven. The prophecy referred to Christ and His followers in the highest sense, to His eternal kingdom and our everlasting salvation; but men understood it in their own way, referring it to that which is of least importance, and of which God makes but little account, a temporal dominion, and a temporal deliverance, which in the sight of God is not a kingdom nor freedom. The Jews, blinded by the letter of the prophecy, and not understanding the true spiritual meaning it involved, put our Lord God to death. 'They that inhabited Jerusalem,' saith the Apostle, 'and the rulers thereof, not knowing Him, nor the voices of the Prophets, which are read every Sabbath, judging Him, have fulfilled them.'‡

The words of God are indeed hard to be understood as

* Ps. lxxi. 8.

† Ib. 12.

‡ Acts xiii. 27.

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XIX.

they ought to be. His own disciples, who had been familiar with Him, were themselves deceived. Two of them after His death were journeying sad and desponding to Emmaus, and saying, 'We hoped that it was He who should have redeemed Israel.*' They, too, understood this redemption and dominion in a temporal sense. Our Lord appeared to them, and rebuked them, saying, 'O foolish, and slow of heart to believe in all things which the Prophets have spoken!† Even on the day of His Ascension some of them were alike ignorant, for they asked Him saying, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?'‡

Many things have been spoken by the Holy Ghost, the meaning of which is different from that which men conceive. Such were the words of Caiphas concerning Christ: 'It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this he spoke not of himself.§ The words of Caiphas had one meaning to himself, and another, a very different one, to the Holy Ghost.

This shows us that we cannot rely upon visions and revelations, even though coming from God, because it is so easy for us to be deceived by understanding them in our own sense. They are an abyss and a depth of the Spirit, and therefore to limit them to our own sense and apprehension of them, is to grasp the air and the motes floating in it; the air only disperses, and our hand is empty.

The spiritual director must be therefore careful not to make his penitent narrow-minded by attaching any importance to these supernatural visitations; for they are nothing else but the motes of the Spirit, and he who shall give his attention to these alone will in the end have no spirituality at all. Yea, rather let him wean him from all visions and locutions, and guide him into the liberty and obscurity of

* S. Luke xxiv. 21.

† Acts i. 6.

‡ Ib. 25.

§ S. John xi. 50.

Caiphas as a
prophet.True discern-
ment found
in detach-
ment of
spirit.

BOOK
II.

The best interpreters,
Faith, and
Liberty of
Spirit.

faith, where he shall receive of the abundance of the Spirit, and consequently the knowledge and understanding of the words of God. It is impossible for anyone who is not spiritually-minded to judge, even in a moderate degree, the things of God; and he who judges them according to sense is not spiritual. Though the things of God are presented to men through the senses, they are not to be so understood. 'The sensual man,' saith the Apostle, 'perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand; because it is spiritually examined. But the spiritual man judgeth all things.*' By 'sensual man' is here meant one who understands the Divine locutions in the literal sense; and the 'spiritual man' is he who is neither tied to it, nor directed by it. It is presumption therefore to converse with God in this supernatural way and to allow sense to intermeddle therewith.

Two illustrations.
1. Spiritual
Triumph.

For the clearer understanding of this I will give some illustrations of it. Let us suppose a holy man in affliction, persecuted by his enemies, to whom God shall say, 'I will deliver thee out of their hands.' This promise may be verified, and yet the enemies of the Saint triumph, and he die by their hands. Should he understand the word of God in a temporal sense, that would be a delusion; for God may have spoken of the true deliverance and victory, which is salvation, by which the soul is delivered, and by which it conquers all its enemies in a higher and truer sense than that of any temporal victory over them. Thus the prophecy is much more true and comprehensive than the understanding of it by anyone who should have limited its meaning to this life. For God, when He speaks, intends great and profitable things; but man may understand Him in his

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

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own way, in the lowest sense, and so fall into error. This is exemplified in the prophecy of David concerning Christ: 'Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, and shalt break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*' Here God speaks of that supreme and perfect dominion, which is eternal and now accomplished; not of a dominion which is less perfect, which is temporal, and which was not fulfilled in the earthly life of Christ.

Again: let us suppose a man longing for martyrdom, to whom God shall say, 'Thou shalt be a Martyr.' Upon this such an one feels great interior consolation, and hopes of being a martyr. Still he does not die a martyr's death, and yet the promise is fulfilled. But why is the promise not literally performed? Because God keeps it in the highest and substantial sense, bestowing on that soul the essential love and reward of a martyr, making it a martyr of love, granting to it a prolonged martyrdom of suffering, the continuance of which is more painful than death. Thus He bestows really on that soul what that soul desired, and what He had promised. For the substance of that desire was, not any particular kind of death, but rather the oblation to God of the obedience of a martyr, and a martyr's act of love. Martyrdom itself is nothing worth without the friendship of God, Who by other means gives the love, obedience, and reward of a martyr perfectly; and the soul is satisfied as to its desires, though the death of a martyr is withheld from it.

These desires, and others like them, when they spring from true love, though not fulfilled as men may understand them, are nevertheless fulfilled in another and better way, and more for the honour of God than men know how to ask. 'The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor;† and 'to the just their desire shall be given.‡ Many Saints have desired

2. Martyr-
dom of
Desire.

Analogy
between ful-
filment of
Prophecy,
and answer
to Prayer.

* Ps. ii. 9.

† Ib. ix. 17.

‡ Prov. x. 24.

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many things for God in this life, and their desires have not been granted; but it is certain that, as their desires were just and good, they will be perfectly fulfilled in the world to come. And as this is true, so also is it true, that God in this life performs His promise of granting their desires, though not in the way they thought.

In this and in many other ways the words and visions of God are true and certain, and yet we may be deceived because we do not rise to the heights of God's purpose and meaning. Thus, the safest course, which directors can take, is to lead souls into a prudent avoidance of these supernatural visitations, accustoming them to pureness of spirit in the obscurity of faith, which is the means of the Divine union

CHAPTER XX.

Proofs from Scripture that the Divine Locutions, though always true, are not always certain in their causes.

Second reason why Divine visions may deceive, —their conditional nature.

It is necessary for me now to show why Divine visions and locutions, though always true in themselves, are not always so with regard to us. This depends on the motive on which they are founded; and it is to be understood that they are always true, while the cause remains, which determines God, for instance, to inflict chastisement. God perhaps says, 'Within a year such a kingdom shall be visited with pestilence.' The ground of this denunciation is a certain offence against God committed in that kingdom. Now if that offence ceases or is changed, the punishment will not be inflicted, or it will come in another form. The denunciation was true, because grounded upon actual sin, and would have been verified if the sin had been persisted in. This is a threatening or conditional revelation.

We have an instance of this in the story of Ninive. God

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Conditional prophecies of Jonas; and of Elias.

sent Jonas to it to prophesy its ruin: 'Yet forty days and Ninive shall be destroyed.'* The prophecy was not fulfilled, because the reason of it had ceased. The people did penance for their sins; but if they had not done so, the prophecy would have been accomplished. King Achab committed a great sin, and God sent our Father Elias to threaten him and his house and his kingdom with a most grievous chastisement. But when Achab 'rent his garments, and put haircloth on his flesh, and fasted and slept in sackcloth, and walked with his head cast down,' and was humbled, God said to the same Prophet, 'Because he hath humbled himself for My sake, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.'† Thus we see that, because of the change in Achab, there was a change also of the threatening and sentence of God.

It follows, then, from this that God, having once revealed distinctly to anyone, that he was about to bless or punish either that person or any other, may still change his purpose more or less, or cease from it altogether, according to the change in the disposition of those to whom the revelation referred, or the cessation of the cause in view of which the revelation was made. And this being so, the word that He spoke will not be fulfilled according to the expectation of those to whom it was known, and that very often without its being known why, save to God only. God is wont to speak, teach, and promise, many things at different times, not to be understood, or accomplished then; but that they may be understood afterwards, when the time is come, or when they are effectually fulfilled. It was in this way our Lord conversed with His disciples. He spoke to them in parables and dark sayings, the meaning of which they perceived not till the time came when they were to preach them to others.

Voluntate Dei conditionata.

* Jon. iii. 4.

† 3 Kings xxi. 27—29.

This time arrived when the Holy Ghost descended upon them, of whom our Saviour had said: 'He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you.'* S. John, speaking of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, says: 'These things His disciples did not know at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him.'† Thus, then, many Divine communications, most distinctly made, may be received by us without being understood before the proper time, either by ourselves or by our spiritual directors.

The condi-
tional pro-
mise to Heli.

God was angry with Heli the High Priest of Israel, because he knew that his 'sons did wickedly, and he did not chastise them.'‡ He sent a prophet to him to admonish him. 'I said indeed that thy house and the house of thy father should minister in My sight for ever. But now saith the Lord, Far be this from Me: but whosoever shall glorify Me, him will I glorify: but they that despise Me shall be despised.'§ Now the priesthood was instituted for the honour and glory of God, and for that end it had been promised by God for ever to the father of Heli on the due fulfilment of his functions. But when Heli ceased to be zealous for God's honour—as God Himself complains—preferring his children above Him, conniving at their sins that he might not be compelled to punish them—the promise also ceased to be observed; though it would have abided for ever, had they to whom it belonged persevered zealously in the true service of God. We are, therefore, not to imagine that the words or revelations of God, though most true, will be infallibly verified in their obvious meaning; for they are, by the disposition of God Himself, bound up with human causes, which are liable to fluctuation and change. All this is known unto God, but He declares it not. He sends forth

* S. John xiv. 26.

† 1 Kings iii. 13.

‡ Ib. xii. 16.

§ Ib. ii. 30.

His word, and at times makes no mention of the condition; as in the case of Ninive, when He declared distinctly that after forty days the city would be destroyed. At other times He declares the condition, as in the case of Jeroboam, saying, 'If then thou . . . wilt walk in My ways . . . keeping My commandments and My precepts, as David My servant did; I will be with thee and will build thee up a faithful house as I built a house for David.'*

But after all, whether God declares the conditions or not, we must not trust to our understanding of His words; for we cannot comprehend the hidden truths of God, and the manifold meaning of His words. He is high above the heavens, speaking in the ways of eternity; we are blind upon earth, and cannot penetrate His secrets. This is the meaning of Solomon when he said: 'God is in Heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few.'†

Here, perhaps, an objection may be made: If then we cannot understand the revelations of God, nor enter into their meaning, why does He send them? I have already met this difficulty. Everything will be intelligible in the time appointed by Him who hath spoken, and he whom He hath determined beforehand shall understand: and then all will see that it was right and fitting it should be so: for God doeth nothing but in truth and equity. It is, therefore, most certain that we cannot perfectly understand nor grasp the full meaning of His words, or determine the sense of them to be what it seems to be, without falling into shameful delusions. This truth was well known to the Prophets to whom the word of the Lord was sent. To prophesy to the people was to them a grievous affliction; for, as I have said, much of what they said was not fulfilled in the letter, and this proved an excuse to the multitude to ridicule and mock

Revelations
hard to un-
derstand,—
why sent.

* 3 Kings xi. 38.

† Eccles. v. i.

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the Prophets. 'I am become,' saith the Prophet, 'a laughing-stock all the day, all scoff at me. For I am speaking now this long time, crying out against iniquity, and I often proclaim devastation; and the word of the Lord is made a reproach unto me, and a derision all the day. Then I said: I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name.'*

Examples of
Jeremias and
Jonas.

Here the holy Prophet, though he speaks with resignation and like a frail man, unable to endure the ways and secrets of God, teaches us clearly the difference between the true fulfilment and the apparent meaning of the word of God. The people treated the heavenly messengers as deceivers, whose afflictions, on account of their prophecies, were so great that Jeremias cried out: 'Prophecy is become to us a fear, and a snare and destruction.'† Jonas fled when God sent him to preach the destruction of Ninive, because he did not perceive the truth, nor wholly comprehend the meaning, of the words of God. He fled, that he might not become an object of derision to the people when they saw the prophecy not fulfilled. He further stayed outside the city for forty days waiting for the accomplishment of his prophecy, and when he saw that it remained unfulfilled, he was greatly affected, and complained, saying: 'I beseech Thee, O Lord, is not this what I said, when I was yet in my own country? Therefore, I went before to flee unto Tharsis.'‡ In his vexation, therefore, he prayed God to take his life from him.

Is it then surprising that the revelations are not fulfilled in our sense? For if God makes known to anyone good or evil, relating to him or to others, and if the revelation thereof be founded on the obedience or disobedience of that person or the others, and if the facts continue the same, no doubt the prophecy will be fulfilled. But it is not, however, certain

* Jerem. xx. 7-9.

† Lam. iii. 47.

‡ Jon. iv. 2.

that it will be fulfilled in the letter, because the reasons of it may change. And therefore we must not trust to our own understanding of these revelations, but to faith.

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CHAPTER XXI.

God is at times displeased with certain prayers, though He answers them. Illustrations of His anger with such prayers.

SOME spiritual persons persuade themselves—not reflecting on the great curiosity which they often display when they seek knowledge from God in supernatural ways—because their prayers are sometimes answered, that their conduct in the matter is good and pleasing unto God. Nevertheless the truth is, notwithstanding the answers they receive, that God is offended, and not pleased. And more than this, they provoke Him to anger, and displease Him greatly. The reason is this—no creature may transgress the limits which God hath appointed in the order of its being for its rule and guidance. He has ordained for man's governance certain natural and reasonable laws, the transgression of which is therefore not right: now, to seek anything by supernatural ways is to transgress these laws, and therefore an unholy and unbecoming thing, and displeasing unto God.

Transgression of
natural order
displeasing to
God.

You will object, and say, Why then does God, if He is displeased, answer such prayers at all? I reply, the answer occasionally comes from the devil. But when God answers, it is out of condescension to the human weakness of him who will walk in that way, that he may not become disconsolate, and go back; or that he may not think that God is angry with him, or that he may not be tempted overmuch; or it may be for other ends known to God, founded on his weakness, in consideration of which God is pleased to answer him, and condescend to him in that way. He deals in the same

God con-
descends to
human weak-
ness.

way with many weak and delicate souls, giving them a sensible sweetness in their converse with Himself, not because He delights in this, or because this way is according to His will; but because He deals with everyone according to his capacity.

Extra-ordinary means permitted, but not expedient.

God is a well from which everyone may draw water according to the measure of his vessel, and He sometimes permits us to draw it through extraordinary channels, but it is not therefore necessarily right to make use of them. It belongs to God alone to determine this, Who gives how, when, to whom, and why He wills, without respect of persons. He sometimes inclines His ear to the prayer of those who cry to Him, and because of their goodness and simplicity succours them, that they may not be made sad, and not because He is pleased with their prayer. The following illustration will make this more clear. A father covers his table with divers meats, some better than others. One of his children asks for one kind, not the best, but the first that presents itself to him: he asks for it because he likes it better than any other. His father seeing that he will not take of the best, even if he offered it, and that he would not have any satisfaction in it, gives him that he asked for. He gives it to him that he might not be left without food and disconsolate, but he gives it sorrowfully. Such was God's dealing with the people of Israel when they demanded a king. He gave them a king unwillingly, for that was not for their good. 'Hearken to the voice of the people,' saith He to Samuel: 'they have not rejected thee but Me, that I should not reign over them.*' He condescends in the same way to certain souls, giving them that which is not for their greater good, either because they will not, or because they cannot, walk with Him in the better way. And if at times these souls have a

* 1 Kings viii. 7.

tenderness and sweetness, spiritual or sensible, He gives it them because they are not disposed to feed on the strong and substantial meat, the sufferings of the Cross of His Son. It is His will that we should cleave thereto rather than to aught else. It is, in my opinion, much worse to seek for the knowledge of events through supernatural ways, than to seek spiritual sweetness in those of sense.

I do not see how I can excuse from sin, at least venial, those persons who do this, however good their intentions and great their progress in perfection. I say the same of those who bid them persevere in this way, or who consent to it. There is no necessity for their acting thus, because natural reason, the law and teaching of the Gospel are sufficient for our guidance, and there are no wants or difficulties which cannot be supplied or remedied by them, and that more in accordance with the will of God, and more to the profit of souls. Such is our obligation to make use of our reason and of the teaching of the Gospel, that, whether with or without our concurrence, if anything be revealed to us supernaturally, we may receive that only which is consistent with reason and the evangelical law. And we are bound to examine such things much more carefully than we should do, if no revelation had been made; for the devil, in order to deceive us, utters many things which are true and in conformity with reason.

True means, —Reason and Revelation.

There is no better or safer remedy for all our necessities and troubles than prayer and hope, by which God is moved to provide for us by such means as are pleasing unto Him. This is the counsel which the Holy Scriptures furnish us. When King Josaphat was in deepest affliction, hemmed in by his enemies on all sides, he betook himself to prayer, and said, 'As we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to Thee.*' When everything fails us, when reason is power-

Prayer and Hope enough for all needs.

* 2 Paral. xx. 12.

less to suggest relief, we can then lift up our eyes to Thee only, that Thou mayest provide for us, as it shall seem best to Thee.

Three
examples
from Holy
Scripture.

God too, though He sends answers to prayers thus offered, is angry. But, notwithstanding the certainty of this, I think it will be well to show it from certain passages of Holy Writ. When Saul desired to consult the prophet Samuel, then dead, the Prophet came at his request; God, however, was angry with Saul, for the Prophet rebuked him, saying, 'Why hast thou disturbed my rest, that I should be brought up?*' We know, too, that God was angry with the people of Israel when they asked Him for meat. He gave them meat, but He also sent fire from heaven to chastise them: 'As yet the meat was in their mouth, and the wrath of God came upon them.'† He was angry also with Balaam, when, at the bidding of Balac, he went to the Madianites, though God had said, 'Arise and go.' Balaam was bent on going, and had asked permission of God; but an Angel stood before him in the way with a drawn sword in his hand, and sought to kill him, and said, 'Thy way is perverse and contrary to Me.'‡ In this, and in many other ways, God condescends, but in anger, to our desires. And the Holy Writings furnish us many other instances of this truth, but on which we have no need to enlarge in a matter so plain.

I have only to add that it is a most perilous thing, and much more so than I can tell, to converse with God by these supernatural ways, and that whosoever is thus disposed cannot but fall into many shameful delusions. He who shall apply himself to these ways will learn by experience the truth of the matter. For over and above the difficulty of not being deceived by the Divine visions and locutions, there is usually the further danger of the devil thrusting himself

* 1 Kings xxviii. 15.

† Num. xxii. 20, 32.

‡ Num. xi. 4, 33; Ps. lxxvii. 30, 31.

in among them. Satan, in general, comes to the soul in the ways and methods of God, suggesting to it communications so much resembling those of God, insinuating himself as a wolf in sheep's clothing among the flock, so that he can scarcely be detected. For as the evil spirit announces many things that are true, conformable with reason, and certain, men may be most easily deluded, thinking that, as the prophecy corresponded with the event, it could be none other than God who had spoken. They do not reflect how very easy it is for one, endowed with clear natural light, to understand in their causes many matters, which have been or may be done. Such an one will accurately guess at many things to come. And as the devil is endowed with so clear a light, he is able to infer such results from such causes; though they are not always such as he describes them, because all things depend on the will of God.

Let us make this clear by an illustration: The devil knows that the condition of the earth and the atmosphere, and the position of the sun are such, that at a given time, the combination of the elements must, of necessity, occasion a pestilence. He will also know where the pestilence will be most violent and where least so. He perceives the pestilence in its causes. Is it a great matter for the devil, in this case, to reveal to a particular person that within a year or six months a plague will come, which does come? Yet the prediction is diabolic. He may also foretell earthquakes in the same way. When he sees the caverns of the earth filled with air, he may say an earthquake will come at such a time. This knowledge is natural. Extraordinary events in the providence of God may also be detected in their sources. Seeing that He is most just in His dealings with men, we may be able to see, in the ordinary way, that a given individual, city, or place is come to such a state or difficulty that God, in His providence and justice, must deal

Satan has
knowledge of
physical
causes.

BOOK
II.

Future
events fore-
told by
natural
knowledge.
Two in-
stances.

therewith as the cause demands: either in the way of punishment or of reward, according to the nature of the case. Under these circumstances, we may say, at such a time, God will visit, or such things will happen, most certainly. We have an instance of this in holy Judith, who, when she would persuade Holofernes that the people of Israel must certainly perish, told him of their many sins and the calamities they suffered, and added, 'therefore because they do these things, it is certain they will be given to destruction.'*

Here Judith saw the punishment in its cause. It is as if she had said, it is certain that such sins will draw down the chastisements of God, Who is most just. The same principle is taught in the book of Wisdom where it is written, 'By what things a man sinneth, by the same also he is tormented.'† The devil may perceive this not only naturally, but also by his experience of the like dealings of God. He may also announce it certainly beforehand.

Holy Tobias also knew in its causes the chastisement about to fall upon Ninive, for he warned his son thereof, saying, 'Now, children, hear me, and do not stay here; but as soon as you shall bury your mother by me in one sepulchre, without delay direct your steps to depart hence. For I see that its iniquity will bring it to destruction.'‡ It is as if he had said, I see clearly that its iniquity must bring on punishment, and that its punishment will be its utter ruin. This might have been foreseen by the devil and Tobias, not only because of the evil deeds of Ninive, but also from their experience of the past, knowing that God had destroyed the old world, on account of the sins of men, by the deluge, and the people of Sodom by fire. But Tobias knew also the ruin of Ninive by the Holy Ghost.

The evil spirit may know that a given individual will die

* Judith xi. 12. † Wisd. xi. 17. ‡ Tob. xiv. 12, 13.

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within a certain time in the course of nature, and may announce the fact beforehand. He may also know many other events in divers ways, which I am unable to describe, because they are exceedingly intricate and subtle. There is no escape here, therefore, but in fleeing revelations, visions, and locutions, because God is most justly offended with whosoever seeks them; He sees that it is rashness to expose oneself to so great a risk, and that to seek these things is presumption, curiosity, the fruit of pride, the source and root of vain-glory, contempt of the things of God, and many other evils into which so many have fallen. Such persons have so offended God, that He has deliberately abandoned them to errors and delusions and mental blindness; and has suffered them to go astray from the ordinary course of a well-regulated life, giving way to vanity and imaginations, as the Prophet saith: 'The Lord hath mingled in the midst thereof the spirit of giddiness,'* that is, in common speech, the spirit of understanding things the wrong way. The words of the Prophet are to the point, for he is speaking of those who attempted to know future events by supernatural ways. He says, therefore, that God had mingled in the midst of them the spirit of understanding things the wrong way; not that God willed or sent, in fact, this spirit of delusion, but that they thrust themselves into those things, the knowledge of which is naturally a secret. God, therefore, in His anger allowed them to utter foolish things, giving them no light where it was not His will they should enter. It is therefore said that He mingled, permissively, the spirit of giddiness in the midst of them.

This is the way in which God is the cause of this evil, namely, as the privative cause, which is the withdrawal of His light and grace, the result of which is inevitable error. It

* Is. xix. 14.

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II.Two
examples of
self-delusion.

is in this way, too, that He permits the devil to blind and deceive many, whose sins and whose frowardness deserve it. The devil is then able to deceive them, and does deceive them; men believing and accounting him a good spirit, and this to such a degree, that, though convinced that they are under the influence of the evil one, they cannot get rid of their delusions; because, by the permission of God, the spirit of contradiction is so strong within them. This was the case with the prophets of Achab, who, by the permission of God, was deceived by them; for He had allowed the evil spirit to do so, saying, 'Thou shalt deceive him and shalt prevail; go forth and do so.*' So strong was the delusion of the king and the prophets, that they refused to believe Micheas, who prophesied truly in opposition to the lying words of those prophets. They were all deceived, God having permitted their blindness, because they were bent on what they liked themselves, desiring that the event and the answer of God should correspond with their own wishes and desires. This disposition of mind is the most certain road towards being abandoned of God to error and delusions. Ezechiel in the name of God prophesies to the same effect; for speaking against such as seek knowledge, in the way of God, out of vanity of mind and curiosity, he says: 'If he... come to the prophet to enquire of Me by him, I the Lord will answer him by Myself, and I will set My face against that man. . . . And when the prophet shall err. . . . I the Lord have deceived' him.† We are to understand this of the non-concurrence of God's grace, so that delusion follows. God says, 'I will answer him by Myself,' in My anger, that is, I withdraw My grace and protection; then man falls infallibly into delusions, because God has abandoned him. Then, too, the devil comes forward and makes answer ac-

* 3 Kings xxii. 22.

† Ezech. xiv. 7, 8, 9.

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ording to that man's wishes and desires, who, taking pleasure therein, the answers and suggestions of the evil one being in unison with his will, falls into many delusions.

I seem to have strayed in some measure from the subject, as I described it in the beginning of this chapter. I undertook to show that God was offended, even though He answered our prayers. Yet, if what I have said be carefully considered, it will be found to prove what I intended: it being clear throughout, that God is not pleased that men should seek after such visions, because they are in so many ways occasions of delusions.

CHAPTER XXII.

It is not lawful, under the New Law, as it was under the Old, to enquire of God by supernatural ways. This doctrine profitable for the understanding of the mysteries of our Holy Faith. Proofs from S. Paul.

DOUBTS spring up before us, and hinder us from advancing as rapidly as I wish. For as they rise, it is necessary to remove them, that the truth of this doctrine may remain clear and in its full force. These doubts bring with them this advantage, that, notwithstanding the delays they occasion, they subserve my teaching, and make my purpose clear. Such is the present doubt.

Objections
answered.

I said in the former chapter, it is not the will of God that men should seek for clear knowledge in visions and locutions by supernatural ways. On the other hand, we know that this method was practised under the Old Law, and that it was then lawful; further still, that it was not only lawful but commanded, and that God rebuked men for not having recourse to it. He rebuked the children of Israel, because they had resolved to go down into Egypt before enquiring of Him, saying to them, 'Woe to you . . . who walk to go

down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth.* When the people of Israel were deceived by the Gabaonites, the Holy Ghost rebuked them for a like fault, for it is written that 'they took of their victuals and consulted not the mouth of the Lord.† In the Holy Writings we see that God was consulted continually by Moses, by David, by all the Kings of Israel in their wars and necessities, by the Priests and Prophets of old, and that He answered them, and was not provoked to anger, and that in this all was well done. Yea, moreover, if they had not consulted Him, they would have done amiss: which is true. Why then, may we not, under the New Law and in the state of grace, do what was done under the Old?

What permitted to Jews forbidden to Christians,—why.

To this I reply, the chief reason why the prayers in question were lawful under the old dispensation, and why it was necessary for Prophets and Priests to seek visions and revelations from God was, that the Faith was not then revealed, that the evangelical Law was not established; and therefore that it was necessary for men to enquire of God in this way, and that He should answer them at one time by visions, revelations and locutions, at another by figures and similitudes, and again by other and different ways of communication. For all the answers, locutions, and revelations of old were mysteries of the Faith, or matters pertaining or tending thereto; inasmuch as the objects of faith proceed not from man, but from the mouth of God Himself, who, by His own mouth has revealed them. He therefore rebuked them when they did not consult Him; for it was His will they should do so, that He might answer them, directing all things towards the Faith, of which they had then no knowledge. But now that the Faith of Christ is established, and the evangelical Law promulgated in this day of grace, there is

* Is. xxx. 1, 2.

† Jos. ix. 14.

no necessity to consult Him as before, nor that He should answer and speak. For in giving to us, as He hath done, His Son, who is His only Word, He has spoken unto us once for all by His own and only Word, and has nothing further to reveal.

This is the meaning of S. Paul in those words, by which he endeavoured to persuade the Jews to abandon the ancient ways of conversing with God, according to the Law of Moses, and to fix their eyes on Christ alone. 'God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke, in times past to the fathers by the Prophets, last of all, in these days hath spoken to us by His Son.* God hath now so spoken, that nothing remains unspoken; for that which He partially revealed to the Prophets He hath now revealed all in Him, giving unto us all, that is, His Son. And, therefore, he who should now enquire of God in the ancient way, seeking visions or revelations, would offend Him; because he does not fix his eyes upon Christ alone, disregarding all besides. To such an one the answer of God is: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him.† I have spoken all by My Word, my Son; fix thine eyes upon Him, for in Him I have spoken and revealed all, and thou wilt find in Him more than thou desirest or askest. For if thou desirest partial visions, revelations, or words, fix thine eyes upon Him, and thou shalt find all. He is My whole Voice and Answer, My whole Vision and Revelation, which I spoke, answered, made, and revealed, when I gave Him to be thy Brother, Master, Companion, Ransom and Reward. I descended upon Him with My Spirit on Mount Tabor and said, 'This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him.' It is not for thee now to seek new oracles and responses; for when I spoke in former times it was to promise

The Word of God fully spoken in the Incarnation.

* Heb. i. 1.

† S. Matth. xvii. 5.

Christ: and the prayers of those who then enquired of Me were prayers for Christ and expectations of His coming, in whom all good was comprehended, according to the teaching of the Evangelists and Apostles. But, now, he who shall enquire of Me in the ancient way, or hope for an answer at My mouth, or that I should make to him any revelation, shows that he is not content with Christ, and therefore grievously wrongs My Beloved Son. While thou hast Christ thou hast nothing to ask of Me, nothing to desire in the way of visions or revelations. Look well unto Him, and thou wilt find that I have given all this and much more in Christ. If thou desirest a word of consolation from My mouth, behold My Son obedient unto Me and afflicted for My love, and thou wilt see how great is the answer I give thee. If thou desirest to learn of God secret things, fix thine eyes upon Christ, and thou wilt find the profoundest mysteries, the wisdom and marvels of God, hidden in Him: 'In Whom,' saith the Apostle, 'are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*' These treasures will be sweeter and more profitable to thee than all those things thou desirest to know. It was in these that the Apostle gloried when he said, 'I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.'† If thou desirest other visions and revelations, Divine or bodily, look upon His Sacred Humanity, and thou wilt find there more than can ever enter into thy thoughts, 'for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally.'‡

It is, therefore, unbecoming to enquire of God by supernatural ways, and there is no necessity that He should reply, for having spoken by Christ, we ought to desire nothing more. He who shall now desire to know anything by extraordinary supernatural ways, implies a defect in God, as if

* Coloss. ii. 3.

† 1 Cor. ii. 2.

‡ Coloss. ii. 9.

He had not given us enough when He gave us His only Son. For though we should enquire of Him, admitting the Faith and believing it, we should be guilty of curiosity showing but little faith. If we are thus curious we cannot expect to be taught, nor receive any other help in the supernatural way. For at that moment when Christ, dying on the cross cried out, 'it is consummated,*' not these forms of prayer only, but all the rites and ceremonies also of the Old Law were done away with.

We must, therefore, be guided now by the teaching of Christ, of His Church and ministers, and through it seek the remedy for all our spiritual ignorance and infirmities. It is in this way that we shall obtain an abundant relief; all that goes beyond this, or neglects it, is not curiosity only, but great rashness; and we are to rely upon nothing supernatural which does not rest on the teaching of Christ, God and man, and of His ministers. So great is the obligation to do this, that S. Paul said: 'Though we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach to you a gospel, beside that which you have received, let him be anathema.†' Seeing, then, that it is true that we must abide in the teaching of Christ, that all beside is nothing and not to be believed, unless it be in harmony therewith, he laboureth in vain who attempts to converse with God according to the way of the ancient dispensation. Moreover, it was not lawful in those days for everyone to enquire of God—neither did God answer everyone—but only for the Priests and the Prophets, for it was at their mouth that men were to seek for the law and knowledge. Whenever, therefore, anyone enquired of God, he did so through a prophet or a priest, and not by himself. And if David from time to time enquired of God, it was because he was himself a prophet, and even then he did not do so

Knowledge
of God
through the
Church.

* S. John xix. 30.

† Galat. i. 8.

BOOK
II.

God appoints
ministers,
from whom
men must
learn His
Truth and
Will.

without assuming the priestly robe; as we learn from his words to Abiathar, 'bring me hither the Ephod,'* which was one of the chief sacerdotal vestments. When the Ephod was brought, then it was he enquired of God. But at other times he made use of the services of Nathan and other prophets. Men were to believe that what the priests said to them came from God, because it was spoken by the mouth of prophets and of priests, and not because they themselves judged it safe. The words of God in those days were not meant by Him to be fully relied on, unless uttered by the mouth of priests and prophets; for it is the will of God that man should be governed and directed by another man like himself, and that we should not give entire belief to His own supernatural communications, nor rely securely upon them, until they shall have passed through the human channel of another man's mouth. And so it is, whenever He reveals anything to the human soul, He does so by inclining that soul, and him to whom it should be made known, to the matter of His revelation. Until then, the soul will be destitute of entire satisfaction therein, in order that man may obtain it through another like himself, and whom God has appointed to stand in His place.

Such was the case with Gideon, to whom God had more than once promised victory over the Madianites. He continued, nevertheless, to hesitate and fear, God having left him in this weakness, until he heard from the mouth of men that which God had announced Himself. So when God saw him hesitate, He said unto him, 'Arise, and go down into the camp. . . . and when thou shalt hear what they are saying, then shall thy hands be strengthened, and thou shalt go down more secure into the enemies' camp.'† So, when he had penetrated within the camp of the Madianites, he

* 1 Kings xxx. 7.

† Judg. vii. 9, 11.

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XXII.

Hesitation
of Gideon
and of Moses.

heard one of them tell another how he had dreamed that Gideon conquered them. Upon this he took courage, and with great joy made his preparations for battle. It appears from this, that God's will was that he should not feel secure till he heard from another, what God had revealed Himself.

A like event in the life of Moses is more wonderful still. God sent him with many instructions, confirming them by miracles—the rod he had was changed into a serpent, and his hand became leprous—to be the deliverer of the people of Israel. But Moses was so weak, hesitating, and doubtful of his course, that, notwithstanding God's being angry with him, he could not resolve to undertake his work until God encouraged him by the mouth of Aaron his brother: 'Aaron the Levite is thy brother; I know that he is eloquent; behold, he cometh forth to meet thee, and, seeing thee, shall be glad at heart. Speak to him, and put My words in his mouth, and I will be in thy mouth and in his mouth.*' When Moses heard this he took courage, in the hope of that comfort which he was to receive from the counsels of his brother Aaron.

Such, too, is the conduct of the humble soul: it will not presume to converse with God by itself, neither can it satisfy itself without human counsel and direction. Such, also, is the will of God, for He draws near to those who come together in the way of truth, to make it clear, and to strengthen them in it, as He promised to do in the case of Moses and Aaron—namely, to be in the mouth of them both. He has promised us in His Gospel to help us in the same way, saying, 'Where there are two or three gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.'† Where two or three meet together, to consider what is for the greater glory and honour of My Name, there am I in the midst of

Mutual coun-
sel a means of
Divine light
and strength.

* Ex. iv. 14, 15.

† S. Matt. xviii. 20.

BOOK
II.Submission
to the
Church the
security
against
deception.

them, enlightening them, and confirming the truths of God in their hearts. Remember, He does not say: Where one is, but where two are, at the least. He would have us know that it is not His will that anyone should, trusting to himself, rely on the Divine communications; and that He will not establish us therein without the authority and direction of the Church or His ministers. God will not enlighten him who is alone, nor confirm the truth in his heart: such an one will be weak and cold.

Peril of self-
guidance.

This truth is insisted on by the Preacher, saying, 'Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth, he hath none to lift him up. And if two lie together, they shall warm one another: how shall one alone be warmed? And if a man prevail against one, two shall withstand him.* They shall 'warm one another' in the fire of God; and he that is alone cannot be but cold in the things of God. If the evil one prevail against those who are alone in their spiritual affairs, two, that is the penitent and his director, shall resist him when they come together to learn and practise the truth. And in general, until this be done, he who is alone is weak and tepid in it, notwithstanding he may have heard it of God more than once. S. Paul himself, having preached the Gospel for some time, and having received it, not from man, but from God, would not proceed further without conferring with S. Peter and the other Apostles, lest he should 'run, or had run in vain.†

Prudence of
S. Paul.

It is clear from these words of the Apostle, that it is not safe to rely on what seems to be a revelation from God, except under the conditions I have described. For even if a person were certain that a particular revelation is from God, as S. Paul was of the Gospel—for he had begun to preach it—still such an one might err in the execution of his work and in matters pertaining to it. For God does not always

* Eccles. iv. 10, 11, 12.

† Gal. ii. 2.

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reveal the one, while He reveals the other; frequently He reveals a matter without revealing how it is to be brought about—because, in general, all that is within the province of human sagacity and skill He does not Himself perform nor declare, though He may have conversed familiarly for a long time with him to whom the revelation is made. S. Paul understood this well, for though he knew that the Gospel he preached was a Divine revelation, he 'conferred' with S. Peter.

We have a most clear illustration of this truth in the life of Moses. Though God conversed so familiarly with him, He never gave him the salutary counsel which Jethro suggested, that he should appoint other judges to assist him, that the people might not 'wait from morning till night.' 'Provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, in whom there is truth . . . who may judge the people at all times.* God approved of the counsel of Jethro, but He gave it not, because the matter was within the limits of human prudence and discretion.

Counsel of
Jethro.

In the same way, too, all things relating to visions and Divine locutions, which are within the compass of human prudence and discretion, are not made known to us by God: it being always His will, that we should make use of our natural endowments, so far as possible; except in matters of Faith, which transcend the province of Judgment and Reason, though they are not contrary to them. Let no man, therefore, imagine, although God and His Saints converse familiarly with him about many things, that they will also reveal to him the faults he commits with respect to the matter of the revelation; for he may ascertain these in another way. We must not be too confident in this matter; for S. Peter himself, the Prince of the Church, and immediately taught of God, fell into error in his intercourse with the Gentiles. God was silent, and

Harmony of
Reason and
Faith.

* Ex. xviii. 21, 22.

BOOK
II.S. Paul
rebukes
S. Peter.

S. Paul rebuked him, as he tells us himself: 'When I saw that they walked not uprightly unto the truth of the Gospel, I said to Cephas, before them all: If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as the Jews do, how dost thou compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?*' God did not warn Peter of his fault, because he might have known it in the ordinary way. In the Day of Judgment God will punish many for sins and errors, with whom He holds familiar intercourse now, and to whom He gives much light and strength; because they are negligent in what they know they ought to do — relying on their converse with Him, and disregarding all besides. Such persons will then be astonished, as our Lord tells us; and they will cry, 'Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in Thy Name, and cast out devils in Thy Name, and done many miracles in Thy Name?' The answer of the Judge will be, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you that work iniquity.'† Of the number of these was Balaam, and others like him, who were sinners, even though God held converse with them. God will also rebuke the Elect, His own friends, with whom he conversed familiarly in this life, for the faults and negligences of which they are guilty. It is not necessary for Him to warn them now directly, because He has given them Reason and the Natural Law to remind them of their errors.

Obedience
better than
miracles.God the
Author of
Reason and
the Natural
Law.

In conclusion, then, I say—and I gather it from the foregoing principle—that all communications made to the soul, of whatever kind and in whatever form, ought to be clearly, distinctly, and simply revealed to our spiritual director forthwith, and in all truthfulness. Though such communications seem to us of no moment, and not worth the time they take up in recounting them—seeing that the soul, by rejecting them and making no account of them, remains secure, as I

* Gal. ii. 14.

† S. Matt. vii. 22, 23.

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XXII.Three fruits
of openness
with
Spiritual
Director:—

have said; and more especially if they are visions or revelations or other supernatural visitations, whether clear or not, or whether it be of no importance or not that they should be so — still it is absolutely necessary to reveal them, though we may think otherwise ourselves. There are three reasons why it should be done:

1. God reveals many things, the fruit, meaning, and certainty of which He does not establish in the soul until he, whom God has constituted the spiritual judge of that soul, has had them before him; for it is he who has the power to bind and to loose, to approve and reject, those communications, as I have shown by the illustrations I have given. Daily experience teaches us the same truth; for those humble souls, to whom these visitations are made, attain to renewed satisfaction, strength, enlightenment, and security, as soon as they have revealed them to the rightful person. Yea, such is the fruit of this submission, that some who, until they had revealed them, thought they had received them not, and that they were not theirs, after revealing them receive them as it were anew.

1. Clear
under-
standing.

2. In general the soul to whom these communications are made requires instruction therein, that it may be directed in that way to poverty of spirit and detachment, which is the Obscure Night. For if the necessary instructions fail — even when the soul does not seek these things — the result will be an unconscious rudeness in the spiritual way, and a falling back upon the way of sense.

2. Detach-
ment of
spirit.

3. An unreserved communication is necessary for humbling and mortifying the soul, though we make no account of these visions, and regard them not. For there are some souls who have a great repugnance to reveal these matters, because they think them to be of no importance, and do not know how their spiritual director may deal with them. This is a want of humility, and therefore such persons must

3. Humility.

submit to reveal them. On the other hand, there are some who are ashamed to make known these things, lest they should seem to be like the Saints, or for other reasons which fill them with pain when they speak. These, therefore, think themselves dispensed from manifesting their state, because they attribute no importance to it. But this is the very reason why they should mortify themselves, and reveal what has passed within them, until they become humble, gentle, and ready in this, and ever afterwards reveal with facility their interior state.

Advice to
Spiritual
Directors.

But remember, though I say that these communications are to be set aside, and that confessors should be careful not to discuss them with their penitents, it is not right for spiritual directors to show themselves severe in the matter, nor betray any contempt or aversion; lest their penitents should shrink within themselves, and be afraid to reveal their condition, and so fall into many inconveniences, which would be the case if the door were thus shut against them. For, as I have said before, these supernatural visitations are means in the hands of God for guiding souls, and, being such, they must not be lightly regarded by spiritual directors, who are not to be surprised nor scandalised at them; yea, rather, they must treat them with gentleness and calmness, encouraging their penitents, and giving them every opportunity to explain them. And, if it be necessary, they must enjoin upon them this manifestation, for at times, everything is necessary in the difficulty, which penitents experience when they have to reveal their state. Let them direct them by faith, carefully instructing them to turn away from these supernatural visitations, showing them how to be detached therefrom in mind and desire, so that they may advance, and understand that one good work, or act of the will, wrought in charity is more precious in the eyes of God, than that which all the visions and revelations of Heaven might effect; and

Works of
love better
than visions
of Heaven.

that many souls, to whom visions have never come, are incomparably more advanced in the Way of Perfection, than others to whom many have been given.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Of the purely Spiritual Apprehensions of the Intellect.

I HAVE been somewhat concise in the discussion of those intellectual apprehensions which are derived from the senses, if we regard the abundance of the matter, and I am unwilling to pursue it at greater length; because, so far as my purpose is concerned—which is the extrication of the intellect from them, and the direction of it into the Night of Faith—I think I have said more than enough. I shall now, therefore, enter on the discussion of the other four apprehensions of the intellect, which, in the tenth chapter, I said were purely spiritual—namely, Visions, Revelations, Locutions, and Spiritual Impressions. I call these purely spiritual, because they do not reach the intellect, like those which are corporeal and imaginary, by the way of the senses of the body; but because they reach it independently of every bodily sense, interior or exterior, clearly and distinctly in a supernatural way, and passively; that is, irrespectively of, at least, any active operation on the part of the soul itself.

First kind of
supernatural
spiritual
knowledge,—
Distinct.

Speaking generally, we may say that these four apprehensions may be called visions of the soul; for we say that the soul sees when it understands. And inasmuch as all these apprehensions are intelligible to the intellect, we say that they are spiritually visible; and therefore the particular intelligence of them, formed in the intellect, may be called intellectual vision. And as all the objects of the senses—of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching—in so far as

Comprising
purely
spiritual—
1. Visions.
2. Revela-
tions.
3. Locutions.
4. Impres-
sions.

BOOK
II.

The Intelligible seen by the Eye of the Soul.

they are true or false, are objects of the intellect, it follows that, as all that is bodily visible is an occasion of corporeal visions to the bodily eyes; so all that is intelligible is an occasion of spiritual vision to the spiritual eye of the soul, which is the intellect; for, as I have said, to understand is to see. And thus, speaking generally, these four apprehensions may be called visions. The other senses, however, cannot be thus applied, for not one of them is capable of receiving, as such, the subject-matter of another.

Explanation of terms.

But as these apprehensions are represented to the soul in the same manner as to all the senses, it follows, to use the proper and specific terms, that all which the intellect receives by the way of seeing—for it can see spiritually, as the eyes see bodily—may be called Vision; that which it receives by apprehending and perceiving new things, Revelation; that which it receives by the way of hearing, Locution; and that which it receives in the way of the other senses, such as spiritual odour, taste, and delectation, of which the soul is supernaturally conscious, may be called Spiritual Impressions. From all this the intellect elicits an act of intelligence or spiritual vision, as I have said, without perceiving any form, image, or figure whatever of the natural imagination or fancy, which could furnish any foundation for it: for these things are communicated directly to the soul by a supernatural operation and by supernatural means.

The intellect, therefore, must be extricated from these things also — precisely as from the corporeal and imaginary apprehensions — by being guided and directed into the spiritual Night of Faith to the Divine and substantial Union of the love of God. For if this be not effected, the intellect will be perplexed and rude; and that solitude and detachment from them, which is requisite for travelling on the Way of Union, will be prevented. For, admitting that these apprehensions are more exalted, more profitable and safe,

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than those which are corporeal and imaginary — inasmuch as they are interior, purely spiritual, and less liable to the intrusions of Satan — because they are communications of God to the soul, in the greatest pureness and subtlety, independent of, at least, any active operations of the soul or of the imagination; still the intellect may be not only embarrassed by them, but, by its incautiousness, greatly deluded.

I might now finish with these four apprehensions together, by giving advice common to them all, as I have already done with the others — namely; let no man seek them or desire them: still, inasmuch as a different course will enlighten us how to do so, and as there is something still to be said with reference to them, I think it well to treat of each one of them in particular. With this view I now proceed to speak of the first of them—Spiritual or Intellectual Visions.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Of the two kinds of Spiritual Visions which come by the supernatural way.

I SAY, then, speaking directly of the Spiritual Visions, independent of any bodily sense, that there are two kinds to which the intellect is liable: one of corporeal substances, another of abstract or incorporeal substances. The corporeal visions are visions of all material things in heaven and earth, visible to the soul in a certain light emanating from God, in which distant things of heaven and earth may be seen. The other visions of incorporeal things require a higher light: thus visions of incorporeal substances, as of Angels and of souls, are not frequent or natural in this life; and still less so is the vision of the Divine Essence, which is

First source of distinct supernatural spiritual knowledge,—Intellectual Vision.

Two kinds.
1. Of the Corporeal.
2. Of the Spiritual.

BOOK
II.Spiritual
Visions of
incorporeal
substances.Examples of
S. Paul,
Moses, and
Elias.

peculiar to the Blessed, unless it be communicated transiently by a dispensation of God, or by conservation of our natural life and condition, and the abstraction of the spirit; as was perhaps the case of S. Paul when he heard the unutterable secrets in the third heaven, 'Whether in the body,' saith he, 'I know not, or out of the body, I know not; God knoweth.'* It is clear from the words of the Apostle that he was carried out of himself, by the act of God, as to his natural existence.

It is also believed that God showed His own Essence to Moses, for He said unto him that He would set him in a hole of the rock, and protect him with His right hand, that he might not die when His glory passed by.† This passing by was a transient vision, God upholding with His right hand the natural life of Moses. But these Essential Visions, such as those of S. Paul, Moses, and our father Elias, when, at the whistling of a gentle air, he 'covered his face with his mantle,'‡ are transient and of most rare occurrence, and scarcely ever granted, and to very few; for God shows them only to those who, like these, are the mighty ones of His Church and Law.

Now, though, in the ordinary course, these visions cannot be clearly and distinctly seen in this life, the effect of them may be felt in the very substance of the soul, through the instrumentality of a loving knowledge, in the most sweet touch and union pertaining to the spiritual impressions, of which, by the grace of God, I shall speak hereafter. The end I have in view is the Divine Embracing, the Union of the soul with the Divine Substance. I shall speak of it when I treat of the mystical, confused, or obscure intelligence, and explain how, in this loving and obscure knowledge, God unites Himself with the soul, eminently and Divinely. For

* 2 Cor. xii. 2.

† Ex. xxxiii. 22.

‡ 3 Kings xix. 13.

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this loving obscure knowledge, which is Faith, serves, in a manner, in this life as means of the Divine union, as the light of glory hereafter serves for the Beatific Vision.

Let me now, then, speak of visions of corporeal substances, spiritually presented to the soul, after the manner of bodily visions. As the eyes behold bodily things in natural light, so the intellect, in light supernaturally derived, beholds interiorly the same natural things, and others also such as God wills; the vision, however, is different in kind and form, for spiritual or intellectual visions are much more clear and subtle than bodily visions. When God grants this favour to any one, He communicates to him that supernatural light, wherein he beholds what God wills, most easily and most distinctly, whether they be things of heaven or of earth; neither is their presence nor absence any impediment to the vision.

When these visions occur, it is as if a door were opened into a most marvellous light, whereby the soul sees, as men do when the lightning suddenly flashes in a dark night. The lightning makes surrounding objects visible for an instant, and then leaves them in obscurity, though the forms of them remain in the fancy. But in the case of the soul the vision is much more perfect; for those things it saw in spirit in that light are so impressed upon it, that whenever God enlightens it again, it beholds them as distinctly as it did at first, precisely as in a mirror, in which we see objects reflected whenever we look upon it. These visions once granted to the soul never again leave it altogether; for the forms remain, though they become somewhat indistinct in the course of time.

The effects of these visions in the soul are quietness, enlightenment, joy like glory, sweetness, pureness, love, humility, inclination or elevation of the mind to God, sometimes more, sometimes less, sometimes more of one, some-

Spiritual
Visions of
corporeal
substances.1. Their
nature.2. Their
permanent
character.3. Their
effects. X

BOOK
II.Diabolic
spiritual
visions.How distin-
guished from
those of God.

times more of another, according to the disposition of the soul and the will of God.

The devil, too, can produce or mimic these visions by means of a certain natural light. He employs therein the fancy, in which, by spiritual insinuations, he presents clearly before the mind either present or distant things. And some Doctors, commenting on that place in the Gospel where it is written that the devil 'showed' our Lord 'all the kingdoms of the world,'* say that he did so by a spiritual insinuation, because it was impossible to see at once 'all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them' with the bodily eyes. But there is a great difference between the visions of God and those of the evil one. For the effect of the latter is not like that of the former: those of Satan result in dryness of spirit, in a tendency to self-esteem, to accept and make much of visions: and in no degree whatever do they produce the gentleness of humility, and love of God. Again, the forms of the diabolic visions do not remain impressed on the soul with the sweet clearness of the others, neither do they endure, yea, rather, are immediately effaced, unless it be when the soul attaches itself to them: in that case the importance attached to them causes them to be remembered naturally, but with great dryness of spirit, and without the fruit of humility and love, which issue out of the good visions, whenever they recur to the memory.

These visions, inasmuch as they are visions of created things, between which and God there is no congruity or proportion, cannot subserve the intellect as proximate means of the Divine union. It is, therefore, necessary for the soul to be negatively disposed with respect to them, as well as to the others, if it is to advance by the proximate means,

* S. Matt. iv. 8; vide S. Thom. 3, p. q. 41, a. 2, 3; Abulensem in Matt. iv. q. 49.

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which is Faith. And therefore the forms which these visions show, and which remain impressed on the soul, must not be treasured up nor preserved, neither must we trust to them; for this would be to embarrass ourselves by dwelling on forms, images, and persons, which relate to the interior life, and not to advance in the denial of all things onwards unto God. For supposing that these forms are continually present, that would be no great hindrance, if we make no account of them. Though it be true that the recollection of them excites the soul to a certain love of God, and to Contemplation, yet pure faith and detachment in darkness excites it much more, without the soul's knowing how or whence it cometh. The end of this will be that the soul goes forward, on fire with the anxieties of the most pure love of God, without knowing whence they come or on what foundations they rest. In short, as faith is rooted and infused more and more into the soul, in this emptiness and darkness, in detachment from all things, in poverty of spirit — these are different expressions of one and the same thing — so also the Charity of God is the more rooted and infused into the soul. And therefore the more the soul strives to become blind and annihilated as to all interior and exterior things, the more it will be filled with Faith and Love and Hope. But this love at times is neither comprehended nor felt, because it does not establish itself in the senses with tenderness, but in the soul with fortitude, with greater courage and resolution than before; though it sometimes overflows into the senses, and shows itself tender and gentle.

In order, then, to attain to this love, joy, and delight which visions effect, it is necessary that the soul should have fortitude, and be mortified; so as to abide willingly in emptiness and darkness, and to lay the foundation of its love and delight on what it neither sees nor feels, on what

Effective and
affective
love.

BOOK
II.

it cannot see nor feel—namely, on God Incomprehensible and Supreme. Our way to Him is therefore, of necessity, in self-denial. Even if a soul were so wise, strong, and humble that the devil could not delude it by visions, nor make it presumptuous, as he generally does, it will make no progress, because it puts obstacles in the way of spiritual detachment and poverty of spirit, and emptiness in faith, the essential conditions of the Divine union.

As the principles established in the nineteenth and the twentieth chapters, concerning the visions and supernatural apprehensions of the senses, are applicable to these visions also, I shall not spend further time now in treating of them at greater length.

CHAPTER XXV.

Of Revelations: their nature and division.

Second
source,—
Spiritual
Revela-
tions,—what.

I HAVE now to speak, in the order laid down, of the spiritual apprehensions, which I have called Revelations. Of these, some properly belong to the spirit of Prophecy. In the first place, a revelation is nothing else but the disclosure of some hidden truth, or the manifestation of some secret or mystery. For instance, God permits a certain soul to understand a particular matter, declaring the truth of it to the intellect, or makes known certain things that He hath done, is doing, or intends to do. This being so, we may say that there are two kinds of revelations: one, the disclosure of truths to the intellect, properly called intellectual knowledge or intelligence; the other, a manifestation of secrets, and this is called revelation with more propriety than the former. The first kind, strictly speaking, cannot be called revelation, because it consists in God's making the soul to understand pure truths,

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regarding not only temporal but also spiritual things, showing them openly and distinctly. I have resolved to treat of them under the term Revelations—first, because of their mutual connection and proximity, and, secondly, because I would not multiply distinctions.

I distinguish revelations therefore into two kinds of apprehensions—intellectual knowledge, and the manifestation of the secrets and hidden mysteries of God. I shall conclude the subject, with the utmost brevity, in two chapters; and, first, of intellectual knowledge.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Intelligence of pure truths. Two kinds thereof. The conduct of the soul therein.

THE intelligence of pure truths requires, for its proper explanation, that God should hold the hand and wield the pen of the writer. Keep in mind, my dear reader, that these matters are beyond all words. But as my purpose is not to discuss them, but to teach and direct the soul through them to the Divine union, it will be enough if I speak of them concisely within certain limits, so far as my subject requires it.

This kind of visions, or rather of knowledge of pure truths, is very different from that described in the twenty-second chapter, for it is not the same with the intellectual visions of bodily things. It consists in understanding or seeing with the intellect the truths of God, or of things, or concerning things which are, have been, or will be. It is most like to the spirit of Prophecy, as I shall perhaps hereafter explain. This kind of knowledge is twofold: one relates to the Creator, the other to creatures. And though both kinds are most full of sweetness, the delight produced by that which relates to God is not to be compared to aught beside; and there are

First kind of
Revelations,
—Intelli-
gence of pure
truths.Its definition
and division.

BOOK
II.

neither words nor language to describe it, for it is the knowledge of God Himself and His delights; as the Psalmist saith, 'There is no one like to Thee.'*

1. Super-natural intuition of God and His Attributes.

This knowledge relates directly unto God, in the deepest sense of some of His Attributes; now of His Omnipotence, now of His Might, and again of His Goodness and Sweetness; and whenever the soul feels it, it is penetrated by it. In so far as this becomes pure Contemplation, the soul sees clearly that it cannot describe it otherwise than in general terms, which the abundance of delight and happiness forces from it; but still those are not adequate expressions of what it feels within. Thus David, having had experience of this state, makes use of ordinary words, saying, 'The judgments of the Lord,' that is, what we judge and feel about God, His Might and His Attributes, 'are true, justified in themselves, more to be desired than gold and many precious stones, and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.'†

Examples of David, Moses, and S. Paul.

When God gave Moses the knowledge of Himself, while passing by, all that Moses could say was uttered in ordinary words. For when the Lord passed before him he fell prostrate on his face, and said, 'O the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion and true, Who keepeth mercy unto thousands!'‡ It is evident from this that Moses was unable to describe what he learned of God in that particular knowledge, and so gave utterance to these words. And though at times, when this knowledge is vouchsafed to the soul, words are uttered, yet the soul knows full well that it has in nowise expressed what it felt, because it is conscious that there are no words of adequate signification. Thus S. Paul, admitted to this knowledge of God, did not attempt to express it, only saying that he had 'heard secret words which it is not granted to man to utter.'§

* Ps. xxxix. 6.

† Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7.

‡ Ps. xviii. 11.

§ 2 Cor. xii. 4.

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This Divine knowledge concerning God never relates to particular things, because it is conversant with the Highest, and therefore cannot be explained unless when it is extended to some truth less than God, which is capable of being described; but this general knowledge is ineffable. It is only a soul in union with God that is capable of this profound loving knowledge, for it is itself that union. This knowledge consists in a certain contact of the soul with the Divinity, and it is God Himself Who is then felt and tasted, though not manifestly and distinctly, as it will be in glory. But this touch of knowledge and of sweetness is so deep and so profound that it penetrates into the inmost substance of the soul, and the devil cannot interfere with it, nor produce anything like it—because there is nothing else comparable with it—nor infuse any sweetness or delight which shall at all resemble it. This knowledge savours, in some measure, of the Divine Essence and of everlasting life, and the devil has no power to simulate anything so great.

Nevertheless, the devil is able to produce certain pretended imitations of it, by representing to the soul a certain grandeur and sensible fulness, striving to persuade it that this is God; but he cannot so do this that his influence shall penetrate into the interior part of the soul, renew it, and fill it with love profoundly, as the knowledge of God does. For there are some acts of knowledge and touches of God, wrought by Him in the substance of the soul, which so enrich it that one of them is sufficient, not only to purge away at once certain imperfections, which had hitherto resisted the efforts of a whole life, but also to fill the soul with virtues and Divine gifts. Such is the sweetness and deep delight of these touches of God, that one of them is more than a recompense for all the sufferings of this life, however great their number. They render the soul so generous and so courageous

Bliss and Power of the Touches of God.

in the endurance of afflictions for God, that it becomes a special pain to see its tribulations diminished.

Now the soul can never ascend to the height of this knowledge by any reflections or imagination, because it transcends all these, and so God effects it without the cooperation of the soul. Sometimes, when the soul least thinks of it, and when it least desires it, God touches it divinely, causing certain recollections of Himself. Sometimes, too, the Divine touches are sudden, occurring even while the soul is occupied with something else, and that occasionally of trifling moment. They are also so sensible and efficacious, that at times they make not only the soul, but the body also, to tremble. At other times they come gently, without any agitation whatever, accompanied by a deep sense of delight and spiritual refreshing.

On other occasions, they come at the hearing or utterance of particular expressions, whether taken from the Holy Scripture or elsewhere. But they are not always equally sensible and efficacious, for they are very often exceedingly slight; but however slight they may be, one of these recollections and touches of God is more profitable to the soul than any other knowledge of, or meditation on, the creatures and works of God. And as this knowledge is communicated suddenly, and independently of the will, the soul must not strive to receive it, or strive not to receive it, but be humble and resigned; for God will do His own work, how and when He will. I do not say that the soul is to conduct itself negatively here, as in the case of the other apprehensions; because the Divine touches are a part of the Union, to which I would direct the soul, and for attaining unto which I teach it to withdraw and detach itself from all besides. The means by which God effects this great work must be humility and patient suffering for love of Him, with resignation and indifference as to all reward. These graces are not bestowed

on the soul which cleaves to anything of its own, inasmuch as they are wrought by an especial Love of God towards the soul, which also loves Him in perfect detachment and pure disinterestedness. This is the meaning of those words of our Lord, 'He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father: and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.'* These words refer to this knowledge and these touches, of which I am speaking, and which God manifests to the soul that truly loves Him.

The second kind of knowledge, or of visions of interior truths, is very different from this, being of things greatly lower than God. It includes the perception of the truth of things in themselves, of actions and events in the world. Such is the nature of this knowledge, whenever it is given, that it compels assent, without regard to any assertion on the part of others; even if the matter be told otherwise, the soul is unable to assent interiorly to that account, though it may do violence to itself for that end. The mind perceives something else in that which had been spiritually presented to it, and sees it, as it were, clearly. This may belong to the spirit of Prophecy, or to that gift which S. Paul calls 'the discerning of spirits.'† Still, though the soul may hold what it perceives to be certain and true, it must not on that account refuse belief and obedience to its spiritual director, though his counsels contradict the impressions received. This must be done in order that the soul may be directed in Faith to the Divine union, towards which it should journey by believing rather than by understanding.

The Holy Scriptures furnish clear evidence of both the one and the other. The particular knowledge of things is thus spoken of by the Wise Man: 'He hath given me the true knowledge of the things that are: to know the disposition of the whole world and the virtues of the elements. The

* S. John xiv. 21.

† 1 Cor. xii 10.

BOOK
II.Infused
knowledge of
Solomon.

beginning and ending, and midst of the times; the alterations of their courses, and the changes of seasons; the revolutions of the year, and the dispositions of the stars; the natures of living creatures, and the rage of wild beasts; the force of winds, and reasonings of men; the diversities of plants, and the virtues of roots; and all such things as are hid and not foreseen, I have learned: for Wisdom, which is the worker of all things, taught me.* And though this knowledge of all things, which the Wise Man says he had received from God, was infused and general, the passage before us is sufficient evidence for all the particular knowledge which God infuses into souls supernaturally, according to His good pleasure: not that He gives a general habit of knowledge, as He gave to Solomon, but that He reveals occasionally certain truths concerning those matters which the Wise Man speaks of.

Gratias gratis
datae.

Though our Lord infuses into many souls habits of knowledge relating to many things, still He does not infuse them so generally as in the case of Solomon. There is a difference like that between the gifts, mentioned by S. Paul, which God distributes; among these are wisdom, knowledge, faith, prophecy, discerning of spirits, divers kinds of tongues, and interpretation of speeches: 'To one indeed, by the Spirit, is given the word of wisdom. . . . and to another the word of knowledge, . . . to another faith, . . . to another prophecy, to another the discerning of spirits, to another divers kinds of tongues, to another interpretation of speeches.'† All these kinds of knowledge are infused *gratias gratis datae*, gratuitously given of God to whom He will, as He gave them to the holy Prophets and the Apostles, and to other Saints.

But over and above these gifts, or *gratias gratis datae*, perfect persons, or those who are advancing to Perfection,

* Wisd. vii. 17-21.

† 1 Cor. xii. 8-10.

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very frequently receive the knowledge of things present or distant, in a certain illumination of their purified and enlightened mind. The following words are applicable in this sense: 'As the faces of them that look therein, shine in the water, so the hearts of men are laid open to the prudent.'* This is to be understood of those who have attained to the Science of the Saints, in Holy Scripture called Prudence.† In the same way, too, spiritual persons understand other things, though not always when they will: for this gift is theirs only who have the habit of this knowledge, and even they sometimes are at fault, because all this depends on the good pleasure of God.

Those persons, whose minds are purified, ascertain with great facility, some better than others, what is passing in the hearts of men, their inclinations and their capacities; and this from certain outward signs, however slight they may be, such as expressions, motions, or gestures. As the devil, being a spirit, can do this, so also the spiritual man, according to the words of the Apostle: 'The spiritual man judgeth all things,'‡ and 'the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God.'§ Therefore, though spiritual men cannot, in the order of nature, know the thoughts and intentions of others, yet by supernatural enlightenment, through certain signs, they may well do so. And though they may be often deceived in their interpretation of these signs, yet for the most part they will be correct. But we are not to rely on any of these means, for the devil may insinuate himself herein with exceeding cunning, as we shall presently see, and in consequence of this, we must renounce this method and form of knowledge.

Science of
the Saints.

Spiritual persons are able to see, though distant, what

* Prov. xxvii. 19.

† 1 Cor. ii. 15.

† Ib. ix. 10.

§ Ib. 10.

other men are doing. We have an instance of this in our holy Father Eliseus, who saw his servant Giezi hide the gifts he had received from Naaman. 'Was not my heart present,' saith the Prophet, 'when the man turned back from his chariot to meet thee?''* Eliseus saw in spirit the act, as if he had been present on the spot. The same Prophet saw also what passed in the council of the King of Syria, and revealed it to the King of Israel, thereby frustrating the devices of the former. So when the King of Syria saw that his plans became known to his enemy, he complained to his people, saying: 'Why do you not tell me who it is that betrays me to the King of Israel? And one of his servants said, No one, my Lord O King; but Eliseus the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the King of Israel all the words, that thou speakest in thy privy chamber.'†

Both the one and the other kind of this knowledge of events are granted to the soul passively, without effort on its part. For it sometimes occurs that a person, while not thinking at all of the matter, receives in spirit a vivid perception of what he hears or reads, and that with greater distinctness than the words involve; and sometimes, too, even when he knows not the language to which the words belong, the knowledge of the matter is conveyed to him without his being able to explain the terms that imply it.

As to the delusions which the devil is able to effect, and does effect, with reference to this knowledge, I have much to say. Those delusions are very great and very difficult of detection; for the devil, by way of suggestion, is able to represent much intellectual knowledge to the soul, by the use of the bodily senses, and is able to establish that knowledge so firmly as to make it appear true; and if that soul be not humble and cautious, he will no doubt cause it to believe

* 4 Kings v. 26.

† Ib. vi. 11, 12.

an infinity of lies. For the suggestions of the devil offer great violence to the soul at times, especially because the senses are weak; and he plays on that weakness with such force, persuasiveness, and determination, that much prayer and repeated efforts become necessary, in order to shake off his influence.

He is wont occasionally to reveal, falsely, but with great distinctness, the sins of others, evil consciences, and corrupt souls, with a view to detraction, and to induce him, to whom the revelation is made, to publish the sins in question, so that other sins may be added to them. He excites a false zeal, deluding him, in whom he excites it, into the belief that these revelations are intended to lead him to pray for the souls of those whom he thus traduces. It is indeed true that God sometimes represents to holy souls the necessities of their neighbours, that they may pray for them, or relieve them. He revealed to Jeremias the weakness of Baruch, that he might advise him therein.* But most frequently it is the devil that doeth this, and that falsely, that persons may be accused of sin, and afflicted: of this we have many proofs. At other times, he communicates with much certainty other kinds of knowledge, and induces men to believe them.

All such knowledge as this, whether it comes from God or not, can be but of little profit to the soul in the Way of Perfection, if it trusts to it: yea, rather, if it is not careful to reject it, it will not only hinder it on its road, but will inflict upon it great evil, and cause it to fall into many delusions; for all the dangers and inconveniences of the Supernatural Apprehensions, and many more, are to be found here. I shall, therefore, not enlarge further on this point; seeing that I have already given sufficient instruction on this

Detachment
from super-
natural
intuitions
necessary for
Perfection.

* Jerem. xlv.

matter, and shall say but this, that the penitent must be careful to reject this knowledge, walking with God in the way of knowing nothing, and to give account to his director of it all, and abide constantly by his advice.

Let the director guide his penitent quickly past this, and not suffer him to dwell upon it, because it is of no help to him on the road to the Divine union. For as I have said of those things which are passively wrought in the soul, the fruit which God wills, remains behind. I do not, therefore, think it requisite to describe the effects of this knowledge, whether true or false, for my task in such a case would be wearisome and endless. The effects in question cannot be described within reasonable limits, for as the knowledge is manifold, so are the effects of it. The true knowledge brings forth good issues, tending to good; and the false knowledge evil, tending to evil. When I say that this knowledge is to be rejected, and how it is to be done, I have said enough.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Of the second kind of Revelations, the disclosure of secrets and hidden mysteries. How they may subserve and hinder the Divine union. Of the many delusions of the devil incident to them.

Second kind
of Revela-
tions,—
Disclosure of
Mysteries.

I EXPLAINED the second kind of revelations to be the manifestation of secrets and hidden mysteries. This again is twofold. One relates to God Himself, and includes the revelation of the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity and the Divine Unity. The second relates to God in His operations, and includes all the other articles of the Holy Catholic Faith, and the truths explicitly resulting therefrom. It includes also a great number of prophetic revelations, promises, and threatenings of God, and other matters which have already been accomplished, and which shall hereafter

occur. We may also refer to this second kind of revelations, many other particular events which God ordinarily reveals, as well concerning the world in general, as also concerning particular Kingdoms, Provinces, States, families, and persons. We have abundant evidence of all this in the Holy Scriptures, especially in the books of the Prophets, where we meet with revelations of all kinds.

But as this matter is perfectly plain and clear, I will not spend my time in adducing the proofs; but content myself with saying, that these revelations are not always expressed in words, for God makes them in many and in divers ways. Sometimes He makes them by words alone, and sometimes by signs alone, figures, images, and resemblances, and at other times by both signs and words together; as we see in the Prophets, particularly in the Apocalypse, where we find not only the kinds of revelations here spoken of, but also the divers modes by which they are made.

God still in our day makes revelations of the second kind. He reveals to some individuals how long they shall live, what trials they have to endure, or what will befall such and such a person, such or such a kingdom. And even with regard to the mysteries of our Faith, He is wont to reveal the truths thereof by a special light and meaning. This, however, is not properly a revelation, because the matter of it has been already revealed, but rather a manifestation and explanation of it.

In those things, therefore, which we call revelations — I am not now using the word as relating to the Revelation of the mysteries of Faith—the devil may interfere on a great scale. For as these revelations are generally expressed by words, figures, and similitudes, the devil may also imitate the same most easily. If, however, in the first and second kind, in that which touches the Faith, any new or different revelation be made, we are in no wise to give heed to it; no, not

Revelations
divided into
1. De Deo ad
intra.
2. De Deo ad
extra.

Revelations
tested by the
Catholic
Faith.

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II.

The Catholic
Faith
always the
same.

even if we learned it from an angel from Heaven. 'Though we or an angel from Heaven,' saith the Apostle, 'preach a gospel to you beside that which you have received, let him be anathema.*' No new revelations are to be admitted in the matter of that once made, beyond what may be consistent with it, lest we should go astray by admitting contradictions, and lose the purity of Faith. We must captivate the intellect, and cleave in simplicity to the Faith and teaching of the Church, 'for faith,' saith S. Paul, 'cometh by hearing.†' No man will give heed or credit easily to new revelations, unless he has a mind to be deceived.

The devil
likened to a
cobbler.

The devil with a view to deceive mankind, and propagate delusions in the world, begins by publishing truth, and what is likely to be true, in order to gain our confidence. He resembles herein a cobbler, who with the sharp bristle at the end of his thread penetrates the leather, and then draws after it the soft and waxened part, which never could have penetrated the leather by itself, without being preceded by the hard bristle. Great circumspection is necessary here; for though it were true that the soul ran no risk of delusion, yet is it more becoming that it should not desire clear knowledge, so that it may preserve the merit of its faith in its purity and integrity, and come in this Night of the Intellect to the Divine light of Union.

It is of the utmost moment for us to close the eyes of our intellect, when a new revelation is brought to us, and rest on the ancient prophecies. The Apostle himself, though he had seen the glories of Tabor, writes, 'We have the more firm prophetic word, whereunto you do well to attend.‡' Though the vision which we saw on the Mount was true, yet the more certain and more firm is the word of revealed Prophecy, on which you do well to rest your souls.

* Galat. i. 8.

† Rom. x. 17.

‡ 2 S. Pet. i. 19.

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If it be true, for these reasons, that we ought not to regard with curiosity any new revelations on the subject-matter of the Faith; how much more ought we also, not to admit, or to give heed to, other revelations relating to other matters? It is in these that the devil in general is so strong, that I think it impossible to escape his delusions in many of them, if we do not strive to repel them; such appearance of truth and certainty does the devil throw around them. He unites together so many probabilities, and all so consistently arranged, in order to gain credit, and roots them so firmly in the senses and the imagination, that the subject of them believes them without any hesitation whatever. He makes the soul trust to them so completely, that if it were not humble, it could scarcely be persuaded of their falsehood and disentangled from his delusions.

For this cause, therefore, the pure, simple, cautious, and humble soul ought to resist and reject these revelations and other visions; for it is not necessary to seek them, yea rather it is necessary to reject them, if we are to attain to the Union of Love. This is the meaning of Sölomon when he said, 'What needeth a man to seek things that are above him?*' That is, it is not necessary for Perfection, by supernatural and extraordinary ways, to seek supernatural things which are beyond our reach.

Having, in the nineteenth and twentieth chapters, replied to the objections that may be brought forward, I now refer the reader thereto, and conclude the discussion of revelations of this sort: it being sufficient to have said that the soul ought to be very prudent in the matter, that it may walk in pureness, without illusions, in the Night of Faith, to the Divine union.

* Eccles. vii. 1.

BOOK
II.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Of the interior Locutions which occur supernaturally. Their different kinds.

Third source
of super-
natural
knowledge,—
Spiritual
Locutions.

IT is necessary for the reader to keep in mind continually the end and object which I have in view — namely, the direction of the soul, through all its natural and supernatural apprehensions, without illusion or perplexity, in pureness of faith to the Divine union with God — that he may perceive that I am not too concise; though I do not enter into divisions and subdivisions of the subject, while treating of the apprehensions of the soul, as, perhaps, the intellect might require. On the whole, I think I have furnished sufficient advice, information, and warning, to enable the soul, by a prudent behaviour, in all these interior and exterior matters, to make progress onwards. This is the reason why I have so soon dismissed the subject of Prophecy like the rest, having at the same time much to say of each kind according to their distinctive characteristics, which are so many that I should never accomplish my task. I am satisfied that I have said enough about them, and that I have given the true doctrine and the requisite cautions with reference to them, and to every other matter of a like nature that may pass within the soul.

Three kinds:
1. Successive.
2. Formal.
3. Substan-
tial.

I shall pursue the same course with the third kind of apprehensions, the Supernatural Locutions of spiritual men, which are effected without the instrumentality of the corporeal senses. These locutions, notwithstanding their variety, may be comprised under three designations: Successive, Formal, and Substantial Words. By Successive Words I mean certain words and considerations which the mind, self-recalled, forms and fashions within itself. By Formal, I mean certain distinct and definite words, which the mind receives not from itself but from a third person, sometimes

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while in a state of self-recollection, and at other times while not. By Substantial, I mean other words which are also formally in the mind, sometimes while it is recollected, and sometimes while it is not. These words produce and effect in the innermost soul that substance and power of which they are the expression. I shall speak of these in the order I have named them.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Of the first kind of words formed by the mind self-recalled. The causes of them. The advantages and disadvantages of them.

AT all times when Successive Words take place, it is when the mind is collected and absorbed by some particular subject; and while attentively considering the matter which occupies its thoughts, it proceeds from one part of it to another, puts words and reasonings together so much to the purpose, and with such facility and clearness discovers by reflection things it knew not before, that it seems to itself as if it was not itself which did so, but some third person which addressed it interiorly, reasoning, answering, and informing. And in truth there is good ground for such a notion; the mind then reasons with itself as one man does with another, and to a certain extent it is so. For though it be the mind itself that thus reasons, yet the Holy Ghost very often assists it in the formation of these conceptions, words, and reasonings. Thus the mind addresses itself to itself as if to some other person.

First kind of
interior
words,—
Successive.

For as the intellect is then united, and intently occupied, with the truth of that whereof it thinks, and as the Holy Spirit is also united with it; the intellect in this communion with the Divine Spirit, through the channel of that particular truth, forms successively within itself those other truths which

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II.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Of the interior Locutions which occur supernaturally. Their different kinds.

Third source
of super-
natural
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Spiritual
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II.

The Holy Ghost may teach a truth, which the mind puts into words.

relate to the matter before it; the Holy Ghost, the Teacher, opening the way and giving light. This is one way in which the Holy Ghost teaches us. The understanding, being thus enlightened and instructed by the great Teacher, while perceiving these truths, forms at the same time the words in question about those truths which it receives from another source. We may apply to this the saying of Isaac, 'The voice, indeed, is the voice of Jacob; but the hands are the hands of Esau.'* He who is in this state cannot believe that the words and expressions do not proceed from some third person, not knowing how easily the intellect can form words about conceptions and truths which it derives from another person.

Error may occur in Expression and Deduction.

Now, though it is true that there can be no illusion in this communication, and in the enlightenment of the intellect; still illusions may, and do, frequently occur in the formal words and reasonings which the intellect forms about them. Inasmuch as the light then bestowed is most subtle and spiritual, so much so that it is beyond the capacity of the intellect, the result is that the intellect in its own strength forms these reasonings which in consequence are often false, apparently true, or imperfect. When a man has the clue of a true principle and then deals with it by his own abilities, or in the ignorance of his weak understanding, it is an easy thing for such an one to fall into delusions, and that too, in this way, as if a third person were addressing him. I have known one who had these Successive Locutions, but who, on the subject of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, amid some most true, had others full of error.

I am terrified by what passes among us in these days. Anyone, who has barely begun to meditate, if he becomes conscious of these locutions during his self-recollection, pronounces them forthwith to be the work of God, and,

* Genes. xxvii. 22.

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considering them to be so, says, God has spoken to me, or, I have had an answer from God. But it is not true: such an one has been only speaking to himself. Besides, the affection and desire for these locutions, which men encourage, cause them to reply to themselves, and then to imagine that God has spoken. The consequence is that they fall into great disorders, if they do not restrain themselves, and if their spiritual director does not command them to abstain from these interior discourses; for the fruit of them is foolishness and impureness of soul, and not the spirit of humility and mortification. They think that these locutions are great things, that God has been speaking to them, when in truth all was little more than nothing, or nothing, or less than nothing. For what is that worth which does not beget humility and charity, mortification, and holy simplicity and silence? These locutions, then, may prove a great impediment to the Divine union, because they lead astray the soul, that thinks much of them, from the abyss of Faith, where the intellect ought to abide in obscurity, and in obscurity advance by faith in love, and not by much reasoning.

Men deceived by their own words.

True test of worth,—
what.

You will object, and say, Why must the intellect deny itself in these truths, seeing that the Spirit of God enlightens it in them, and that they cannot for that reason proceed from the evil one? I answer, the Holy Ghost enlightens the recollected intellect, and in proportion to its recollection; and, as there can be no greater recollection of the intellect than in Faith, the Holy Ghost will not enlighten it in any other way more than in that of Faith. For the more pure and complete the soul in the perfection of a living Faith the greater is the infusion of Charity, and the greater the Charity the greater the illumination, and the more abundant the graces. Though it be true that in this illumination some light is given to the soul, yet the light of Faith, wherein nothing is clearly seen, is in kind as different from it as refined

Faith, the greatest Light of the Holy Ghost.

gold from base metal, and in quantity as the sea exceeds a drop of water. In one way the soul receives the knowledge of one, two, or three truths; but in the other the Wisdom of God generally, which is His Son, in one simple universal knowledge communicated to the soul by Faith.

Faith and
Love better
than Interior
Voices.

If, again, you object and say that this is all good, and that it hinders not the other; my answer is, that it hinders it very much if the soul makes any account of it; for by doing so the soul occupies itself with evident matters and of little moment, which impede the communication of the abyss of faith, wherein God supernaturally and secretly teaches the soul, and trains it up, in a way it knows not, in virtues and in graces. We shall never profit by these Successive Locutions if we deliberately contemplate them with the intellect, for if we do this we shall lose all the good of them, as it is written, 'Turn away thy eyes from me, for they have made me flee away.'* We must therefore simply and sincerely, without applying the intellect to the matter of these supernatural communications, direct the will lovingly to God, because it is by love that these blessings are bestowed, and that in greater abundance than before. If the powers of the intellect, or of our other faculties, be actively applied to these things which are supernaturally and passively received, we shall find that our incapacity and ignorance will not reach them. They will therefore be modified and changed, and so we shall of necessity incur the hazard of delusions while forming these reasonings within ourselves. This will be neither supernatural itself, nor will in any respect resemble it, but will be something most natural and common.

There are some men whose intellect is so quick and penetrating that their conceptions, when they are self-recollected, naturally proceed with great facility, and form

* Cant. vi. 4.

themselves into these locutions and reasonings so clearly as to make them think that God is speaking. But it is not so. All this is the work of the intellect, somewhat disengaged from the operations of sense; for it may do this and even more without any supernatural help whatever, by its own natural light. This is a state of things of frequent occurrence, and many delude themselves into the belief that they have acquired the gift of prayer, and that God converses with them: they write down, or cause others to write for them, what they have experienced. And after all it is nothing: without the substance of virtue, and serving to no other end than to minister food to vanity.

Let such persons learn to disregard these locutions, and to ground the will in humble love; let them practise good works, and suffer patiently, imitating the Son of God, and mortifying themselves in all things: this, and not the abundance of interior discourses, is the road unto spiritual good.

These Interior Successive Locutions furnish occasions to the evil spirit, especially when persons have an inclination or affection for them. For when they begin to recollect themselves, the devil offers to them materials for discursive reflections, suggesting thoughts and expressions to the intellect; and then, having deceived them by things that appear to be true, casts them down to the ground. Such is his dealing with those, who have entered into a compact with him, tacit or expressed. Thus he converses with some heretics, especially with heresiarchs; he informs their intellect with most subtle thoughts and reasonings, false, however, and erroneous.

It appears, then, that these Successive Words may proceed from three sources: from the Holy Spirit, moving and enlightening; from the natural light of the intellect; and from the evil spirit suggesting. It will be rather a difficult matter to describe the signs and tokens, by which it may be known

Satan as a
logician.

BOOK
II.

Three
Spirits;
1. Divine.
2. Human.
3. Diabolic.

from which of these sources particular locutions proceed, but some general notions may be given. When the soul loves, and at the same time is humbly and reverently conscious of that love, it is a sign that these locutions come from the Holy Ghost, Who, whenever He grants us these graces, grants them through love. When they come from the vivacity and light of the intellect only, it is that which effects them without any operation of virtue—though the will may love naturally in the knowledge and light of those truths—and, when the meditation is over, the will remains cold, though not inclined to vanity or evil, unless the devil shall have tempted us anew. The Locutions of the Holy Ghost cannot issue in this, for when they are over, the will is usually affectionately disposed towards God, and inclined to good, though sometimes, certainly, the will may be dry, even after the communications of the Holy Spirit, God thus ordering it for the profit of particular souls. At other times, too, the soul will not be very sensible of the operations or motions of these virtues, and yet what passes within will have been good. This is why I have said that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish one from another, because of the various effects which they sometimes have. The effects I have mentioned are the most common, though sometimes more, and sometimes less abundant.

Their distinctive marks.

The evil Locutions are occasionally hard to distinguish, for, though they dry up the love of God in the will, and incline men to vanity, self-esteem, or complacency; still they beget at times a certain false humility and fervent affection of the will founded on self-love, which requires for its detection great spirituality of mind. This the devil brings about, the better to conceal his presence. He is able perfectly well to produce tears by the impressions he makes, and he does so that he may inspire the soul with those affections, which he desires to excite. But he always labours to move the will so

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that men shall esteem these interior communications, and make much account of them, in order to induce them to give themselves up to them, and occupy themselves with what is not virtue, but rather an occasion of losing what virtue they may have.

Let us, therefore, abide by this necessary caution, in order to escape all perplexity and delusions; never to make any account of these Locutions, from whatever source they may come, but learn how to direct our will courageously to God in the perfect fulfilment of His law and holy counsels, which is the Wisdom of the Saints, content with the knowledge of those truths and mysteries, in simplicity and sincerity, as the Holy Church sets them forth, for these are sufficient to inflame our will; without thrusting ourselves into deep and curious investigations, where the absence of danger is a miracle. It was with reference to this that S. Paul exhorts us 'not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise.*' Let this suffice on the subject of successive words.

CHAPTER XXX.

Of Interior Words formally wrought in a Supernatural way. Of the dangers incident thereto; and a necessary caution against delusions.

The second kind of interior locutions are Formal Words, uttered in the mind sometimes supernaturally, without the intervention of the senses, whether in a state of recollection or not. I call these Formal Words, because the mind formally perceives they are spoken by a third person, independently of its own operations. For this reason they are very different from those of which I have just spoken. They differ from them, not only because they take place without any effort of

Second kind
of interior
Words,—
Formal.

* Rom. xii. 3.

BOOK
II.Explanation
of Formal
Words.1. Their ob-
jective cha-
racter.

the mind, but sometimes even when the mind is not recollected, but far from thinking of what is uttered within it. This is not so in the case of Successive Words, for these always relate to the matter which then occupies the mind. The locutions of which I am now speaking are sometimes perfectly formed, sometimes not, being very often, as it were, conceptions, by which something is said, at one time in the way of an answer, at another by another mode of speaking. Sometimes it is one word, at another two or more, and occasionally successive words, as in the former case: for they continue in the way of instruction to the soul, or of discussion with it. Still all takes place without the active participation of the mind, for it is as if another person were then speaking, as we read in Daniel, who says that an Angel instructed him and spoke. This was formal successive reasoning and instruction: the Angel says, 'I am now come forth to teach thee.'*

2. Their con-
straining
power.

When these Locutions are no more than formal, the effect on the mind is not great. They are in general sent only to instruct and enlighten us on a particular subject; and it is not necessary for this purpose, that they should have another effect different from that, for which they are sent. And so whenever they come from God, they effect their object in the soul; for they render it ready to accomplish what is commanded, and enlighten it so that it understands what it hears. They do not always remove the repugnance which the soul feels, but rather increase it; and this is the operation of God, the end of which is the more perfect instruction, humiliation, and profit of the soul. This repugnance is in general the result, when great and noble deeds are commanded; and there is greater promptitude and facility, when vile and humiliating things are enjoined. Thus when Moses was

God increases
repugnance,
to perfect
the Will.

* Dan. ix. 22.

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XXX.

commanded to go unto Pharaoh, and deliver the people of Israel, he felt so great a repugnance for his task, that God was obliged to command him three times, and show him signs. And after all, this was not sufficient until God gave him Aaron, as his partner in the work, and a partaker of his dignity.

On the other hand, when these locutions are from the evil spirit, great things are readily undertaken, but humble occupations become repugnant. God hates to see men inclined to greatness and honour; for when He bids them accept dignities, and when He bestows them Himself, He wills not that they should be accepted with readiness and willingness. Formal Words differ, as to that readiness which God communicates, from the other Successive Words: these do not influence the mind so much, neither do they communicate to it so much readiness; that is an effect of the former, by reason of their greater formality, and because the intellect has less to do with them. Still this does not prevent successive locutions from having occasionally a greater influence, because of the great intercourse, that takes place at times, between the human spirit and the Divine. But there is a great difference in the manner. In the formal locutions the soul has no doubt about them, whether they come from itself or not; for it sees clearly that they do not—especially when it was not thinking of the subject to which they relate; and even when that subject occupied its thoughts, it sees most clearly and distinctly, that the locutions proceed from another.

God exalts
the Humble.

We must not make much of these Formal Locutions any more than of the Successive. For over and above the occupation of the mind with that, which is not the legitimate and proximate means of Union with God, namely Faith, there is also the too certain risk of diabolical delusions. We can scarcely distinguish at times what locutions come from a good, and what from an evil, spirit. And as the

effects of them are not great, we can hardly distinguish them by that test; for sometimes the diabolic locutions have a more sensible influence on the imperfect, than the Divine locutions on spiritual, persons. We must, also, not obey them at once, whether they come from a good or evil spirit. But we must not neglect to manifest them to a prudent confessor, or to some discreet and learned person, who shall teach us, and decide for us, what we ought to do; and when we have had his decision, we must be resigned and indifferent in the matter. If we cannot find such a person, a man of experience, it is better in that case, accepting the substance of them, and what is safe, to disregard the rest, and to reveal the matter to no one; for it is easy to find persons who destroy souls instead of edifying them. It is not everyone 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 an affair as that.

Cautions.

Remember, too, that we must never do of our own head, or accept, anything told us in these locutions, without great deliberation and reflection. So subtle and so singular are the illusions incidental to them that, in my opinion, no soul, who does not deal with them as with an enemy, can possibly escape delusions in a greater, or less degree, in many of them. Having in the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth chapters of this book, deliberately discussed these illusions and dangers, and the cautions to be observed, I shall not enlarge upon them here. I content myself with saying, that the real and secure teaching on the subject is, not to give heed to them, however plausible they may be, but to be governed in all by Reason, and by what the Church has taught and teaches us every day.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Of the Interior Substantial Locutions: the difference between them and the Formal. The profitableness of them. The resignation and reverence of the soul in respect of them.

THE third kind of interior locutions are the Substantial Words. Though these are also formal, inasmuch as they are formally impressed on the soul, they differ from them in this; the substantial locutions produce a vivid and substantial effect in the soul, while those locutions which are only formal do not. Though it be true that every substantial locution is also formal, yet every formal locution is not substantial; but only that which really impresses on the soul what it signifies. Thus, if our Lord were to say formally to a particular soul, Be thou good; that soul would immediately be good. Or, Love thou Me; that soul would at once have and feel in itself the substance of love, that is, a true love of God. Or, again, if He were to say to a timid soul, Be not afraid; that soul would on the instant become courageous and calm. For 'The Word of God,' saith the wise man, 'is full of power.'* Thus, what the locution meaneth is substantially accomplished in the soul. This is the meaning of those words of David: 'He will give to His voice the voice of power.'† Thus, also, dealt He with Abraham, when He said unto him, 'Walk before Me, and be perfect.'‡ Abraham was then perfect, and ever walked reverently before God.

This is the power of His word in the Gospel, by which He healed the sick and raised the dead, by a word only. Such, too, are His Substantial Locutions; they are of such price and moment, as to be the life and strength and the

CHAP.
XXXI.Third kind
of interior
words,—
Substantial.1. They work
what they
signify.

* Eccles. viii. 4.

† Ps. lxxvii. 34.

‡ Genes. xvii. 1.

BOOK
II.

2. Their independence of the Will.

3. Their freedom from illusions.

Not Satan, but the Will enslaves the soul.

incomparable good of souls; for one locution of God does for the soul far more at once, than that soul has done for itself in its whole past life.

The soul is not called upon to do or attempt anything with regard to these locutions, but to be resigned and humble. It is not called upon to undervalue or fear them, nor to labour in doing what they enjoin it. For God by means of these substantial locutions works in and by the soul Himself. And herein they differ from the formal and successive locutions. The soul need not reject these locutions, for the effect of them remains substantially in the soul, and full of blessing; and therefore the action of the soul is useless, because it has received them passively.

Neither need the soul be afraid of illusions here, for these locutions are beyond the reach of the intellect or the evil spirit. The devil cannot passively produce this substantial effect in any soul whatever, so as to impress upon it the effect and habit of his locution; though he may, by his suggestions, lead those souls in whom he dwells as their lord, in virtue of their voluntary compact with him, to perform deeds of exceeding malignity. For he is able to influence them easily, because they are united to him voluntarily in the bonds of iniquity. We see, by experience, that even good men suffer violence from his suggestions, which are exceedingly strong; but if men are evilly disposed, his suggestions then are more efficacious.

But the devil cannot produce any effects resembling those of the Divine Locutions, for there is no comparison possible between his locutions and those of God. All his are as if they were not, in presence of the Divine, and their effects as nothing compared with the effects of God's locutions. This is the meaning of those words of the Prophet: 'What hath the chaff to do with the wheat? . . . Are not My words as a fire, and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in

pieces?''* Thus the Substantial Locutions conduce greatly to the Union of the soul with God; and the more interior they are, the more substantial are they and the more profitable. Blessed then is that soul to which God sends His locutions: 'Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'†

CHAP.
XXXI.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Of Intellectual Apprehensions resulting from the Interior Impressions supernaturally effected. The sources of them. The conduct to be observed by the soul, so that these apprehensions shall not hinder it on the Way of Union.

It remains for me now to discuss the fourth and last kind of apprehensions, which those spiritual impressions, frequently effected supernaturally in spiritual men, produce in the intellect. Those impressions I have reckoned among the distinct apprehensions of the intellect.‡

Fourth source of supernatural knowledge, —Spiritual Impressions.

There are two kinds of these Distinct Spiritual Impressions. The first kind is in the affection of the will. The second, though also in the will, yet because it is most intense, high, profound, and secret, seems not to touch the will, but to have been wrought in the very substance of the soul. Both the one and the other are extremely diversified. The first, when from God, is very high; but the second is the highest, of great profit and advantage. But neither the soul that receives them, nor its director, can ever know their sources, or why God effects them; they do not depend in any way upon good works or meditation, though these dispose us for them. God sends them to whom, and why, He wills.

Of two kinds.

Sometimes a person who has done many good works will never have these touches, and another of inferior merit, will

* Jerem. xxiii. 28, 29.

† 1 Kings iii. 10.

‡ Bk. ii. c. 10.

BOOK
II.

The Spirit
breathes
where He
will.

Discussion
of Spiritual
Impressions
postponed.

have them most profoundly and most abundantly. It is not necessary, therefore, for the soul to be actually occupied with spiritual things — though that is the better state — in order to be the object of the Divine touches, of which these impressions are the result, for they frequently occur when the soul is heedless of them. Some of these touches are distinct, and pass rapidly away; others less so, but of longer continuance.

These Impressions — so far as they come under this description of them — do not appertain to the intellect but to the will. I shall therefore not discuss them now, but reserve them for the treatise on the Night, or Purgation of the Will in its affections, which will form the third book. As in general, and even very frequently, a more express and perceptible apprehension, knowledge, and understanding, flow from these impressions into the intellect, it is necessary to mention it here only for that purpose.

We must, therefore, remember that, from all these impressions, whether the Divine touches which cause them, be rapid, or continuous and successive, there flows frequently into the intellect the apprehension of knowledge or understanding; which is usually a most profound and sweet sense of God, to which, as well as to the impression from which it flows, no name can be given. This knowledge comes, sometimes in one way, sometimes in another, now most deep and clear, again less so, according to the nature of the Divine touches, which occasion the impressions, and according to the nature of the impressions, of which it is the result.

It is not necessary to waste words here in cautioning and directing the Intellect, amid this knowledge, in Faith to the Divine union. For as these impressions are passively wrought in the soul, without any cooperation on its part; so also the knowledge which results from them, is passively received by the intellect — Philosophers apply the term passible to

CHAP.
XXXII.

the intellect—independently of its own exertions. In order, therefore, to escape delusions here, and not to hinder the benefits of these impressions, the intellect ought not to meddle with them, but to remain passive, inclining the will to consent freely and gratefully, and not interfering itself. For, as in the case of the Successive Locutions, the activity of the intellect can very easily disturb and destroy this delicate knowledge, which is a sweet supernatural intelligence, which no natural faculty can reach or comprehend otherwise than by the way of recipient, and never by that of agent. No effort, therefore, should be made, lest the intellect should fashion something of itself, and the devil at the same time effect an entrance into the soul with false and strange knowledge. He is well able to do this, through the channel of these impressions, by taking advantage of the bodily senses. Let the soul be resigned, humble and passive, for as it receives passively from God this knowledge; so will He communicate it, of His own good pleasure, when He sees it humble and detached. By so living, the soul will put no obstacles in the way of the profitableness of this knowledge for the Divine union: and that profitableness is great. All these touches are touches of Union, which is passively effected in the soul.

The whole teaching of this book on the subject of total abstraction and passive Contemplation, whereby we abandon ourselves into the hands of God—in the forgetfulness of all created things, in detachment from images and figures, and dwelling on the supreme truth in pure contemplation—is applicable, not only to the act of most perfect contemplation—the profound and altogether supernatural repose of which is disturbed by ‘the daughters of Jerusalem,’* namely, good meditations and reflections, if we then attempt them—but

* Cant. iii. 5. See Spiritual Canticle, stanza 29, *Introd.*, and Flame of Love, stanza 3, § xi.

Recapitulation.

BOOK
II.

also to the whole of that time, in which our Lord communicates the simple, general, and loving attention, of which I have made mention before, or when the soul, assisted by grace, is established in that state. For then we must contrive to have the intellect in repose, undisturbed by the intrusion of forms, figures, or particular knowledge, unless it were slightly and for an instant, and that with sweetness of love, to enkindle our souls the more. At other times, however, in all our acts of devotion and of good works, we must make use of good recollections and meditations, so that we may feel an increase of profit and devotion; most especially applying ourselves to the life, passion, and death of Jesus Christ our Lord, that our life and conduct may be an imitation of His.

Let this suffice for the Supernatural Apprehensions of the intellect, so far as the guiding thereof through them, in faith, to the Divine union, is concerned. I think I have said enough on the subject: for the instructions and cautions already given will be found ample with regard to all that may occur in the intellect. And if anything should be met with of a different nature, and not comprised in the distinctions laid down—though I do not imagine that there can be anything which cannot be referred to one of the four kinds of distinct knowledge—what I have said of those that resemble them will suffice.

I now proceed to the third book; where, by the help of God, I shall speak of the interior spiritual purgation of the will from its interior affections. This is the Active Night. I therefore entreat the discerning reader to consider what I write in simplicity and candour: for when these qualities are wanting, however perfect and profound the teaching may be, he will not profit by it, neither will he value it as it deserves. And much more will this be the case in the present instance, because of the deficiencies of my way of writing.

Advice to the
Reader to be
simple and
candid.

BOOK III.

THE PURGATION AND ACTIVE NIGHT OF THE MEMORY AND THE
WILL.

ARGUMENT.

The Intellect, which is the first power of the soul, being now instructed, with regard to all its apprehensions, in the first Theological Virtue, namely Faith, so that the soul, according to this power, may be united to God in pureness of faith; it remains for me now to do the same with respect to the two other powers, Memory and Will, showing how they too are to be purified in all their acts, so that the soul, according to them also, may be united to God in perfect Hope and Charity. I shall do this briefly in this third book. For having concluded that which relates to the Intellect, the receptacle of all objects that pass through the Memory and the Will—and that goes a great way towards the full execution of my purpose—it is not so necessary to enlarge on the subject of these two powers; because, in general, the spiritual man who shall have well directed his Intellect in Faith, according to my teaching, will also, by the way, have done as much for the Memory and the Will in the matter of Hope and Charity: for the operations of these virtues are mutually dependent the one on the other. But, as it is necessary—that I may observe the same order, and be the better understood—to speak of the proper and determinate matter, I shall treat of the acts of each of these two faculties, distinguishing between them according to the method of my subject. That distinction arises out of the distinction between their objects, which are three, Natural, Supernatural Imaginary, and Spiritual. The knowledge of the Memory, following these distinctions, is also threefold: Natural, Supernatural Imaginary, and Spiritual. I shall treat of these here, by the grace of God, beginning with natural knowledge, which is conversant with the most exterior objects; and I shall afterwards speak of the affections of the Will, and then conclude this third book, the subject of which is the Active Spiritual Night.

CHAPTER I.

Of the Natural Apprehensions of the Memory: which is to be emptied of them, that the soul, according to that faculty, may be united with God.

BOOK
III.
The Reader
cautioned.

IT is necessary to keep in mind the special object of each of these books; for otherwise the reader will be perplexed by what he reads, as he may have been by what I said about the Intellect, and as he may be now by what I say of the Memory, and what I have to say hereafter of the Will. For when he observes, that I teach the annihilation of these powers in the matter of their operations; he will perhaps imagine, that I am destroying, and not building up, the spiritual edifice. This objection would be valid, if my purpose here was to instruct only beginners, who are to be conducted onwards by means of these discursive and tangible apprehensions. But as I am teaching how to advance by Contemplation to the Divine union—for which end all these means, and the sensible exertion of the powers of the soul must cease and be silent, in order that God in His own way may bring that Union to pass—it is necessary to release the faculties and to empty them, and to make them renounce their natural jurisdiction and operations, in order that the Supernatural may fill and enlighten them; seeing that the ability of them cannot compass so great a matter, but rather, unless suppressed, prove a difficulty in the way. And as it is most true that the soul knoweth God, rather by what He is not, than by what He is; it follows of necessity that if we are to draw near unto Him, it must be by denying and renouncing to the uttermost, all that may be denied, of our apprehensions, natural and supernatural alike. We shall, therefore, apply this process to the Memory: driving it away out of its natural position and elevating it beyond

itself, that is, beyond all distinct knowledge and palpable comprehension, to the highest hope of God Who is Incomprehensible. CHAP.
I.

I begin with Natural Knowledge. The natural knowledge of the Memory is all that knowledge it can form about the objects of the five bodily senses: hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and touching, and all else of the like kind. The Memory must be denuded and emptied of all this knowledge and of all these forms; it must labour to destroy all apprehension of them, so that no impression whatever of them shall be left behind; it must forget them, and withdraw itself from them, and that as completely as if they had never entered into it. Nothing less than the annihilation of the Memory as to all these forms will serve, if it is to be united with God. For that union can never take place without a total disunion from these forms which are not God, for God is without form; neither is He the object of any distinct knowledge whatever, as I have said while treating of the Night of the Intellect.

First kind of
knowledge
of the
Memory,—
Natural.

‘No man,’ saith our Redeemer, ‘can serve two masters,’* so the Memory cannot be perfectly united with God, and at the same time with forms and distinct knowledge. And as God is without form or image, on which the memory may dwell, so when the Memory is united with God—as we see by daily experience—it remains without form or figure, with the imagination destroyed, and itself absorbed in supreme felicity, in profound oblivion, remembering nothing. The Divine union expels every fancy, and shuts out all forms and knowledge; it elevates the Memory to that which is supernatural, leaving it in such deep forgetfulness that it must do violence to itself, if it will remember anything at all. Such at times is this forgetfulness of the Memory, and

The Memory
to be purified,
and elevated.

* S. Matt. vi. 24.

suspension of the imaginative powers, because of the union of the memory with God, that time passes by unheeded, and what took place in the interval cannot be known. When the imaginative powers are held in suspense, there is no sense of pain even when pain is inflicted; for without imagination there is no sense, not even in thought, because it exists not. If God is to bring about this Perfect Union, the Memory must be severed from all acts of knowledge of which it is capable. But it is to be observed, that this suspension never occurs thus in those who are perfect, because they have attained already to the perfect union, and this suspension relates to the commencement of that estate.

Does God destroy Nature?

You will, perhaps, object and say: All this is very well, but the principle involves the destruction of the natural usage and course of our faculties, and reduces man to the level of a brute beast, forgetful of all things, and what is worse, without reflection or recollection of his natural wants and functions. Surely God does not destroy nature, but rather perfects it; but its destruction is the natural issue of this doctrine, for man forgets all moral and rational motives, and all natural acts; he remembers nothing, because he regards not the forms and knowledge in question, which are means of recollection.

No; the natural powers are perfected in God.

To this I reply: the more the Memory is united to God the more it loses all distinct knowledge, and at last all such fades utterly away, when the State of Perfection is reached. In the beginning, when this is going on, great forgetfulness ensues, for these forms and knowledge fall into oblivion, men neglect themselves in outward things, forgetting to eat or drink; they do not remember whether they have done or left undone a particular work, whether they have seen such things or not, or whether such and such things have been mentioned to them; and all this because the Memory is lost

in God. But he who has attained to the habit of Union does not forget, in this way, that which relates to moral and natural Reason; he performs with much greater perfection all necessary and befitting actions, though by the ministry of forms and knowledge, in the memory, supplied in a special manner by God. In the State of Union, which is a supernatural state, the memory and the other faculties fail as to their natural functions, and rise beyond their natural objects upwards unto God, Who is Supernatural.

And thus, then, when the Memory is transformed in God, no permanent forms or knowledge can be impressed upon it; the operations of the memory, therefore, and of the other powers in this state are, as it were, Divine; God has entered into possession, by this transformation, as their absolute Lord; guides and governs them Himself divinely by His own Spirit and Will, as it is written, 'He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit;'^{*} and therefore the operations of the soul in the State of Union are the operations of the Holy Ghost, and, consequently, Divine.

Memory possessed by God.

Now, the actions of such souls only are what they ought to be, and reasonable, and not what they ought not to be; because under the influence of the Holy Ghost they know what they ought to know, are ignorant of what they ought to be ignorant, remember what they ought to remember, forget what they ought to forget, love what they ought to love, and love not that which is not God. Thus in general the first motions of the faculties of these souls are, as it were, Divine. There is nothing wonderful in this, seeing that they are transformed in the Divine Nature.

I will explain my meaning by the following illustration. A person in the State of Union is requested to pray for a certain individual. Now he will never remember to do what

* 1 Cor. vi. 17.

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III.Prayer and
Work of the
perfect man.

is asked of him, by reason of anything whatever remaining in his memory; but if it be right so to pray — which it will be when God shall be pleased to hear that prayer — God will then move the will and excite a desire to pray. On the other hand, if it be not the Will of God to hear that prayer; let that person do what he may, he will never pray as he was requested, neither will he have any desire to do so. Sometimes God will make him pray for others, whom he never knew or heard of. This is the effect of a particular influence of God exerted over these souls, whom He directs to perform certain actions according to the disposition of His Will. The actions and the prayers of such souls always attain their end.

Example of
the Blessed
Virgin.

So it was with the Glorious Mother of God. Perfect from the first, there was no impression of created things on her soul, to turn her aside from God, or in any way to influence her; for her every movement ever proceeded from the Holy Ghost.

Again. A perfect man has at a given time a certain indispensable business to transact. He has no recollection whatever of it; but in some way he knows not, it will present itself to his mind, through that stirring of his Memory of which I speak, at the time and in the way it ought, and that without fail. It is not only in these matters that the Holy Ghost enlightens the soul, but in many others, present, future, and distant—men knowing not how the knowledge thereof comes to them. But it comes from the Divine Wisdom, because they exercise themselves in knowing or apprehending nothing, which can obstruct their course. It comes to them in general, as I said in the beginning, while speaking of the Mount, so that they do all things; as it is written, 'Wisdom, which is the worker of all things, taught me.'*

* Wisd. vii. 21.

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I.

You will say, perhaps, that the soul cannot so empty and deprive the Memory of all forms and fantasies, as to reach a state so high; for there are two things to be done which are beyond the forces and abilities of man; namely, to cast what is natural aside, and touch, and unite with, the Supernatural, which is the most difficult, and, in truth, impossible for mere natural strength. God, indeed, must raise it up into this supernatural state; but the soul, so far as it can, must also be in good dispositions, which it may acquire by the help which God supplies. And so when the soul rejects these forms and empties itself of them, God causes it to enter into the enjoyment of this Union. When God does this, the soul is passive, as I shall explain in speaking of the Passive Night; and He will then bestow upon it the habit of Perfect Union, proportional to its good dispositions, when it shall seem to Him good to do so. I do not speak of the Divine effects of the perfect union, as they relate to the Intellect on the one hand, to the Memory and the Will on the other, in connection with this Night and Active Purgation, for the Divine union is not here complete; but I will do so in connection with the Passive Night, in which the soul is united with God.

God the Au-
thor of the
Superna-
tural.Hindrances
to be re-
moved by
Man.

I speak here only of the necessary means of purifying the Memory, so that, so far as itself is concerned, it may enter actively upon this Night and Purgation. The spiritual man must observe this precaution: never to treasure up or retain in the memory anything he may see, hear, taste, touch, or smell; but to let them pass away, forgetting them, and never reflecting upon them, unless when it may be necessary to do so in order to a good meditation. But this deliberate forgetfulness, and rejection of all knowledge and of forms, must never be extended to Christ and His Sacred Humanity.

Sometimes, indeed, in the height of Contemplation and pure intuition of the Divinity, the soul does not remember

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III.

The Sacred
Humanity to
be kept in
Memory.

the Sacred Humanity, because God elevates the mind to this, as it were, confused and most supernatural knowledge; but for all this, studiously to forget It is by no means right, for the contemplation of the Sacred Humanity, and loving meditation upon It, will help us up to all good, and it is by It we shall ascend most easily to the highest state of Union.

It is evident at once that, while all visible and bodily things ought to be forgotten, for they are an impediment in our way, He, who for our salvation became man, is not to be accounted among them, for He is the Truth, the Door, and the Way, and our Guide unto all good.

Let the spiritual man, then, take this for granted. Let him aim at complete abstraction and forgetfulness; so that, as much as possible, no knowledge or form of created things—as if they existed not—shall remain in his Memory, so that the memory thus emptied and free may be wholly for God, lost as it were, in holy oblivion.

If, again, doubts are raised and objections made, as before with regard to the Intellect, to the effect that in this way we shall be doing nothing, losing our time and depriving ourselves of those spiritual blessings, of which the Memory serves as a channel; I can but answer that I have replied to them here as I did before, and that there is no reason why I should dwell longer upon them at present. Only let us remember, that if for a time this forgetfulness of all knowledge and forms is not felt to be profitable, the spiritual man must not therefore grow wearied; for God will draw near in His own time, and that for so great a blessing we ought to wait long, and patiently persevere in Hope.

God abides in
those who
abide in Him.

Though it is true that we shall scarcely meet with anyone, who in all things and at all times is under the direct influence of God, whose union with Him is so continuous that his faculties are ever Divinely directed; still there are souls, which for the most part in their operations are under the

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I.

guidance of God, and these are not souls which move themselves; this is the sense of S. Paul, when he said that the sons of God—those who are transformed, and united in Him—‘are led by the Spirit of God,’* to accomplish Divine actions in their faculties. This is nothing strange, for these operations must be Divine, seeing that the union of the soul is Divine.

CHAPTER II.

Three kinds of Evils to which the soul is liable, when not in darkness, with respect to the knowledge and reflections of the Memory. Explanation of the first.

THE spiritual man is subject to three evils and inconveniences, if he persists in the use of the natural knowledge of the Memory, with a view to drawing near unto God, or for any other purpose. Two of them are positive, and the third is negative. The first proceeds from the things of this world; the second from the devil; and the third, which is negative, consists in the hindrance to the Divine union, which this knowledge brings with it.

The first, proceeding from the things of this world, is a subjection to many kinds of evils, the result of this knowledge and reflection, such as falsehoods, imperfections, desires, opinions, waste of time, and many other things which greatly defile the soul. It is clear, that in yielding to these notions and reflections, we must fall into many errors; for very often what is false seems to be true, what is certain, doubtful, and the contrary; seeing that we can scarcely ever ascertain thoroughly a single truth. From all these we shall escape, if we make the memory blind to these notions and reflections.

First evil,—
a worldly
Memory.

* Rom. viii. 14.

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III.Creatures to
be banished
from Me-
mory.

Imperfections beset the Memory at every step in all we hear, see, smell, touch, and taste; for these touch certain affections, such as pain and fear and hatred, useless hopes, empty joy, or vain glory. All these at least are imperfections, and sometimes undoubted venial sins; things which disturb perfect purity and simple union with God. Desires also are certainly excited, for the knowledge and reflections in question naturally produce them, and a mere disposition to retain these reflections furnishes food for desire. We are also liable to many a trial through our own opinions, because the memory must err in the recollection of the good and evil of others; for sometimes evil is taken for good, and good for evil. No man, as I believe, can ever escape these evils, who does not blind his memory as to all such matters.

If you say that a man may easily overcome all these trials, when they come upon him, I answer, that it is utterly impossible, if he gives heed to these reflections; for they involve innumerable follies, and some of them so subtle and minute that they cling to the soul unawares, like pitch to the hand that has touched it. I repeat, then, that the best way to overcome them is to do so at once, banishing them utterly out of the memory.

You will further object and say, that the soul thus deprives itself of many good thoughts and meditations about God, and which are most profitable to it in the blessings they bring with them. I answer, all that is purely God and promotes this pure simple general and confused knowledge, is not to be rejected, but only what detains the Memory on images, forms, figures, and similitudes of created things. And in order that God may accomplish this purgation, pureness of soul is most profitable—that pureness which consists in not setting the affections thereof on any created or transitory things, and in not regarding them; for in my opinion, the opposite conduct will not fail to make a deep impression

The purely
good to be
held in Me-
mory.CHAP.
II.

because of the imperfection, which cleaves to the powers of the soul in their operation. It is, therefore, much better to impose silence on the faculties, that God may speak. In order to attain to this state, the natural operations must cease. This takes place, as the Prophet saith, when the soul comes into solitude with its faculties, and when God speaks to the heart: 'I . . . will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart.'*

But if you still object and say, that the soul will profit nothing, if the Memory does not reflect and dwell upon God, and that it will be liable to much tepidity and distraction—I answer, it is impossible; for if the memory be entirely withdrawn from the things of this life and of the next, no evil, no distraction, no folly or vice can enter within it—such things insinuate themselves through the wandering of the memory—for then there is no way by which they can enter, nor anything to give occasion to them. This certainly would be the case, if we opened the door to the consideration of earthly things, while it is shut against that of heavenly things: but we shut the door against everything which is prejudicial to Union, and out of which distractions may come, bringing the memory into silence, that the Spirit only may be heard; and saying with the Prophet, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'† Such also is the state of the Bride; for the Bridegroom saith of her, 'My sister, my spouse is a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up,'‡ so that nothing may enter within.

Spiritual si-
lence.—
Remedy for
distractions.

Let the soul, therefore, be 'enclosed' without anxiety or alarm; and He Who, when the doors were shut, entered bodily in among His disciples, and said, 'Peace be unto you,'§ in an unexpected and inconceivable way, will enter spiritually into the soul without its knowledge or cooperation, when

The River of
Peace.

* Os. ii. 14.

† 1 Kings iii. 10.

‡ Cant. iv. 12.

§ S. John xx. 19.

the doors of Memory, Intellect, and Will are shut, and will fill it with His peace, turning into it the river of peace, as it is written, 'O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments; thy peace had been as a river.'* And He will take away all misgivings, and suspicions, all uneasiness and darkness, which made the soul afraid that it was already, or on the point of being, lost. Be, therefore, earnest in prayer, and hope in detachment and emptiness: thy good will not tarry.

CHAPTER III.

Of the second evil, coming from the evil spirit through the Natural Apprehensions of the Memory.

Second evil,
— caused by
the devil.

THE second positive evil, to which the soul is liable from the notions of the Memory, comes from the devil, who by these means has great power over it. For he can heap forms upon forms, and thereby infect the soul with pride, avarice, envy, and hatred. He can also excite unjust enmities, vain love, and delude us in many ways. Besides, he is wont so to impress matters on the fancy, that falsehood seems true, and truth false. Finally, all the greatest delusions of Satan, and the evils of the soul, enter in through these notions and forms of the memory. Now if the memory were blind to these things, and annihilated in forgetfulness of them, it would shut the door against the evil spirit, so far as this evil is concerned, and free itself wholly from these things, which would be a great blessing. The evil spirit cannot molest the soul but through the operations of its faculties, and chiefly by the help of forms and fancies: for upon these depend, more or less, all the operations of the other faculties. And, therefore, if the memory annihilates itself as to them, the

* Is. xlvi. 18.

devil can do nothing; because he can find nothing to lay hold of, and without something of that kind he can do nothing whatever.

Would that spiritual directors could clearly see, how great are the evils, which the wicked spirits inflict upon souls through the Memory, when they make use of it; what sadness and affliction and vain joys they occasion, both with regard to the things of God and the things of the world; what impurities they leave rooted in the mind, distracting it so profoundly from that supreme self-recollection, which consists in fixing all the powers of the soul on the One Incomprehensible Good, and withdrawing them from all objects of sense. This emptying of the memory, though the advantages of it are not so great as those of the State of Union, yet, merely because it delivers souls from much sorrow, grief, and sadness, besides imperfections and sins, is in itself a great good.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the third evil, proceeding from the Distinct Natural Knowledge of the Memory.

THE third evil, to which the soul is liable from the Natural Apprehensions of the Memory, is negative. These apprehensions can impede moral, and deprive us of spiritual, good. And, first of all, to show how they impede moral good, we must keep in mind, that moral good consists in curbing the passions, and in restraining our disorderly appetites; the result of which is peace, tranquillity, and rest, which appertain unto moral good. But this curbing and restraining of the passions is impossible for any soul, that does not forget and withdraw from all those things, by which its affections are excited; and no trouble is ever produced in the soul but

Third evil—
negative.

1. Deprives of
Moral good.

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III.

Means and
fruits of the
Moral Order
of the Soul.

by the apprehensions of the memory. For if we forget all things, there is then nothing to disturb our peace or to excite our desires; seeing that, as they say, what the eye has not seen the heart does not desire.

This is a truth of daily experience: whenever the soul broods over anything, it is changed or disturbed, be it much or little, according to the measure of its apprehension. If the subject of its thoughts be serious and disagreeable, it elicits feelings of sadness or dislike; if, on the other hand, the subject be pleasant, its feelings are those of joy and desire. The inevitable result of these changing apprehensions is interior disorder: joy and grief, hate and love succeed each other, and there is no possibility of preserving a uniform state—which is an effect of moral tranquillity—but by the studious oblivion of all these. It is, therefore, quite clear that this knowledge of the memory greatly impedes the good of the moral virtues.

2. Deprives
of Spiritual
good.

A cumbered Memory also impedes the mystical or spiritual good; for the disturbed soul, having no foundation of moral good is, so far, incapable of that which is spiritual, because this enters into no soul, that is not under control and ordered in peace. Besides, if the soul cleaves and gives heed to the apprehensions of the memory—it can attend to but one thing at a time—if it occupies itself with apprehensible things, for such are the notions of the memory, it is impossible that it can be at liberty for the Incomprehensible, which is God. For, as I have already said,* the soul that will draw near unto God must do so by not comprehending, rather than by comprehending; it must change the mutable and the comprehensible for the Immutable and Incomprehensible.

Moral Justice
the founda-
tion of Spi-
ritual Perfec-
tion.

* Book ii. ch. 8.

CHAPTER V.

The profitableness of forgetfulness, and emptiness with regard to all thoughts and knowledge, which naturally occur to the Memory.

THE evils which flow into the soul, through the Apprehensions of the Memory, suggest to us the opposite benefits, which result from forgetting them and emptying ourselves of them; because, as natural Philosophers say, the doctrine of contraries is the same.

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Three bene-
fits of self-
restraint in
Memory.

In the first place, the soul enjoys tranquillity and peace of mind, because it is delivered from the harassing vexations of thoughts and notions of the memory; and, in consequence, what is of more importance, the conscience is pure. This state is a preparation for human and Divine wisdom, and for the acquisition of virtue.

1. Peace of
mind.

In the second place, it is delivered from many suggestions, temptations, and assaults of Satan, who, through these thoughts, insinuates himself into the soul, and at least causes it to fall into many impurities and, as I have said, into sin; as it is written, 'They have thought and spoken wickedness.*' So when these thoughts are driven away, the devil has no weapon wherewith to assail the soul.

2. Victory
over Satan.

In the third place, while the soul is self-recollected, and forgetful of all things, it is then prepared for the influence and teaching of the Holy Ghost, Who 'will withdraw Himself from thoughts that are without understanding.†' Even if we derived no greater benefit, from this forgetfulness and emptiness of the memory, than our deliverance from pain and trouble, that of itself is a great gain and blessing; because the pain and troubles, occasioned by the adversities of this life, bring no relief with them, but rather aggravate those

3. Prepara-
tion for the
Holy Spirit.

* Ps. lxxii. 8.

† Wisd. i. 5.

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adversities in general, and hurt the soul. For this it was that made David say, 'Surely man passeth as an image, yea, and he is disquieted in vain.*' And in truth, every man disquieteth himself in vain; for it is clear that disquietude is always vanity, because it serves to no good. Yea, even if the whole world were thrown into confusion, and all things in it, disquietude on that account is vanity, for it hurts us more than it relieves us. To endure all things, with an equable and peaceful mind, not only brings with it many blessings to the soul; but it also enables us, in the midst of our difficulties, to have a clear judgment about them, and to minister the fitting remedy for them.

The cure for
the ills of life.

Solomon knew well the advantage of this disposition. 'I have known,' saith he, 'that there was no better thing than to rejoice, and to do well in his life;†'—that is, in all the events of this life, however adverse they may be, the Wise Man bids us rejoice rather than be sad, that we may not lose that greatest good, peace of mind in adversity as well as in prosperity, bearing all things alike. This peace of mind no man will ever lose, if only he will forget these notions and cast aside thoughts, and withdraw from the sight, and hearing, and discussion of matters so far as it is possible for him. We are naturally so frail and weak, that, in spite of all self-discipline, we can scarcely avoid stumbling on the recollection of many things, which disturb and disquiet our mind; though it may have been once established in peace and tranquillity, oblivious of all things. This is the meaning of the Prophet when he said, 'I will be mindful and remember, and my soul shall languish within me.‡'

* Ps. xxxviii. 7.

† Eccles. iii. 12.

‡ Lam. iii. 20.

CHAPTER VI.

Of the second kind of Apprehensions: the Imaginary and Supernatural.

THOUGH, while treating of the first kind of Natural Apprehensions, I also sufficiently explained the Imaginary, which are also natural, it was necessary to make this division, because of the attachment of the Memory to other forms and notions of Supernatural things: such are Visions and Revelations, Locutions and Impressions, which come upon us in a supernatural way. When these things have happened to the soul, the image, form, or figure of them remains impressed upon it, in the memory or the fancy; and sometimes that impression is exceedingly vivid. It is necessary to caution men on this subject: that the memory may not be perplexed by these images, and that they may not prove an impediment to union with God in the purity and integrity of Hope.

I say, then, that in order to attain that blessing, the soul must never reflect upon those objects, which have been clearly and distinctly present to it in a supernatural way, so as to preserve the forms, notions, and figures of them. We must always keep this principle before our eyes; the more the soul attends to any clear and distinct apprehension, natural or supernatural, the less will be its capacity and disposition for entering into the abyss of Faith, wherein all things else are absorbed. For, as I have before maintained, no supernatural forms or knowledge, of which the memory takes cognizance, are God: they bear no proportion to Him, neither can they serve as proximate means of union with Him. The soul, if it is to draw near unto God, must empty itself of all that is not God; and the memory, therefore, must also get rid of all forms and knowledge, in order to be united to Him in the way of perfect and mystical Hope.

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VI.Second kind
of Apprehen-
sions,—Me-
mory of the
Superna-
tural.

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Detachment
gives Hope;
Hope obtains
God.

This must be done, for all possession contradicts Hope, which, as the Apostle writes, is of things not in possession: 'Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not.'* Consequently, the more the Memory divests itself, the greater its Hope; and the greater its hope, the greater its union with God. For with respect to God, the more the soul hopes, the more it obtains, and it then hopes most when it is most divested; and when it shall be perfectly divested, it will then have the possession of God, such as is possible on earth in the Divine union. But there are many souls, who will not deprive themselves of that sweetness and delight, which the memory finds in these things, and who, consequently, never attain to this supreme possession and perfect sweetness; for he 'that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be a disciple' † of Christ.

CHAPTER VII.

The Evils inflicted on the soul by the knowledge of Supernatural things if reflected upon. Their number.

Five evils of
reflection on
the Supernatural.

THE spiritual man exposes himself to five kinds of evils, if he attends to, and reflects on, that knowledge, and those forms, which are impressed upon his mind by the things which pass through it in a supernatural way.

1. Illusions.
2. Pride.
3. Temptations.
4. Union weakened.
5. God dishonoured.

The first is frequent illusions, mistaking one thing for another.

The second is proximate occasions of presumption or vain glory.

The third is the opportunities of deceiving, which they furnish to the devil.

* Hebr. xi. 1.

† S. Luke xiv. 33.

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The fourth is impediments to union with God in Hope. The fifth is low views of God for the most part.

As to the first evil, it is clear that if the spiritual man attends to, and reflects upon, these notions and forms, he must be frequently deceived in his judgment about them. For as no man can thoroughly comprehend what passes, in the order of nature, into his imagination, or have a sound and certain opinion about it; much less will he be able to decide correctly about Supernatural things, which are beyond our understanding and of rare occurrence. He will frequently attribute to God what is after all but fancies, and to the evil spirit what is from God, and to God what is from Satan. Very frequently, good or evil to others or to himself will be present to him through these forms or figures: and he will consider them most certain and true, and yet they are nothing less than utterly false. Other impressions made upon him he will consider false, though they are true; this, however, I consider the safer course of the two, for it usually proceeds out of Humility.

But if he is not deceived as to their truth, he may be as to their kind and the value to be set upon them; he may look upon that which is trifling as important, and on what is important as trifling. And as to their quality, he may consider what his imagination presents to him to be of this or that kind, when it is not; putting 'darkness for light, and light for darkness, bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.'* Finally, if he escapes delusion in one thing, it will be surprising if he does in the next; for even if he abstains from determining anything in the matter, it is sufficient, if he attends to it at all, to bring some detriment upon himself, if not the precise one of which I am now speaking, yet some one of the others of which I shall immediately speak.

First evil of
self-reflection
in Super-
natural
matters.

Liability to
deception.

* Is. v. 20.

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The duty, therefore, of the spiritual man is, if he wishes to escape from the delusions of his own judgment, not to decide himself upon his own state or feelings, or what such Visions, Knowledge, or Impressions may mean. He ought not to desire to know anything about them, nor give heed to them, except for the purpose of manifesting them to his confessor, that he may learn from him how to empty his memory of these apprehensions, or what in every case may be most expedient for him, in the same spirit of detachment. For be these things what they may, they cannot help us to love God so much as the least act of earnest Faith and Hope done in the emptiness of all things.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of the second evil: the danger of self-conceit and presumption.

Second evil,
—Spiritual
Pride.

THESE Supernatural Apprehensions of the Memory, if attended to, or regarded at all, are to spiritual men occasions of vanity or presumption. For as he who has no experience of them, is exceedingly free from this vice, because he sees nothing in himself whereon to presume; so on the other hand he, to whom they are familiar, has an ever-present reason for thinking himself to be something, seeing that he is the object of these visitations. It is very true that he may attribute all to God and give thanks, looking upon himself as utterly unworthy; nevertheless a certain secret self-satisfaction and conceit, on the subject of these Apprehensions, will grow up in the mind, out of which, unawares, great spiritual pride will arise. Men might see this very clearly, if they would but reflect on that feeling of dislike and aversion produced in them by those, who do not commend their spirit, or attribute no value to their experiences, and on that feeling of distress, which they have when they are told

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that others also have the like or greater gifts. All this is the fruit of secret self-esteem and pride, and they cannot be made to understand that they are steeped in it up to their very eyes.

They think that a certain recognition of their own wretchedness is sufficient, while at the same time they are filled with secret self-esteem and personal satisfaction, taking more delight in their own spirit and gifts than in those of another. They are like the Pharisee who thanked God that he was 'not as the rest of men,' and that he practised such and such virtues: he was satisfied with himself, and presumed upon his state. 'O God, I give Thee thanks,' said he, 'that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers . . . I fast twice in a week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*' Now these men do not say this in so many words, as the Pharisee did, but they habitually think so; and some of them even become so proud as to be worse than devils. When they are conscious of certain feelings, and devotional sweetness in the things of God, as they imagine, they become so self-satisfied, that they look upon themselves as most near unto God, and upon others, unconscious of the like feelings, as most unworthy, and they despise them as the Pharisee did the Publican.

The Pharisee
and the
Publican.

To avoid this pestilent evil, abominable in the sight of God, there are two considerations to help us. The first is that virtue does not consist in these apprehensions and feelings about God, however sublime they 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 ourselves and of all that belongs to us, profoundly rooted in the soul; and in being glad that others

Two remedies.
1. Perfection
not found
in high
thoughts
or sweet
feelings;

* S. Luke xviii. 11, 12.

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have the same opinion of us, and in not wishing to be thought well of by others at all.

2. But in Humility, and in Charity unconscious of self.

The second is, that all visions, revelations, and heavenly feelings, and whatever else is greater than these, are not worth the least act of Humility bearing the fruits of that Charity which neither values nor seeks itself, which thinketh no evil except of self, and which thinketh well not of self, but of all others. Let men, therefore, cease to regard these supernatural apprehensions, and labour rather to forget them, that they may be free.

CHAPTER IX.

Of the third evil: the work of the devil through the Imaginary Apprehensions of the Memory.

Third evil—
Snares of
the devil.

FROM what I have already written, we may gather and learn how great is that evil which the devil inflicts on the soul through these Supernatural Apprehensions. Not only can he represent to the memory and the fancy many false notions and forms which shall seem good and true, impressing them on the mind and senses with great effect and certainty by his suggestions—and this in such a way as to make his representations be taken for what they pretend to be, for as he changes himself into an angel, he will seem to be light to the soul—but also in the very truths of God he can tempt us in divers ways, by communicating unruly motions about them to our desires and affections, whether spiritual or sensual. For if the soul takes pleasure in these apprehensions, it is very easy for Satan to increase our affections and desires, and to plunge us into spiritual gluttony and other evils.

And that he may succeed the better, he is wont to inspire and fill the senses with delight, sweetness, and pleasure, in

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the things of God; so that the soul, dazzled and enervated by that sweetness, may become blind through pleasure, and set itself more upon sweetness than upon love—at least not so much upon love—and attach greater importance to these apprehensions than to that detachment and emptiness, which are to be found in Faith and Hope and the Love of God. He doeth all this that, starting from that point, he may, by little and little, delude the soul, and bring it to believe, with great readiness, all his lies. For the soul that is blind considers falsehood to be falsehood no longer, evil not to be evil, because it puts darkness for light, and light for darkness, and falls into endless disorders. That which was once wine is turned into vinegar, as well in the natural as in the moral and spiritual order. All this comes upon the soul, because it did not in the beginning deny itself in the pleasure ministered by supernatural things. And as this pleasure was at first not great or not so hurtful, the soul was not sufficiently afraid of it, but suffered it to remain and grow, as the grain of mustard grows into a great tree. For a slight error in the beginning becomes a great error in the end.

The soul that will escape this evil, the work of the devil, must not take any pleasure in these apprehensions, for if it does the result will most certainly be blindness, and then a fall; for delight and sweetness, of their own proper nature, brutalise and blind the soul. This is the meaning of David when he said, 'Perhaps darkness shall cover me; and night shall be my light in my pleasures;'^{*} that is, perhaps darkness shall cover me in my pleasures, and I shall take night for my light.

Blindness
caused by
spiritual
gluttony.

* Ps. cxxxviii. 11.

CHAPTER X.

Of the fourth evil of the Distinct Supernatural Apprehensions of the Memory: the impediment to Union.

Fourth evil,
—Divine
Union weak-
ened.

THERE is not much to be said here about the fourth evil, because I have been speaking of it throughout this book: I have said that the soul, in order to be united with God in Hope, must renounce all possession in the Memory; because nothing that is not God must remain in the memory, if our hope in God is to be perfect. No form or figure or image, natural or supernatural, of which the memory takes cognisance can be, or resemble, God, as it is written, 'There is none among the gods like unto Thee, O Lord;'^{*} and therefore if the memory dwells upon any such it impedes the Divine union. In the first place, because it perplexes itself; and in the next, because the greater its occupation the less perfect is hope. It is therefore necessary for the soul to forget, and detach itself from, all distinct forms and knowledge of supernatural things, that it may not impede, in the Memory, the Divine union in perfect Hope.

CHAPTER XI.

Of the fifth evil, resulting from the Imaginary Supernatural Apprehensions: low and unseemly views of God.

Fifth evil,—
God dis-
honoured.

THE fifth evil is no less hurtful to the soul. It flows from the willing retention, in the imaginative Memory, of the forms and images of those things which are supernaturally communicated to the soul, but especially then, when we would apply them as means to the Divine union. It is a very easy thing for us to form notions about the nature and

^{*} Ps. lxxxv. 8.

greatness of God, unworthy of and unbecoming His Incomprehensible Being. Though our Reason and Judgment may withhold us from forming any express decision that God is like any one of these similitudes; still the mere consideration of these apprehensions generates in the soul a certain esteem and sense of God which are not so high as Faith teaches; namely, that He transcends all comparison and all comprehension. For over and above that the soul takes from God that which it gives to the creature, the mere consideration of these apprehensions naturally produces within it a certain comparison of them with God, which will not leave it to judge of God as it ought to do. For, as I have said before, no creature whatever, in Heaven or on earth, no forms or images, natural or supernatural, cognisable by our faculties, however noble they may be, present any comparison or proportion with the Being of God; because neither genus nor species includes Him. And in this life the soul of man is incapable of comprehending clearly and distinctly anything that cannot be classed under genus and species. This is why S. John said, 'No man hath seen God at any time;'^{*} and Isaias and S. Paul, 'Neither hath it entered into the heart of man.'[†] Yea, God Himself hath said, 'Man shall not see Me and live.'[‡] He, therefore, who shall perplex his Memory and the other powers of his soul with matters that they can comprehend, will never think and feel about God as he ought to do.

I will explain my meaning by a somewhat low comparison. The more we fix the eyes of our regard upon the courtiers of a king, and the more we consider them, the less will be our reverence and respect for that king; for, even if our disesteem of him be not formally and distinctly recognised by the intellect, it is nevertheless visible in our conduct.

Analogy of a
king and his
courtiers.

^{*} S. John i. 18. [†] Is. lxiv. 4.; 1 Cor. ii. 9. [‡] Ex. xxxiii. 20.

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The more we attribute to the courtiers the more we rob their king; and we cannot have a high opinion of that king then, because his courtiers are so respected in his presence. This is the soul's treatment of God whenever the soul gives heed to these apprehensions. This illustration is a very mean one: for God is of another nature than all His creatures, infinitely different from them all.

These apprehensions, therefore, must be put out of sight, and the eyes must regard none of them, but be fixed upon God in Faith and perfect Hope. Hence those who not only give heed to these apprehensions, but also think that God is like unto some of them, and that by their help they may attain unto Union with Him, are already fallen into grievous error; they do not profit by the light of Faith in the Intellect, which is the means by which this faculty is united with God, neither also will they grow up to the heights of Hope, which is the means of union for the Memory; that Union must be effected by the severance of the Memory from all imaginations whatever.

CHAPTER XII.

The benefits of withdrawing the soul from the Apprehensions of the Imagination. Answer to an objection. The difference between the Natural and Supernatural Imaginary Apprehensions.

Benefits of
self-denial in
Memory.

THE benefits that result from emptying the imaginative faculty of these imaginary forms become manifest by the consideration of the five evils which they inflict on the soul, if it would retain them, as I said before of the natural forms. But, beside these benefits, there are others of perfect rest and tranquillity of mind. For, putting aside that natural rest which the soul enjoys when it has set itself free from the dominion of images and forms, it is also delivered

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from the anxiety of ascertaining whether they are good or evil, and what conduct it ought to observe with reference to the one and the other. It also escapes from troubling and wasting the time of its confessors, for it does not require them to determine whether these things are good or evil, or the nature of them,—matters the knowledge of which is not necessary for it, for all it has to do is to reject them in the sense I have already explained, and to give no attention whatever to them. The time and strength, thus wasted, will be then employed in a better and more profitable way, in conforming the will to God, in earnestly striving after detachment, poverty of sense and spirit, which consists in a willing real privation of all consoling and tangible support, interior as well as exterior. This we practise well when we seek and strive to separate ourselves from these forms; the issue of which will be that inestimable blessing of drawing near unto God, who has neither image, form, nor figure; and that blessing will be proportional to our estrangement from all forms, images, and figures.

How peni-
tents waste
the time of
their con-
fessors.

You will here perhaps object, and say, Why, then, do many spiritual directors counsel us to profit by these Divine communications and impressions, and to desire the gifts of God that we may have wherewithal to give to Him in return, for if He gives nothing, we too have nothing to give unto Him? Why does S. Paul say, 'Extinguish not the Spirit'?* Why does the Bridegroom say to the Bride, 'Put Me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm'?† This seal signifies some apprehensions. And yet, according to this teaching, we are not only not to seek them, but, even if God sends them, to reject them. It is also certain that God, when He sends them, sends them for our good, and that their effects will be good. Pearls are not to be thrown

Why must
the good gifts
of the Spirit
be repelled?

* 1 Thess. v. 19.

† Cant. viii. 6.

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away. Yea, it is even a sort of pride not to yield a willing reception to God's communications, as if we could do without them in our own strength.

Answer.
Action of
will unneces-
sary, save to
consent.

I refer the reader, for a solution of this difficulty, to the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the second book, where the objection has been in great measure replied to. I said there that the benefits of the Supernatural Apprehensions, when they are from God, are passively wrought in the soul, at the time of their presentation to the senses, without the cooperation of our faculties. An act of the will admitting them is therefore unnecessary, for, as I have said, if the soul will then exert its own faculties, the effect of that natural and inferior exertion will be to impede the supernatural effects then wrought by God through their intervention, rather than any profit from that active exertion. Yea, rather, inasmuch as the fruit of these Imaginary Apprehensions is passively communicated to the soul; so the soul on its part must be passively disposed in their regard without any interior or exterior acts, as I have already explained. This is really to preserve the Divine impressions, for by this conduct we shall not destroy them by inferior actions of our own. This, too, is the way not to extinguish the Spirit, for we should extinguish Him if we attempted to walk in a way along which God does not lead us. We should be doing that if, when God communicates His Spirit to us passively, as He does in these apprehensions, we should then actively exert our intellect, or seek anything in them beside and beyond that which God communicates through them.

This is evident; for if the soul then exerts itself its action will be only natural, or, at the utmost, if supernatural, far inferior to that which God wills. In its own strength the soul cannot do more, seeing that it neither does, nor can, influence itself supernaturally; it is God that so influences it, but with its own consent. If, then, the soul will do anything

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itself, it will, necessarily, so far as itself is concerned, impede the communication of God, that is, the Spirit; because it has recourse to its own operations, which are of another kind and far inferior to those of God. This, then, is to extinguish the Spirit. The inferiority of this exertion is clear, for the powers of the soul, in their ordinary and natural course, cannot act or reflect but upon some figure, form, or image; and these are but the rind and accidents of the substance and of the Spirit hidden beneath them. This substance and Spirit unite not with the powers of the soul in true intelligence and love, until the reflex and imperfect action of those powers shall have ceased. The end and aim of the soul in this exertion is to receive in itself the substance, understood and loved, which those forms involve. The difference therefore between the active and passive operation, and the superiority of the latter, is the same as that between a work in the course of performance, and the same work already performed; between the search after an object, and that object sought and found.

If the soul, then, will actively exert its faculties on those Supernatural Apprehensions, in which God, as I have said, communicates passively the spirit of them, it will do nothing else but forsake what is already done, in order to do it anew; and so will have no enjoyment of it, neither will its own exertions have any other effect than to frustrate what God hath wrought. Because, as I have said, the powers of the soul can never of themselves attain to the Spirit, which God communicates independently of them. If we were to attach any importance to these Imaginary Apprehensions, we should directly extinguish the Spirit which God infuses through them into the soul: we must therefore put them aside, and observe a passive conduct in their regard, for God is then lifting up the soul to things above its power and its knowledge. This is the meaning of the Prophet when he said, 'I

Superiority
of the passive
soul.

will stand upon my watch, and fix my foot upon the tower; and I will watch to see what will be said to me.* That is, I will keep guard over my faculties, and will not suffer them to move a step, and so shall I be able to see what will be said to me; that is, I shall understand and enjoy what God will communicate to me supernaturally.

Gifts of the
Spirit as mo-
tives of Love.

As to the objection founded on the words of the Bridegroom, those words refer to that love which He demands, the function of which is to make the beloved ones resemble each other. And therefore He saith to her, 'Put Me as a seal upon thy heart'†—where the arrows strike that are shot forth from the quiver of love, that is, the actions and motives of love—so that all the arrows of love might strike Him, being there as a target for them, and that all may thus reach Him, and the soul become like unto Him through the actions and motions of love until it becomes transformed in Him. He says also, 'as a seal upon thy arm.' The arm implies the exercise of love, for it is that which comforts and sustains the Beloved. Therefore all we have to do with these Apprehensions, which come upon us from above, as well imaginary as of every other kind, whether Visions, Locutions, Impressions, or Revelations, is, making no account of the letter or the outward veil—that is, the significative and intelligible fact—to attend only to the preservation of the Love of God which they cause interiorly in the soul. It is in this sense that we are to make much of these impressions; not of the sweetness and delight of them, nor of the figures, but of the impressions of love which produce it. And with this object only in view we may probably at times call to mind that image and apprehension, which have been the occasion of love, in order to furnish ourselves with motives of love. For though the

* Habac. ii. 1.

† Cant. viii. 6.

effect of that apprehension be not so great when recalled to mind as it was when it was first communicated, still at the recollection of it our love is renewed and our minds elevated unto God; especially when the recollection is of one of those supernatural images, figures, or impressions which usually so impress themselves on the soul that they continue for some time there, and can scarcely be driven away.

These images, thus imprinted on the soul, produce, whenever they are adverted to, the Divine effects of love, sweetness, and light, sometimes more, sometimes less, for that is the end for which they are impressed. He with whom God thus deals receives a great gift, for he has a mine of blessings within himself. The images which produce such effects as these are vividly grounded in the spiritual memory, and resemble not those which the fancy preserves. It is not therefore necessary when we would remember them to have recourse to the fancy, because we have them in ourselves, as an image seen in a mirror. And whenever a soul has them formally, it may then profitably recall them to that effect of love; because they will not impede the Union of Love in Faith, when we do not dwell upon them, but make use of them, towards exciting our love, and, when that is done, instantly dismiss them: in this way they will be of service to us towards the attainment of the Divine union.

It is difficult to determine when these images touch directly the spiritual part of the soul, and when they are only in the fancy. Those of the fancy are usually very frequent, for the imagination and the fancy of some people are full of imaginary visions, abundantly present in one form; whether it be the result of the great vigour of that organ which, after the slightest effort of thought, represents at once and portrays in the fancy the usual forms, whether it be the work of Satan, or whether it be the work

Difference
between Spi-
ritual, and
Imaginative
Memory.

of God, but not formally impressed on the soul. But, however, we may determine their nature by their effects. Those that are natural or diabolic in their origin, however accurately remembered, produce no good effect, neither do they spiritually renew the soul, and the recollection of them issues only in dryness; while those which are from God produce, whenever remembered, some good effect, as at the first when originally presented to the soul. The formal images, those which are impressed on the soul, almost always when remembered, produce some effect. He who has these will easily distinguish the one from the other, for the difference between them will be most evident after experience. I have one thing, however, to say; those which are formally and durably impressed on the soul are of very rare occurrence. But of whatever kind they may be, the good of the soul consists in not seeking to comprehend anything save God alone by Faith in Hope.

Finally as to that objection which charges him with pride who rejects these things when they are good, I reply that it is a prudent humility to use them in the best way, as I have shown, and to guide our steps by the road that is safest.

CHAPTER XIII.

Of Spiritual Knowledge as it relates to the Memory.

Third kind
of Apprehen-
sions,—
Memory of
the purely
Spiritual.

THE third kind of Apprehensions of the Memory is Spiritual Knowledge: not because it belongs to the bodily sense of the fancy, like the rest, but because it is also cognisable by the spiritual reminiscence and Memory. When the soul has once had one of this kind, it may, when it wills, call it to mind, not by reason of the figure and image which the apprehension thereof may have left behind in the bodily sense—for that is incapable of receiving spiritual forms—

but because it intellectually and spiritually remembers it by that form of it which remains impressed on the soul—which is also a form, or image, or knowledge spiritual or formal, by which the soul remembers it—or by the effect it has wrought. This is the reason why I place these apprehensions among those of the Memory, though not belonging directly to the fancy.

The nature of this knowledge, and the conduct to be observed by the soul with reference to it, in order to be united with God, has been sufficiently explained in the twenty-fourth chapter of the second book, where I treated of it as an apprehension of the Intellect. You will there find that there are two kinds of them, one of Uncreated Perfections, another of creatures. I am now speaking only so far as it touches this part of my subject; namely, the conduct of the Memory in the matter. I say again, as I did of the formal impressions in the preceding chapter—for these are of the same kind, being of created things—that they may be remembered when the effect of them is good, not, indeed, for the purpose of dwelling upon them but for quickening our love and knowledge of God. But if the recollection of them produces not this effect, the memory should never busy itself with them. But as to the knowledge of the Uncreated Perfections, that may be remembered as often as we can, for it will produce great results; for that is, as I said before, touches and impressions of the Divine union towards which I am directing the soul. The memory does not remember these by the help of any form, image, or figure that may have been impressed on the soul—for none such belong to the touches and impressions of Union with the Creator—but only by their effects of light, love, joy, and spiritual renewing, some of which, as often as they are remembered, are wrought anew in the soul.

Continual
Remem-
brance of the
Perfections
of God.

CHAPTER XIV.

General directions for the guidance of the spiritual man in relation to the Memory.

Recapitulation.

To conclude, then, this subject of the Memory, it may be as well here to furnish the spiritually-minded reader with certain brief directions, of universal application, how he is to unite himself, in the memory, with God. For, notwithstanding that the matter has been sufficiently discussed, it will be more easily grasped, if I repeat it here concisely. Having this in view, then, we must remember, that my object is the Union of the soul with God in the Memory by Hope. Now, that which we hope for is what we possess not, and the less we possess the greater scope we have for hoping, and, consequently, the greater the perfection of hope; while, on the other hand, the more we possess the less room is there for hope, and, consequently, the less is the perfection of hope. Accordingly the more the soul strips the memory of forms and reminiscible matters, which are not the Divinity or God Incarnate—the recollection of Him always subserves our true end, for He is the Way, the Guide, and the Source of all good—the more it will fix the memory on God, and the more empty it will make it, so that it shall hope for Him who is the Fulness of it.

What we have to do, then, in order to live in the simple and perfect Hope of God, whenever these forms, knowledge, and distinct images occur, is, not to fix our minds upon them but to turn immediately to God, emptying the Memory of all such matters, in loving affection, without regarding or considering them more than suffices to enable us to understand and perform our obligations, if they have any reference thereto. We must do this without taking any satisfaction in them, in order that they may leave no disturbing effects

behind. And therefore we must not omit to think of, and remember, those things which it is our duty to do and to know; for in that case, provided no selfish attachments intrude, these recollections will do no harm. Those sentences of the thirteenth chapter of the first book will be profitable to us in this matter.

But, my dear Reader, bear in mind that I have nothing, and will have nothing, in common with the opinions of those pestilent men who, full of the pride and hate of Satan, labour to destroy among the Faithful the holy and necessary use, and noble worship, of the Images of God and the Saints. My principles are very different from theirs; for I am not saying that Images ought not to be allowed, and worshipped, as they do; but I only show the difference between them and God, teaching men to make use of the sign in such a way as that it shall not hinder their progress to the reality, by resting upon it more than is sufficient for their spiritual advancement.

The Author's principles different from those of the Reformers.

Means are necessary to the end; such are Images, for they remind us of God and of His Saints. But when we dwell upon the means more than the nature of such means demands, we are then hindered and perplexed. How much more, then, must this be the case with those interior images and visions which are formed within the soul? These are liable to innumerable risks and illusions. But with regard to the memorial, worship, and veneration of those Images, which our Holy Mother the Church sets before us, there can be neither risk nor delusion; and the recollection of them cannot fail to be profitable, because it is always connected with love of what they represent. And when the Memory makes this use of images they will always help it on towards the Divine union, if it permits the soul to fly upwards, when God grants this grace, from the image to the reality, in forgetfulness of the creature and all that belongs to it.

Images are means to remember and to love God.

CHAPTER XV.

Of the Obscure Night of the Will. Proofs from Deuteronomy and the Psalms. Division of the affections of the Will.

Reformation of the Intellect in Faith; of the Memory, in Hope; of the Will, in Charity.

WE have done nothing by the purification of the Intellect towards grounding it in Faith, and that of the Memory in Hope—according to the sense explained in the sixth chapter of the second book—if we have not also purified the Will in the order of Charity, which is the third virtue, and by which works done in Faith are living and meritorious, and without which they are nothing worth. For as S. James saith, ‘Faith without works is dead.’* That is, without the works of Charity Faith is dead.

The greatest of these, Charity.

And now that I have to treat of the Night and active detachment of the Will, with a view to its perfect establishment in this virtue of the Love of God, I cannot find a better authority than that contained in the Book of Deuteronomy: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength.’† This is all that the spiritual man ought to do—and all that I am teaching him—that he may truly draw near unto God in the Union of the will with God in Love. Man is here bidden to employ for God all his faculties and desires, all the functions and affections of his soul, so that all the skill and all the strength of the soul may minister to no other end than this, as the Psalmist says: ‘I will keep my strength to Thee.’‡ The strength of the soul consists in its powers, passions, and desires, all of which are governed by the Will. But when the Will directs these powers, passions, and desires to God, and turns them away from all that is not God, it then keeps the strength of the soul for God, and

* S. James ii. 20.

† Deuter. vi. 5.

‡ Ps. lviii. 10.

Love the fulfilment of the Law.

loves Him with its whole strength. And that the soul may be able to do this, I purpose here to show how the Will is to be purified from all unruly affections; which are the cause why our strength is not wholly kept for God.

These affections or Passions are four in number:—Joy, Hope, Grief, and Fear. If these passions are excited only according to Reason, in the way of God, so that we feel no joy except in that which is simply for the honour and glory of our Lord God, nor hope except in Him, nor grief except in what concerns Him, nor fear but of Him only, it is clear, then, that the strength and skill of the soul are directed to, and kept for, God. For the more the soul rejoices in aught beside Him, the less effectively will it rejoice in God, and the more it hopes in aught else, the less will it hope in God. The same applies to the other passions also.

Reformation of the Passions, Joy, Hope, Grief, and Fear.

In order to a more complete explanation of this I shall, as usual, speak of each of these passions and desires of the will separately, for the whole matter of Union with God consists in purging the will of its affections and desires, so that the vile and human will may become the Divine Will, being made one with the Will of God.

These four Passions domineer over the soul, and assail it with the more vigour, the less the will is attached to God, and the more dependent it is on created things; for it then rejoices easily in those things which do not deserve to be rejoiced in, hopes in that which is valueless, grieves over that for which perhaps it ought to rejoice, and fears where there is nothing to be afraid of.

In disorder they cause Vice: In order, Virtue.

It is from these affections, when disorderly, that all the vices and imperfections of the soul arise; and all its virtues also, when they are well governed and restrained. Let us remember that if but one of them be under the control of Reason, so will the others be also; for they are so intimately bound together, that the actual course of one is the virtual

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Mutual relations of the Passions to each other; and to the Will.

course of the rest, and if one of them be actually restrained, the others will be proportionately restrained also. For if the Will rejoices in anything, it will consequently hope in the same measure, and there grief and fear are virtually present; and as that joy ceases, in the same proportion cease also grief and fear and hope.

The Will with its four Passions may be said, in some sense, to be represented in the vision which Ezechiel saw of the four living creatures with one body; 'They had faces and wings on the four sides. And the wings of one were joined to the wings of another. They turned not when they went, but every one went straight forward.'* The wings of each one of these four affections are joined to the wings of the others, and whithersoever one of them goes there also of necessity go virtually the others. When one of them goeth on the earth so do the others, and when one is lifted up, so the others also. Where hope is, there also will be joy and fear and grief; and when one has retired, the others retire also.

Remember, therefore, O thou who art spiritual, that the whole soul, with the Will and its other powers, will follow in the wake of every one of these passions; that they will be all captives to it, and that the three other passions also will live in it, afflicting the soul and preventing its flight to the liberty and repose of sweet Contemplation and Union. And so Boethius says: Wilt thou contemplate Truth in clear light? Drive away joy and hope and fear and grief.† For while these passions have dominion over thee, they will not suffer the soul to enjoy that tranquillity and peace which are necessary for the attainment of wisdom, either natural or supernatural.

* Ezech. i. 8, 9.

† 'Tu quoque, si vis lumine claro cernere Verum,
. . . Gaudia pelle, pelle timorem, spemque fugato,
Ne dolor assit.' Boet. *de Cons. Phil.* lib. i. metr. vii.

Boethius
quoted.

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CHAPTER XVI.

Of the first affection of the Will. What Joy is. Its diverse sources.

THE first of the Passions of the soul and of the affections of the Will is Joy, which, in the sense I speak of, is nothing else but a certain satisfaction of the will joined to the appreciation of the object it regards; for the will has no joy except when it appreciates an object and is satisfied with it. This refers to active joy, to that joy which the soul feels when it clearly and distinctly perceives why it rejoices, and when it is in its own power to rejoice or not. For there is another joy, which is passive: when the soul finds itself rejoicing, without clearly perceiving—and sometimes even perceiving—why it rejoices, it being out of its power at that time to control, or not control, that joy. I shall speak of this hereafter. I am now speaking of that joy, active and voluntary, which is derived from clear and distinct perceptions of things.

Joy arises out of six different sources: temporal, natural, sensual, moral, supernatural, and spiritual good. I shall speak of these successively, for we have so to order the Will with regard to them, that, unembarrassed by them, it may not omit to place the strength of its Joy in God. And with this there is one truth which we must take for granted, and lean upon it as upon a staff. And we must understand it thoroughly, for it is the light by which we are to be guided, in which this doctrine is to be regarded, and by which our joy in all these goods is to be directed unto God. That truth is this: The Will ought to rejoice in nothing but in that which tends to the Honour and Glory of God; and that to serve Him in Evangelical Perfection is the greatest honour we can render Him: whatever is beside this is of no value nor of any use to man.

First Affec-
tion of the
Will; Joy,—
1. Its Defi-
nition.

2. Its twofold
division.

3. Its six
sources;
1. Temporal.
2. Natural.
3. Sensual.
4. Moral.
5. Supernatural.
6. Spiritual.

Ad majorem
Dei Gloriam.

CHAPTER XVII.

Of Joy in Temporal Goods. How it is to be directed.

First source
of Joy,—
Temporal
Goods.

THE first source of Joy I mentioned is Temporal good; by which I mean riches, rank, office, and other dignities; children, relations, and alliances. All these are matters in which the Will may rejoice. But what vanity to rejoice in riches, rank, titles, office, and the like, after which men are striving! If a man's wealth made him a better servant of God, he might rejoice in his riches; but riches are rather occasions of sin, as the Wise Man saith: 'My son . . . if thou be rich, thou shalt not be free from sin.'* It is very true that temporal goods are not necessarily, in themselves, occasions of sin, yet generally, by reason of our frailty, the heart sets itself upon them, and falls away from God, which is sin. The wise man therefore says, that the rich shall not be free from sin.

1. Riches.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Gospel, calls riches thorns,† that we may learn that he who shall set his Will upon riches will be wounded by sin. Those fearful words recorded by S. Matthew, 'Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of Heaven,‡' show us plainly that a man ought not to rejoice in his riches, because they expose him to so great a danger. David also bids us withdraw ourselves from riches, saying, 'If riches abound, set not your heart upon them.§ I will not allege further proof in a matter so clear, for when shall I have said all the evils of them that Solomon hath said? Solomon was a man full of wisdom and of great riches, and he knew well what they were when he said, 'I have seen all things that are done under the sun, and behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit

* Eccles. xi. 10.
† S. Matt. xix. 23.

† S. Matt. xiii. 22.
§ Ps. lxi. 11.

. . . and a fruitless solicitude of the mind.* And, 'He that loveth riches shall reap no fruit from them.†' And again, 'Riches kept to the hurt of the owner.‡' An instance of this we have in the Gospel. A rich man, because his harvest was abundant, rejoiced in his expectation of years of comfort: 'But God said to him, Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?'§ The Psalmist also teaches us the same truth, saying, 'Be not thou afraid when a man shall be made rich . . . for when he shall die, he shall take nothing away; nor shall his glory descend with him;'||—that is, we are not to envy our neighbour because he is grown rich, for his riches will not profit him in the life to come; yea, rather let us pity him.

The sum of the matter is this: let no man rejoice in his own or in his brother's wealth, unless it be that it tends to the better service of God. If rejoicing in riches can be made in any way enduring, it is when we spend and employ them for God; for there is no other way of making them profitable. The same principle applies to the temporal goods of title, rank, and office; all rejoicing in which is vanity, unless we feel that these things enable us to serve God better, and that they make the way to Eternal Life more secure. And as we can never be sure that these things enable us to serve God better, it will be vanity to rejoice deliberately in them, because such a joy can never be reasonable. For as our Lord saith: 'For what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?'¶ There cannot be anything worth rejoicing in except that which makes us better servants of our God.

Neither are men to rejoice in their children, because they

* Eccles. i. 14; ii. 26.
† Ib. v. 12.
‡ Ps. xlviii. 17, 18.

† Ib. v. 9.
§ S. Luke xii. 20.
¶ S. Matt. xvi. 26.

2. Rank,
Titles, and
Office.

BOOK
III.
3. Domestic
relations;
(1) Children.

are many, rich, endowed with abilities and natural graces, and prosperous, but only in that they serve God. Neither the beauty, nor the wealth, nor the lineage of Absalom the son of David profited him at all, because he served not God. To rejoice in such a son would have been vanity. It is also vanity to desire children; as some do who disturb the world with their fretting; for they know not if their children will be good and servants of God. They know not whether the pleasure they expect from them may not be turned into pain, tranquillity and consolation into trouble and disquietude, honour into disgrace; and, finally, whether they shall not be to them greater occasions of sinning against God, as is the case with many. Christ has said of these that they compass sea and land to enrich themselves and to make themselves twofold the children of perdition: 'You go round about the sea and the land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, you make him the child of hell twofold more than yourselves.'*

(2) Worldly
Prosperity.

If a man's affairs are prosperous, if his undertakings succeed, and all his wishes are gratified, he ought to fear rather than rejoice, for this is a dangerous occasion of forgetting, and offending against, God. It was for this cause that Solomon was cautious, saying: 'Laughter I counted error; and to mirth I said: Why art thou vainly deceived?'† It is as if he said: when all things smiled upon me I counted it error and delusion to rejoice therein; for, beyond all doubt, it is a great error and folly on the part of man if he rejoices in the sunshine of prosperity, when he does not know for certain that it will lead to any durable good. 'The heart of the wise is where there is mourning,' saith Solomon, 'and the heart of fools where there is mirth.'‡ Vain rejoicing blinds the heart, makes it inconsiderate and thoughtless, but

* S. Matt. xxiii. 15.

† Eccles. ii. 2.

‡ Ib. vii. 5.

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mourning opens our eyes to the vision of our loss and gain. This is the reason why the wise man saith that 'anger is better than laughter;'* and that 'it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting; for in that we are put in mind of the end of all, and the living thinketh what is to come.'†

It is also vanity for a wife or a husband to rejoice in marriage, for they know not whether they shall serve God the better in that state. Yea, rather they should feel humbled, because, as the Apostle saith, marriage leads them to set their affections upon each other, and not to give their heart whole unto God. This is why he said: 'Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.'‡ He that is married ought to live with freedom of heart, as if he had not been married. The Apostle teaches the same doctrine with regard to all temporal goods, saying: 'This, therefore, I say, brethren, the time is short; it remaineth that they also who have wives be as if they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as if they used it not.'§ The Apostle teaches that to rejoice in anything which tendeth not to the service of God is vanity and without profit, for all joy which is not in God brings no good to the soul.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Of the Evils resulting from Joy in Temporal goods.

If I were to describe all the evils that environ the soul when the affections of the Will are set upon Temporal Goods, paper and ink would fail me, and time itself would be too short.

* Eccles. vii. 4.
† 1 Cor. vii. 27.

‡ Ib. vii. 3.
§ 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30.

BOOK
III.

Slight beginnings issue in great evils, and in the ruin of great prosperity. A spark, unquenched, kindles a great fire, which may burn up the whole world. All these evils have their root and origin in one principal evil of a negative character involved in this joy, namely, a departure from God.

Joy in creatures ends in loss of God.

For, as the drawing near of the soul unto God with the affection of the will is the source of all good, so the going away from Him, through love of created things, issues in all evils and calamities, in proportion to the joy and affection which unite us to the creature. This is the departure from God. In proportion, therefore, to our departure from God, more or less, will be the evils resulting from it in greater or less extent and gravity; and for the most part they are at once most extensive and most grave.

Four degrees of Departure from God.

There are four degrees, one worse than the other, in this negative evil, from which all the other evils, negative and positive, proceed. And when the fourth degree is reached, all the evils involved in this case will have fallen upon the soul. These four degrees are described in the following words of Moses:—‘The beloved grew fat and kicked; he grew fat, and thick, and gross; he forsook God, who made him, and departed from God his Saviour.’*

1. Dimness of Spiritual Perception.

This growing fat of the soul, once beloved, is its absorption in the joy of created things. Hence the first degree of evil, going backwards; it is a certain obtuseness of mind with regard to God, which obscures His blessings, as a cloud darkens the sky, hiding the light of the sun. For the moment the spiritual man rejoices in anything, and gives the reins to his foolish desires, he becomes blind to God, and overshadows with a cloud the pure perceptions of his judgment. ‘For the bewitching of vanity,’ saith the Holy Ghost, ‘obscureth good things, and the wandering of con-

* Deuter. xxxii. 15.

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cupiscence overturneth the innocent mind.’* The Holy Spirit teaches here that concupiscence alone, and joy in created things, even when the soul is without previous malice, are sufficient to precipitate it into the first degree of evil; into that obtuseness of mind and obscurity of judgment which destroy the perception of truth and a right judgment in all things. If a man gives way to concupiscence, or rejoices in temporal things, neither his sanctity nor his prudence can prevent his fall.

This explains those words of God: ‘Neither shalt thou take bribes, which even blind the wise.’† This is especially addressed unto judges who have need of a clear and vigilant judgment, which cannot coexist with avarice and joy in gifts. Hence God commanded Moses to appoint men for judges who hated avarice: ‘Provide out of all the people able men . . . that hate avarice, who may judge the people at all times,’‡ men who would not blind their judgment by the lust of possession. God does not say men that avoid avarice, but men that hate avarice. For if we would defend ourselves completely against a particular affection we must hold it in abhorrence, and guard ourselves against it by the contrary feeling. The reason why Samuel was always so upright and enlightened a judge was, as he tells us himself, his abstinence from gifts: ‘If I have taken a bribe at any man’s hand.’§

The second degree grows out of the first, as the text shows: ‘he grew fat, and thick, and gross.’ Thus the Will becomes gross and distracted, by greater liberty in worldly things. It has no further scruples about the pleasures of sense, and abandons itself to created things. This state grows out of a previous indulgence in joy, for when the soul of man is

2. Tedium de Deo.

* Wisd. iv. 12.

† Ib. xviii. 21, 22.

† Exod. xxiii. 8.

§ 1 Kings xii. 3.

engrossed therein it is the result of yielding to it; and this engrossing of it by joy and desire causes the will to dilate and expand itself on created things. Great evils result from this, because this second degree leads us away from the things of God, and from holy practices, and robs us of all pleasure in them, because we take pleasure in other matters, and abandon ourselves to many follies, to empty joys and pleasures. When the second degree is completely reached, it destroys utterly habitual devotions, and the mind and desire are given up to secularities. Those who have fallen to this second degree, not only have their judgment and understanding blinded as to truth and justice, like those who have fallen into the first; but they are also remiss and tepid in recognising and doing their duty, according to the words of the Prophet: 'They all love bribes, they run after rewards. They judge not for the fatherless; and the widow's cause cometh not unto them.*' This implicates them in sin, especially if such duties are incumbent upon them, for those who have fallen to this depth are not free from malice, like those of the first degree. These, therefore, withdraw more and more from justice and virtue, because they inflame the will more and more by this their affection for created things. The characteristics of those who are in this second state are great tepidity in spiritual things, and a careless observance of them; they perform their highest duties rather as if they were ceremonies, or from compulsion, or from habit, and not from love.

3. Neglect of
God's Law.

The third degree of this negative evil is the utter forsaking of God, neglect of His law, because men will not deny themselves in the merest trifle of this world, and, finally, mortal sin committed through concupiscence. This degree is described in the text by the words, 'He forsook God who made him.' This degree includes all those the faculties of whose souls are so immersed in the things of the world —

* Is. i. 23.

in riches and the commerce thereof — that they are utterly regardless of the obligations of the Divine Law. In that which concerns their salvation they are forgetful and dull, but quick and clear in the things of the world, so much so that our Lord calls them 'children of this world,' saying of them, that they 'are wiser in their generation than the children of light;*' that is, more prudent in the management of their own affairs than the children of light in their own. Such persons are nothing in the things of God, but everything in the things of the world. These persons are the truly avaricious; they have so profusely wasted their affections and desires upon created things that they can never be satisfied; their desire and thirst increase the more, the more they depart from the Fountain which alone can satisfy them, namely, God. It is of these that God speaks by the mouth of the Prophet, saying, 'They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.†' The covetous man cannot quench his thirst by created things; but he increases it. These persons fall into innumerable sins through temporal goods; of whom the Psalmist hath said, 'They have passed into the affection of the heart.‡'

The fourth degree of this negative evil is described in the same text thus: 'departed from God his Saviour.' This is the issue of the third degree, of which I have just spoken.

The avaricious man, because he makes light of his want of affection for the Law of God, on account of temporal goods, departs from Him in Memory, Intellect, and Will. He forgets Him as if He existed not, because he has made money and temporal prosperity his god; for avarice is, according to the Apostle, 'the service of idols.‡' This fourth degree extends to forgetfulness of God, to the setting of the heart formally on money which ought to be set formally upon God; as if

* S. Luke xvi. 8.

† Ps. lxxii. 7.

‡ Jerem. ii. 13.

§ Coloss. iii. 5.

4. False gods
in place of
the True One.

BOOK
III.
Spiritual
Simony.

men had no other god than money. They have fallen into this fourth degree who scruple not to subject Divine and Supernatural things to temporal, as if the latter were God; their duty being to act on the contrary rule, subjecting temporal things to God, as Reason requires. Such was the impious Balaam, who sold for money the gift of God,* and Simon Magus, who 'thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money,'† and attempted to buy it. They thought more of money; they seemed to think that others did so too, and that they would sell the gift of God.

There are many who, in various ways, have fallen into this fourth degree of evil, their Reason is blinded by avarice, and they are the servants of money and not of God; they labour for it and not for Him; they propose to themselves a human and not the Divine reward; making money in divers ways their principal end and god, and preferring it to God, their ultimate end.

Tribute paid
by Gold-wor-
shippers.

This class, too, comprises all those miserable men who so love their earthly goods as to esteem them their god; and who therefore shrink not from the sacrifice of their own lives whenever their god suffers the slightest injury; they fall into despair, and for wretched objects inflict death upon themselves; thereby exhibiting, in the work of their own hands, the miserable reward which their god bestows upon them. When their expectations fail them they despair and die, and those who escape this final calamity live in the torments of continual anxiety and misery; no joy enters into their soul, and no temporal happiness attends them; they pay tribute to their god in sorrow of heart, gathering money for the final misery of their just perdition: as it is written, 'Riches kept to the hurt of the owner.'‡

Those also of whom it is said, 'God delivered them up to

* Num. xxii. 7.

† Acts viii. 20.

‡ Eccles. v. 12.

a reprobate sense,* are of this class, for joy, when it makes possessions its end, drags men down to this. Those who do not fall so low are objects of deep commiseration, because they turn back from the way of God. 'Be not thou afraid when a man shall be made rich, and when the glory of his house shall be increased. For when he shall die he shall take nothing away, nor shall his glory descend with him.'† 'Be not afraid when a man shall be made rich;' that is, be not envious of him, thinking him superior to thyself, for when he shall die he shall take nothing away with him, neither shall his glory nor his joy descend with him.

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CHAPTER XIX.

The benefits resulting from withdrawing our Joy from Temporal things.

THE spiritual man, then, must be very careful of the beginnings of Joy in Temporal things, lest it should grow from little to be great, and increase from one degree to another. What is small becomes large, out of slight beginnings result great evils, and one spark is enough to set a mountain on fire. However slight his joy may be, let him quench it at once, and not trust that he shall be able to do it later; for if he has not the courage to do so when it is but beginning, how can he presume upon success when it shall have taken root and grown? Remember especially those words of our Lord, 'He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater.'‡

Mortification
in little
things neces-
sary.

He who avoids what is slight will not stumble over what is great. Little things involve great evils, because the fences and wall of the heart are broken down when they enter in. And the proverb says, He who has begun his work has

* Rom. i. 28.

† Ps. xlvi. 17, 18.

‡ S. Luke xvi. 10.

BOOK
III.Benefits of
self-denial in
Temporal
goods, for the
Love of God:

1. Liberality.

2. Liberty,
and Peace.3. Greater
and truer
Joy.4. Clearness
of Spiritual
Perception.

accomplished the half of it. It is for this reason that David admonishes us, saying, 'If riches abound set not your heart upon them.'* If man will not do this for God, and because Christian Perfection requires it, yet because of the temporal advantages, beside the spiritual ones, which such conduct brings with it, he should keep his heart perfectly free from all joy of this kind. In this way he not only delivers himself from those pestilent evils enumerated in the preceding chapter, but also, repressing all joy in temporal goods, acquires the virtue of liberality, one of the chief attributes of God; and which cannot possibly coexist with avarice. Moreover, he attains to liberty of spirit, clearness of judgment, repose, tranquillity, and peaceful confidence in God, together with the true worship and obedience of the Will. He has greater joy and comfort in creatures if he detaches himself from them; and he can have no joy in them if he considers them as his own. He acquires also in this detachment from creatures a clear comprehension of them, so as to understand perfectly the truths that relate to them, both naturally and supernaturally. For this reason his joy in them is widely different from his who is attached to them, and far nobler. The former rejoices in their truth, the latter in their deceptiveness; the former in their best, and the latter in their worst, conditions; the former in their substantial worth, and the latter in their seeming and accidental nature, through his senses only. For sense cannot grasp or comprehend more than the accidents, but the mind, purified from the clouds and species of the accidents, penetrates to the interior truth of things, for that is its proper object.

Now Joy as a cloud darkens the judgment, for there can be no rejoicing in created things without the attachment of the Will. The negation and purgation of this joy leaves the

* Ps. lxi. 11.

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judgment clear as the sky when the mists are scattered. The former, therefore, has joy in all things, but his joy is not dependent upon them, neither does it arise from their being his own: and the latter, in so far as he regards them as his own, loses in general all joy whatever. The former, while his heart is set upon none of them, possesses them all, as the Apostle saith, with great freedom: 'as having nothing, and possessing all things.'* The latter, while in will attached to them, neither has nor possesses anything, for rather created things have possession of his very heart, for which cause he suffers pain as a prisoner. And, therefore, all the joy he will derive from creatures, will necessarily end in as many disquietudes and pains in the heart which is in their possession.

He who is detached from creatures, is not molested during prayer or otherwise, and so, without losing his time, he gains easily great spiritual treasures. On the other hand, 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, running incessantly thither where his heart is fixed. The spiritual man, therefore, must suppress the first motions of this joy, remembering, as I said before, that there is nothing in which a man may rejoice except in serving God, in promoting His Honour and Glory, in directing all things to this end, and in avoiding all vanity in them, and in not seeking his own pleasure and comfort.

The absence of Joy in created good, brings another great and excellent benefit: it sets the heart free for God: which is a disposition meet for all those graces which He will bestow, and without which He will give none. And even in this life, for one joy denied through love of Him and for the

5. Wider and
better pos-
sessions.6. Capacity
for God.

* 2 Cor. vi. 10.

BOOK
III.7. A hundred-
fold reward
even in this
life.

sake of Evangelical Perfection, He will give them a hundred-fold, according to His promise.* But if it were not so, the spiritual Christian ought to suppress all joy in created things because it is offensive in the sight of God. When the rich man, in the gospel, rejoiced, because he had 'much goods laid up for many years,' God was so displeased, that He said unto him: 'Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee.' †

Conclusion.
Light Suffer-
ings, and infi-
nite Bliss; or
short Plea-
sure, and
eternal Pain.

It is therefore justly to be feared, whenever we rejoice in vanity, that God is looking on and preparing some chastisement for us, the bitter cup of our deservings; for the punishment of such rejoicing is frequently greater than its pleasures. Though the words recorded by S. John concerning Babylon be true: 'As much as she hath glorified herself and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her,' ‡ we are not to suppose that the pain will not exceed the joy, because it will be far greater—seeing that for passing pleasures there are infinite and everlasting torments—for the words mean that nothing shall escape its particular punishment, for He who will punish for every idle word, will not pass over our empty joy.

CHAPTER XX.

The Joy of the Will in Natural Goods is Vanity. How to direct the Will to God therein.

Second
source of
Joy.—Na-
tural Goods.

By Natural Goods I mean beauty, grace, comeliness, bodily constitution, and all other physical endowments, and also good understanding, discretion, and other rational qualities. Now, for a man to rejoice, because he himself, or those who belong to him, may be thus gifted, and for that reason only,

* S. Matt. xix. 29. † S. Luke xii. 19, 20. ‡ Apoc. xviii. 7.

without giving thanks to God, who thus endows men in order that they may know Him and love Him the more, is vanity and delusion. 'Favour is deceitful,' saith the Wise Man, 'and beauty is vain: the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.'* He teaches us that man ought rather to be afraid of his natural endowments, because they may so easily withdraw him from the love of God, and cast him down into error and vanity. This is the reason why physical grace is deceitful: it deceives a man and allures him to that which is unseemly, through empty joy or complacency, either in himself, or in others, so endowed. Beauty is vain; it makes man fall in divers ways, when he values it and rejoices in it, for he ought to rejoice in it only when it enables him to serve God. We ought, therefore, rather to fear, lest perhaps our natural gifts and graces should become occasions of offending against God, through presuming upon them, or excessive estimation of them, arising out of their continued contemplation. He therefore, who is thus endowed, ought to be very cautious, and watchful in his conduct, lest he should furnish another with the opportunity of withdrawing his heart from God even for a moment. For these natural gifts and graces are so prolific in temptations and in occasions of sin, as well to the owner as to the beholder, that scarcely any one can avoid all entanglement of the heart in them. Many spiritual persons, of natural beauty, have, under the influence of this fear, prayed to God for their own disfigurement, that they might not be an occasion of vain affection or joy, either to themselves or to others.

The spiritual man, therefore, must purify his Will, and render it insensible to this empty rejoicing, remembering that beauty, and all other natural graces, are earth, from the earth, and soon return to it; that comeliness and grace are

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Beauty may
lead from
God.Better gifts,
greater re-
sponsibility.

* Prov. xxxi. 30.

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III.God the
Uncreated
Beauty.

but smoke and vapour; and if he would escape falling into vanity, he must esteem them as such, and direct his heart upwards unto God beyond them all, rejoicing and delighted that God is all Beauty and all Grace in Himself, supremely, infinitely, above all created things. 'They shall perish, but Thou remainest, and all of them shall grow old like a garment.* If, therefore, our rejoicing is not in God, it will always be false and delusive. It is to this that those words of Solomon apply which he addressed to that joy which has its sources in created things: 'To mirth, I said, Why art thou vainly deceived?'† that is when the heart suffers itself to be attracted by created things.

CHAPTER XXI.

The evils of the Will's rejoicing in Natural Goods.

Six evils of
loving Na-
tural Goods
for their own
sake.

THOUGH many of these evils and benefits, which I describe under these several divisions of Joy, be common to all kinds of joy, nevertheless, because they flow directly from joy and the rejection of it—though comprised under any one of these divisions—I speak under each head of some evils and benefits, which are also found under another, because connected with that joy which is common to all. But my chief object is to speak of those particular evils and benefits which rejoicing, or not rejoicing, in all things, ministers unto the soul. I call them particular evils, because they flow primarily and immediately from one particular kind of rejoicing, and only secondarily and mediately from another. For instance, the evil of tepidity flows directly from all and every kind of joy, and is therefore common to the six kinds in general;

* Ps. ci. 27.

† Eccles. ii. 2.

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but that of sensuality is a particular evil, which flows directly only from joy in the natural goods of which I am speaking.

The spiritual and corporal evils, then, which directly and effectually flow from rejoicing in Natural Goods, are, in number, six principal evils.

The first is vain glory, presumption, pride, and disesteem of our neighbour; for no man can entertain an excessive esteem of one thing without wanting in respect for some other thing. The result is, at least, that we disesteem and despise all else; because naturally, by esteeming one thing we withdraw our heart from all besides, and fix it upon that. It is most easy to glide from this real contempt into an intentional and deliberate despising of others; in particular or in general, not in thoughts only, but in words as well, to the extent of saying that such a person is not like such an one.

1. Contempt
for others.

The second evil is complacency and sensual delight.

2. Sins of the
flesh.
3. Flattery.

The third evil is flattery and empty praise, wherein there is delusion and vanity, as the Prophet saith, 'O my people, they that call thee blessed deceive thee.*' For, even if we speak truly when we praise the grace and beauty of another, it will be strange if some evil be not involved, either in causing him to fall into vain complacency and joy, or in ministering food to his imperfect affections and intentions.

The fourth evil is a general one: it dulls the reason and the spiritual sense, as the joy of temporal goods does, and in a certain way even more. For, as natural goods are more intimately connected with man than temporal goods are, the joy which they minister makes a quicker and deeper impression upon the senses, and more effectually blunts them. Reason and judgment are no longer free, but overshadowed by the cloud of this joy which is so inherent in us; and hence,

4. Spiritual
stupidity.

* Is. iii. 12.

BOOK
III.5. Dissipa-
tion of mind.
6. Weariness
of God.

The fifth evil is the dissipation of the mind by created things. Then the sixth is spiritual sloth and tepidity, which grow into weariness and sadness in Divine things, so that in the end we come to hate them. Pure spirituality is inevitably lost in this joy, at least in principle; for if any spirituality exist, it will be exceedingly sensual and gross, not interior, nor recollected—consisting in sensible delight rather than in the strength of the spirit. If we are in mind so mean and weak as not to destroy the habit of this joy—an imperfect habit of it even is sufficient to sully the purity of our spirituality, without consenting to the acts which this joy suggests—we are living in the weakness of sense rather than in the power of the spirit. This will become manifest in the matter of perfection and fortitude when the occasion shall arise, though I do not deny that many virtues may coexist with great imperfections, but no pure or healthy interior spirituality can coexist with these unchecked rejoicings; for here the flesh almost reigns, which wars against the spirit, and though we may be unconscious of the evil, yet, at least, secret distractions are the result.

Universality
and power of
the second
evil.

I now return to the second evil, which involves innumerable others. No pen can describe, no words can express, the nature and extent of the misery that results from rejoicing in natural grace and beauty. These are daily occasions of murders, of honour lost, of insults, of extravagant dissipation, emulations, contentions, adultery and violence, of the ruin of Saints, comparable in number to the third part of the stars of heaven, swept down to the earth by the tail of the dragon.* 'How is the gold become dim, the finest colour is changed, the stones of the sanctuary are scattered in the top of every street. The noble sons of Sion, and they that were clothed in the best gold, how are they esteemed as

* Apoc. xii. 4.

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earthen vessels, the work of the potter's hands!'^{*} Is any condition secure against the poison of this evil? Who has not drunk, be it much or little, of the golden cup of the Babylonian woman, that sitteth on the 'scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns?''^{*} Neither high nor low, neither saint nor sinner lives, to whom she has not given her cup to drink from, suborning the heart in some thing; for all the kings of the earth have drunk of the wine of her fornication. She seizes upon all conditions of men, the highest and the noblest, the sacred Priesthood itself, and puts the cup of her abominations in the holy place: 'There shall be in the Temple the abomination of desolation.'[†] Even one spiritually strong scarcely escapes the wine of this cup, which is empty rejoicing. This is the reason why it is said that all the kings of the earth have drunk of it; for there are very few, however holy they may be, who have not drunk and been corrupted, in some measure, by the cups of joy which the pleasure of natural grace and beauty supply. Observe, too, that the word is 'drunk,' for if we drink of the wine of this joy, it seizes on the heart and deadens it, obscuring the Reason, as in men drunk with wine. And if no antidote be taken at once, and the poison expelled, the life of the soul is in danger. Spiritual weakness having grown upon us, this poison will drag us down to such depths of evil that we shall grind in the mill like Samson,[‡] deprived of sight, with the hair of our first strength cut off, captives in the hands of our enemies; and afterwards, perhaps, die the second death, as he did the first: the draughts of this joy producing spiritually in us what they did corporally in him, and in many unto this day. In the end our enemies will surround us and say to our great

^{*} Lam. iv. 1, 2.[†] Apoc. xvii. 3.[‡] Dan. ix. 27.[§] Judges xvi. 21.

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III.

confusion, Art thou he who broke the cords, tore the lions, killed the Philistines, carried away the gates, and set thyself free from the hands of thine enemies?

Let me now conclude with the requisite instruction for this poison. If you feel your heart moved by the vain joy of Natural Goods, remember how great vanity it is to rejoice in anything but in the service of God, how dangerous it is and ruinous. Remember the punishment of the angels who rejoiced in their beauty and endowments; they fell deformed into the abyss below. And how great are the evils which vanity brings daily upon men! Resolve, therefore, in time to take the remedy, according to the proverb, Resist the evil in its beginnings; remedies are too late, when the disease has grown; for when the evil has grown in the heart, the remedy is too late: 'Look not upon the wine when it is yellow, when the colour thereof shineth in the glass. It goeth in pleasantly; but in the end it will bite like a snake, and will spread abroad poison like a basilisk.'*

Fall of the
Angels.

CHAPTER XXII.

The benefits of not rejoicing in Natural Goods.

Benefits of
self-denial in
Natural
Goods;

MANY are the benefits which the soul reaps when it withdraws the heart from this joy. For beside disposing itself for the love of God, and the other virtues, it makes a way for personal humility and universal charity towards our neighbours.

1. Universal
charity.

When our affections, free from the influence of Natural Goods, which are deceitful, rest upon no one, the soul is free to love all men reasonably and spiritually, as God wills them to be loved. No one deserves to be loved except for his virtues, and when we love in this way, our love is pleasing unto God, and

* Prov. xxiii. 31, 32.

in great liberty, and if there be attachment in it there is greater attachment to God. For then the more this love grows, the more also grows our love of God, and the deeper our love of Him the more we shall love our neighbour: for the principle of both is the same.

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XXII.

Another great benefit is the perfect observance of our Saviour's words: 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself.'* Now the soul can never do this, if it has any joy in its natural endowments; for he who has, even the slightest self-esteem, neither denies himself nor follows Christ.

2. Following
of Christ.

Another great benefit of this self-denial is, that it makes the soul tranquil, empties it of the sources of distractions, controls the senses, and especially the eyes. The spiritual man, seeking no joy, will neither look upon, nor suffer his other senses to be occupied with, these endowments, that he may not be attracted by them, nor be led to waste time or thought upon them, 'according to the likeness of a serpent, like the deaf asp that stoppeth her ears.'† If we set a guard over our senses, which are the doors of the soul, we shall thereby guard and increase its purity and tranquillity also.

3. Tranqui-
lity of mind.

Another benefit, of no less importance, which those who have made progress in the mortification of this joy, obtain, is this: Impure objects and the knowledge of them no longer impress, and sully the soul, as in their case to whom this joy is still somewhat pleasurable. This mortification and self-denial grows into a spiritual pureness of soul and body, of mind and sense, which issues in a certain angelical conformity with God, rendering both soul and body a worthy temple of the Holy Ghost. Man cannot be thus pure if his heart entertains any joy in these natural gifts and graces. It is not necessary to have given consent to any impure act, for this joy is sufficient to sully the soul and senses with the know-

4. Purity of
heart.

* S. Matt. xvi. 24.

† Ps. lvii. 5.

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III.

ledge of evil, as it is written: 'The Holy Spirit of discipline will withdraw Himself from thoughts that are without understanding,'* that is, from thoughts not directed to God by right Reason.

5. Esteem of
the good.

Another general benefit is this: Beside our deliverance from the evils already mentioned, we are delivered also from innumerable other follies and evils, spiritual and temporal, especially from that contempt which falls to the lot of all those who value themselves, or rejoice either in their own natural gifts or in those of others. In this way we shall be esteemed as wise and excellent men, as in truth all are who make no account of natural goods, but only of those which are pleasing unto God.

6. Generosity
of soul.

These benefits issue in a final one, which is a certain generosity of mind, as necessary in the service of God as liberty of spirit, by which temptations are easily overcome, afflictions endured, and by which virtues grow and thrive.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Of the third kind, Sensible Goods. Their nature and varieties.
The regulation of the Will with respect to them.

Third source
of Joy—
Sensible
Goods.

I HAVE now to speak of Joy in Sensible Goods, wherein the will rejoices. By sensible goods I mean all that is cognisable by the senses, of sight, of hearing, of smell, of taste and of touch, and of the interior working of the imaginative powers; all of which belong to the interior and exterior bodily senses. In order to render the will blind to, and purified from, all joy in sensible objects, directing it to God, we must take this truth for granted. The sense of man's lower nature is not, and cannot be, capable of knowing or comprehending God, as

* Wisd. i. 5.

He is. The eye cannot see Him, or anything that resembles Him; the ear cannot hear His voice, nor any sound that resembles it; the smell cannot perceive any odours so sweet, the palate cannot taste any savour so delicious, nor can the touch feel any contact so exquisite and thrilling, nor any thing like unto Him, and the thoughts and imagination also cannot conceive any form or shape which can possibly be any representation of Him. 'From the beginning of the world they have not heard, nor perceived with the ears: the eye hath not seen, O God, besides Thee; the eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man.'*

Now, sweetness and delight enter into the senses in two ways: either from the mind through some interior Divine communication, or from outward objects represented to them. But according to the text just quoted, our lower nature cannot know God either in the way of the spirit or in the way of sense; for having no capacity for so great a matter, it comprehends the spiritual and intellectual, sensually only. Therefore to occupy the will with the joy that has its sources in any of these apprehensions, will be at the least but vanity, and an impediment in the way of employing the energy of the will upon God, by rejoicing in Him alone. This is what the soul can never do unless it purifies itself from all joy in sensible things, for if it should rejoice herein at all that will be but vanity. When the soul does not rest here, but instantly, as soon as the will becomes conscious of any joy in any object of sense, elevates itself upwards unto God—that joy supplying motives thereto and power—it is well with it, and then it need not suppress such emotions, but may profit by them, and even ought to do so, so as to accomplish so holy an act: for there are souls whom sensible objects greatly influence in the way of God. Such souls, however, must be very cautious, and

CHAP.
XXIII.God not an
object of
Sensitive
Perception.God seen in
His works.

* Is. lxiv. 4; 1 Cor. ii. 9.

watch the issues of this conduct, for very often many spiritual persons indulge themselves in these sensible recreations, under the pretence of giving themselves to prayer and to God. Now what they do should be called recreation, not prayer, and their pleasure in this is their own rather than God's. Though their intention be directed to God, yet the effect is sensible recreation, and the fruit of it is weakness and imperfection, rather than the quickening of the will, and the surrender of it into the hands of God.

Touchstone
of sensational
pleasures,—
Elevation of
the soul to
God.

I propose here to lay down a rule by which we may know when sensible sweetness is profitable, and when it is not. Whenever, in hearing music, or other agreeable sounds, in smelling sweet odours, in tasting what is delicious, in touching what is soothing, the affections of the will rise consciously in an instant unto God, and that movement gives us more pleasure than the sensible occasion of it, and when we have no pleasure in that cause, but because of its effects, that is a sign of profit, and that the objects of sense minister unto the spirit. In this way we may use them, for now they subserve that end for which God hath made them; namely, that He may be the better known and loved on their account. Observe, too, that he, in whom sensible objects produce this purely spiritual effect, does not for that reason seek them, nor make any account of them, though they excite in him this sense of God; neither is he solicitous about them; and when they are present, the will passes instantly beyond them and abandons them, fixing itself upon God.

The reason why he attaches no importance to these motives, although they keep him in the way of God, is that the mind is so prompt, in and through all, to fly upwards to God, so filled, preoccupied, and satiated with the Spirit of God as to want or desire nothing more: and if it should desire anything for that end, it immediately passes on beyond it, forgets it, and thinks nothing more about it.

On the other hand, he who is not conscious of this liberty of spirit, amid sensible objects and sweetness, but whose will rests and feeds upon them, ought to make no such usage of them, for they will be injurious to him. Though such an one may employ his Reason about them, and in that way labour to make them subserve his spiritual advancement; still, because the appetite delights in them in the way of sense, and because the effect corresponds always with the pleasure which they minister, it is certain that they are a greater hindrance than help, a greater evil than benefit. And when he sees that the spirit of these recreations reigns over him, he ought to mortify it; for the stronger it grows, the greater will be his imperfections and weakness.

Every satisfaction, therefore, whether accidental or designed, which proceeds from the senses, the spiritual man must use only for God, carrying up unto Him that joy of his soul, so that it may be profitable and perfect; remembering that every joy, which is not founded on the denial and annihilation of all joy whatever, however noble it may seem to be, is vanity and without profit, and a hindrance to the Union of the will with God.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Evils which befall the soul when the will has joy in Sensible Goods.

In the first place, if the soul does not quench the Joy which proceeds from Sensible things, by directing it to God, all those evils in general, of which I have spoken, the fruit of every kind of joy, flow also from this joy in sensible things: namely, obscuration of Reason, tepidity, spiritual sloth and the like. But to descend to particulars, there are many evils, spiritual and temporal, into which men fall through this joy in sensible things.

Evils of
loving Sen-
sible Goods
for their own
sake.

BOOK
III.
Inordinate
Joy in
Sight,

1. Joy in visible things, when we do not deny ourselves therein for the sake of God, produces directly a spirit of vanity, distraction of mind, unruly concupiscence, want of modesty, interior and exterior restlessness, impure thoughts and envyings.

Hearing,

2. The Joy which the hearing of unprofitable things produces, begets directly distraction of the imagination, gossiping, envy, rash judgments, and changing thoughts, from which many and other ruinous evils flow.

Smell,

3. Joy in sweet odours begets a loathing of the poor which is contrary to the doctrine of Christ, a dislike of ministering unto others, an unhearty submission to humble deeds, and spiritual insensibility, at least proportional to the appetite for this joy.

Taste,

4. Joy in meat and drink produces directly gluttony and drunkenness, anger, discord, and uncharitableness towards our neighbour and the poor, and makes us like the Rich Man in his treatment of Lazarus, while he himself 'feasted sumptuously every day.'* From this arise bodily disorders, sickness, and evil impulses, because the provocations of luxury are increased. It is the source of great spiritual torpor also, and it vitiates the desire for spiritual things, so that the soul has no pleasure in them, cannot even endure them, nor in any way occupy itself about them. This joy, too, dissipates all the other senses and the heart, and creates a feeling of general discontent.

Touch.

5. Joy in matters of touch occasions much greater and more pernicious evils, which most rapidly immerse the senses and injure the mind, destroying all energy and vigour. Hence the abominable sin of effeminacy, or the provocations to it, in proportion to this joy. It produces luxuriousness, makes the mind effeminate and timid, the senses delicate

* S. Luke xvi. 19.

and yielding, disposed for sin and wickedness. It fills the heart with empty rejoicing, makes the tongue licentious, and the eyes wanton, and renders the other senses proportionally brutish. It confounds the judgment, and buries it in folly and spiritual stupidity, it begets moral cowardice and inconsistency of purpose, and by reason of the soul's darkness and the heart's weakness, makes men fear even where no fear is. It creates at times a spirit of confusion, insensibility of mind and conscience, because it enfeebles the Reason so that a man can neither take good counsel nor give it, and incapacitates the soul for all moral and spiritual good, rendering it useless as a broken vessel.

All these evils flow from this particular joy. In some people more, in others fewer, more or less intense, according to the intenseness of this joy, and according to the weakness and irresolution of him who indulges himself in it. For there are some people who naturally are more hurt on slight, than others on great, occasions.

Finally, the evils into which men fall through the joy of the touch are as numerous as those occasioned by that of Natural Goods. As I have already described them, I shall not repeat them here, nor the many others also, such as the diminution of spiritual exercises and of corporal penances, tepidity, and indevotion in the use of the Sacraments of Penance, and of the Eucharist.

CHAPTER XXV.

The spiritual and temporal benefits of self-denial in the Joy of Sensible things.

MARVELLOUS benefits result from self-denial in the joy which sensible goods supply; some are spiritual and some temporal.

1. The soul, by refraining from joy in sensible objects,

CHAP.
XXIV.

Four
benefits of
mortified
senses.

BOOK
III.1. Recollection of
God.2. Spirituality of
mind.

recovers itself from the distractions into which it falls through the excessive indulgence of the senses, and recollects itself in God. Spirituality and the acquired virtues are preserved and increased.

2. The second spiritual benefit of not rejoicing in Sensible Goods is great; and we may say, of a truth, that the sensual becomes spiritual, the animal rational, that man leads an angelical life, that the temporal and the human become heavenly and Divine. As the man who seeks for pleasure in sensual things, and founds all his joy upon them, ought not, and deserves not, to be called by any other name than this, namely, sensual and animal; so the man whose joy is beyond them, deserves the name of spiritual and heavenly. This is most evidently true, for as the energies of the senses, and the power of sensuality, resist, as the Apostle saith, the energy and power of the spirit, 'the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh;'^{*} so when they diminish and fail, those of the spirit grow and increase; that which impeded their growth having been taken away. Thus the spirit made perfect—the higher portion of the soul, and that to which the communications of God are made—merits those appellations, because it is made perfect by the spiritual and heavenly gifts and graces of God. We have the authority of S. Paul for this; he calls the sensual man—the man who wastes the energy of his will upon objects of sense—the animal man, and the other, whose will is fixed on God, the spiritual man: 'The animal man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God. But the spiritual man judgeth all things.'[†] The soul receives in this self-denial an admirable benefit; a disposition meet to receive the gifts and spiritual graces of God.

3. The third benefit is the great increase of the joys and

^{*} Galat. v. 17.

[†] 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15. Animalis autem homo non percipit.

pleasures of the Will in this life; for, as our Saviour saith: 'They shall receive an hundredfold.' If thou wilt deny thyself one joy, our Lord will reward thee a hundredfold, spiritually and temporally, in this world; and for one joy indulged in sensible goods thou shalt have a hundred sorrows and afflictions. As to the eye, now purged from all joy in seeing, the soul receives joy, directed to God, in all that is seen, whether human or Divine. As to the ear, purged from all joy in hearing, the soul receives joy a hundredfold, and that most spiritual, directed to God in all that is heard, whether human or Divine. The same observation applies to the other senses. For as all that our first parents said and did in the state of innocence in Paradise furnished them with means of sweeter contemplation, because their sensual nature was subject unto Reason, so he also whose senses are subject to the spirit and purged from all sensible objects, in their first motions, elicits delight of sweet knowledge and Contemplation of God.

To the pure, therefore, high things and low are profitable, and minister to his greater purity; while both the one and the other are occasions of greater evil to the impure, by reason of his impurity. But he who does not repress the satisfaction of his appetites will never enjoy the ordinary tranquillity of rejoicing in God, through the instrumentality of His creatures. All the functions and powers of his senses, who no longer lives after the flesh, are directed to Divine Contemplation. For, as it is a philosophical truth, that the life of every creature is in harmony with its constitution, so also is it beyond all contradiction clear, that he who is spiritually minded—his animal life being mortified—must be wholly tending towards God, for all his actions and affections are those of the spiritual life. Such an one, therefore, pure

CHAP.
XXV.3. Increase of
Joy in this
life;

(1) In Sight.

(2) Hearing.

(3) And the
other senses.To the Pure
all things are
a pure Joy.

^{*} S. Matt. xix. 29.

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III.

in heart, finds in all things that knowledge of God which is delicious, sweet, chaste, pure, spiritual, joyous, and loving.

From these considerations I come to this conclusion, that, until we shall have so habituated our senses to this purgation from sensible joy, so as to have obtained the benefit of which I have spoken, namely, that instant movement upwards to God, we still need to deny ourselves in all joy, that we may wean our soul from the life of sense. I am afraid, that when not thoroughly spiritualised, we may gratify and invigorate the senses rather than the spirit, under the influence of sensible things; the powers of sense still ruling over us in our conduct, whereby sensuality is increased, maintained, and nourished. The words of our Saviour are: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* Lay this to heart, for it is the truth. Let him who has not mortified his senses in sensible things not presume to avail himself of the energy and functions of sense therein, thinking that they will help him to become spiritual; for the strength of the soul will increase the more, if we cast these things aside, rather by the quenching of joy and desire, than by any employment of them that we can make.

4. Joys of
Heaven.

It is not necessary for me to speak now of the goods of Glory attainable in the life to come. For beside that the bodily gifts of Mobility and Clarity, in Glory, will be much grander than in those who have not denied themselves in this joy, there will be an increase of essential glory, corresponding to their love of God, for whom they have left all things: because every momentary and fleeting joy, which we now deny, will work in us eternally an infinite weight of glory: 'that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.†

I do not refer here to the other benefits, moral, temporal

* S. John iii. 6.

† 2 Cor. iv. 17.

No cross;
no crown.CHAP.
XXV.

and spiritual, the fruits of this Night of Joy, for they are all those already described, and in a higher order, because these joys are more intimately related to our nature, and, therefore, he who denies himself in them acquires a more interior purity.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The fourth kind of goods: Moral Goods. How the will may lawfully rejoice in them.

THE fourth kind of goods in which the Will rejoices are Moral Goods. By these I mean virtues, the moral habits of them, the practice of any virtue whatever, works of mercy, keeping of God's law, politeness, good dispositions and temper. These moral goods, in possession and in practice, deserve, perhaps more than the other three kinds I have mentioned, that the will should rejoice in them. Man may rejoice in these for one of two reasons, or for both together, either because he possesses them, or because of the benefits which they bring with them, of which they are, as it were, instruments or means. Now the possession of the other goods is deserving of no joy whatever, for of themselves they do good to no man, neither is it in them, for they are fleeting and frail, yea, rather they are the occasions of pain and grief and sorrow of heart. Even if they deserved to be rejoiced in for the second reason, namely that man may employ them towards elevating his soul to God, yet this is so uncertain that in general such rejoicing does more harm than good.

Fourth
source of
Joy,—Moral
Goods.

Moral Goods, however, deserve some Joy on the part of their possessor, for their intrinsic worth. And as they bring with them in their train peace and tranquillity, the right use of Reason, and a consistent conduct, man cannot, humanly

Their in-
trinsic
worth, and
happy effects.

BOOK
III.

Virtue to be
loved for its
own sake.

God loves,
promotes,
and rewards
Natural
Virtue.

Two
examples ;
1. The
Ancient
Romans.

2. Solomon.

speaking, possess anything better in this world. And as virtues merit love and esteem, for their own sakes, humanly speaking, men may well rejoice in the possession and practice of them, for what they are in themselves, and for the good, human and temporal, of which they are the channels.

It was in this sense that the Philosophers and wise men and princes of old esteemed and commended virtue, laboured to acquire it and to practise it, though they were heathens, and regarded it only in a worldly light, seeing nothing in it but the temporal, corporal, and natural benefits which resulted from it. They not only obtained those benefits, and the reputation they aimed at, but more than this ; God Himself, Who loves all goodness, even in heathens and barbarians, and Who impedes no good, as it is written, ' which nothing hindereth, beneficent,'* increased their substance, honours, dominion, and peace. He thus dealt with the Romans : because they enacted good laws, He made them masters almost of the whole world ; He recompensed, for their good customs in a temporal way, those who, because of their unbelief, were incapable of the everlasting reward. God loves moral goods : for when Solomon asked for an understanding heart to judge the people, He was so pleased with this prayer that He said unto him : ' Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life or riches, nor the lives of thy enemies, but hast asked for thyself wisdom to discern judgment, behold I have done for thee according to thy words, . . . yea, and the things also which thou didst not ask, I have given thee, to wit, riches and glory, so that no one hath been like thee among the kings in all days heretofore.†

Though a Christian too ought to rejoice in Moral Goods, and in the good works he does, because they minister to his temporal well-being, his joy ought not to stop there where

* Wisd. vii. 22.

† 3 Kings iii. 11-13.

that of the heathens did, who saw nothing beyond this mortal life ; but inasmuch as he has the light of Faith, by which he hopes for everlasting life, and without which all things whatever are valueless, his sole and chief rejoicing should be of the second kind, namely, that eternal life is the reward and issue of the good works he does for the love of God. All his care and all his joy ought to be that he serves and honours God by his virtues and good life. For without this intention all our virtues are worthless in the sight of God, as we are taught in the parable of the Ten Virgins. All these had preserved their virginity and had wrought good works, yet five of them, whose joy therein was not of the second kind, directed unto God, but rather of the first, for they rejoiced and gloried in mere possession, were denied admission into heaven, unrecognised and unrewarded by the Bridegroom.*

There have been many persons in the world of old times who had some virtue and did good works ; and there are many Christians also at this time, who are virtuous men, and who do great things, but their virtue and good works are utterly useless in the matter of eternal life : because they do not, in them, seek the honour and glory and love of God solely, and above all things. A Christian ought to rejoice, not because of his good works and virtuous life, but because his life and acts are such solely for the love of God, and for no other reason whatever. For as works done only for God's honour will have a greater reward of glory, so good works which men do under the influence of other considerations, will end in our greater confusion in the sight of God. The Christian, therefore, if he will direct his rejoicing to God in moral goods, must keep in mind, that the value of his good works, fasting, almsgiving, penances, and prayers, does not

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Mere natural virtue
incapable of
Supernatural
reward.

Parable of
the Ten
Virgins.

Moral value
of good
works pro-
portioned to
purity of
intention.

* S. Matt. xxv.

BOOK
III.Ama, et fac
quod vis.

depend on their number, and nature, but on the love which moves him to perform them for God; and that they are then most perfect when they are wrought in the most pure and sincere love of God, and with the least regard to our own present and future interests, to joy and sweetness, consolation and praise. The heart, therefore, must not rest on the joy, comfort, delight, and advantages which holy habits and good works bring with them, but refer all to God, purifying itself from all joy, and hiding itself from it in darkness; and desiring that God only may rejoice in what it does in secret, and all this without respect to any other consideration than God's honour and glory. Thus all the energies of the will, with regard to moral goods, will be all concentrated in God.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Seven Evils to which men are liable if the Will rejoices in Moral Goods.

THE principal evils to which men become exposed through the rejoicing of the Will in good works and a virtuous life are seven in number, and most fatal, because they are spiritual; I shall now give a brief description of them:

1. The first is vanity, pride, vain glory, and presumption, for no man can rejoice in his own works without attributing a great value to them. From this springs boasting and other faults; an instance of which we have in the Pharisee who in his prayer boasted of his fasts and the other good works he was doing.

2. The second evil is generally connected with the first, and it is this: we come to judge others, and to pronounce them to be comparatively wicked and imperfect, and that their good works are inferior to ours; we despise them in our hearts, and sometimes express ourselves contemptuously about them. The Pharisee had fallen into this also, for in

1. Self-con-
ccit.2. Rash and
contemptuous
judgments
of others.CHAP.
XXVII.

his prayers, he said, 'O God, I give Thee thanks, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this publican; I fast twice in a week.'* Thus by one act he fell into these two evils, namely, self-esteem and contempt of others, as many Christians do daily, who say, I am not like such an one, neither is my life such as his. Yea, many of them are even worse than the Pharisee; he certainly despised others and pointed out the object of his contempt, saying 'this publican:' they, indeed, are not satisfied with this, but give way to anger and envy when they hear others praised, or that they are doing more, or are more useful men, than themselves.

3. The third evil is that, as they look for their own satisfaction in their good works, they will in general do only such as will furnish them with this satisfaction, or obtain the commendation of others. They do all their works, as our Saviour saith, 'for to be seen of men,'† and not for God alone.

4. The fourth evil issues out of the third, and is this: God will not reward them for their good works, because they seek it here in this world in the joy, or the comfort, or the honourable advantages of their good works; of them our Saviour saith, 'Amen. I say to you, they have received their reward.'‡ They will therefore have nothing but their labour, and confusion of face without its reward. The children of men are so miserably involved in this evil that, in my opinion, the greater part of the good works, which are publicly done, are either vicious or worthless, or they are imperfect and defective in God's sight, because men do not detach themselves from self-interest and from human respect. What other opinion can we form of those good works, which men do, or of the monuments which they raise, but which

3. Self-in-
terest and
Human
respect.4. Loss of
Supernatural
reward.

* S. Luke xviii. 11, 12.

† S. Matt. xxiii. 5.

‡ Ib. vi. 2.

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III.

How men
seek them-
selves in
their good
works.

would have been undone and unbuilt, if their authors had not been influenced by worldly honour, human respect, and the vanity of this life? Is not all this too often done in order to perpetuate a name or a pedigree, or to mark authority and lordship; and that to the extent of setting up armorial bearings in churches, as if they would establish themselves there as Images for the veneration of men? At the sight of these good works of some people, we may well say that men respect themselves more than God.

Subtleties of
Self-love.

But passing from these who are the worst, how many are there who in their good works fall into these evils in many ways? Some expect their good works to be extolled, others expect gratitude for them, others enumerate them, and delight in the fact that such and such persons, and even the whole world are aware of them; sometimes they will employ a third person to convey their alms, or to do any other good work, in order to make it the more known; some, too, look both for praise and reward. This is nothing else but to sound a trumpet in the streets, like vain men, but whom God for that reason will never reward.*

Goods works
to be hidden
from others
and from
self.

If men wish to avoid this evil they must hide their good works so that God alone shall see them, and they must not wish any one to think much of them. They must hide them not only from others, but from themselves also; that is, they must take no satisfaction in them nor regard them with complacency, as if they thought them of any value. This is the meaning of those words of our Saviour: 'Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth.'† That is, do not look with temporal and carnal eyes upon thy spiritual works. When this precept is observed, the strength of the will is concentrated in God, and our good works become fruitful in His sight; but where it is not observed, we shall

* S. Matt. vi. 2.

† Ib. vi. 3.

not only lose our labour, but, very frequently, because of our interior boasting and vanity, sin grievously against God. Those words of Job also are to be understood in this sense: 'If . . . my heart in secret hath rejoiced, and I have kissed my hand with my mouth, which is a very great iniquity.*' Here the 'hand' means our good works, and 'mouth' our will which regards them with complacency. This is self-complacency, for the words of Job are, if my 'heart hath in secret rejoiced,' and a 'great iniquity, and a denial against the Most High God.' To attribute our good works to ourselves is to deny them to be God's, from whom all good works proceed, and to follow the example of Lucifer, who rejoiced in himself, denying to God what was His, and arrogating it to himself.

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5. The fifth evil is, that men of this kind make no progress in Perfection; for cleaving to the pleasure and comfort of their good works, when this pleasure and comfort cease — which is usually the case when God seeks their advancement, when He gives them dry bread, which is the bread of the perfect, when He deprives them of the milk of babes, when He tries their strength, and purifies their delicate appetites, so that they may be able to taste the food of the strong — they become generally faint of heart, and fail to persevere, because their good works are no longer sources of pleasure. To this we may apply in a spiritual sense those words of the Wise Man: 'Dying flies spoil the sweetness of the ointment.'† For when mortifications come in their way they die to their good works, abandon them, and lose perseverance, wherein spiritual sweetness and interior comfort consist.

5. No
Spiritual
Progress.

6. The sixth evil is a general delusion under the influence of which men mistake the value of their good works,

6. False test
of value.

* Job xxxi. 26-28.

† Eccles. x. i.

BOOK
III.

Pain of self-denial better than the joy of sensible pleasure.

considering those wherein they find delight to be of greater importance than those wherein they find none: they praise and esteem the former, but despise and reject the latter; yet those works, generally, in which a man is most mortified — especially when he is not advanced in Perfection — are more pleasing and precious in the eyes of God, by reason of that self-denial involved in their performance, than those good works in which he finds consolation, where self-seeking so easily intrudes. ‘The evil of their hand,’ saith the Prophet, ‘they call good;’* that is, what is evil in their work they say is good. And they come to this because they derive their joy from their good works, and not from pleasing God only. The extent of this evil, among spiritually minded men as well as ordinary Christians, baffles all description, for scarcely any one can be found who doeth good simply for the love of God, without relying on some advantage of joy or comfort, or of some other consideration.

7. Spiritual blindness and weakness.

7. The seventh evil is that man, so far as he does not suppress all joy in moral good works, is the more incapable of listening to reasonable counsel and instruction with reference to his duties. The habitual weakness contracted by doing good works with an eye to this empty joy, so fetters him that he cannot accept the advice given him as the best, or if he does so accept it he cannot act upon it, through lack of resolution. The love of God and of our neighbour is greatly weakened in these persons, for their self-love, which they indulge in with reference to their own good works, makes charity cold.

* Mich. vii. 3.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The benefits of repressing all Joy in Moral Goods.

VERY great benefits result to the soul, provided the Will is restrained from rejoicing in Moral Goods. In the first place, it is delivered from many temptations and illusions of Satan, which rejoicing in our good works secretly involves, as we learn from these words of God to Job: ‘He sleepeth under the shadow, in the covert of the reed, and in moist places.’* This applies to the evil spirit, for he deceives the soul in the moisture of joy and in the hollowness of the reed, that is, of good works done through vanity. Nor is it strange that the devil should deceive it secretly in this rejoicing; for, independently of the devil’s suggestion, this empty joy is a delusion itself, especially when a feeling of boasting lurks in the heart, as it is written, ‘Thy arrogancy hath deceived thee and the pride of thy heart.’† Can there be a greater delusion than that of boasting? The soul is delivered from it by purifying itself from this joy.

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1. Victory
over Pride.

2. The second benefit is that our good works are done with greater deliberation and in greater perfection. If the passion of Joy and satisfaction prevails, no deliberation can be had; for then the irascible and concupiscible faculties are so strong that they will not bend to Reason; and, in general, under their influence we change our works and intentions, taking one thing in hand to-day and another to-morrow, beginning everything and bringing nothing to good effect. If Joy be the main-spring of our work, we shall be inconsistent: some are naturally more so than others; and when our joy ceases, we abstain also from our work, and our intentions are abandoned, however important they may be. With

2. Greater
strength and
purity of
Will.

* Job xl. 16.

† Jerem. xlix. 16.

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III.
Natural Joy
a wayward
guide.

people of this kind, Joy is the soul and strength of their good works; and when that joy disappears their good works perish; neither do they persevere. These are they of whom Christ saith, that they receive the word with joy, and that the devil takes it away that they may not persevere. 'They by the wayside are they that hear; then the devil cometh and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved.'* Their strength consisted solely in their joy, and therefore to withdraw the will from this joy is an admirable preparation for perseverance and final success. This benefit, then, is as great as is the opposite evil. The wise man regards the substance and benefit of his labour—not the pleasure which it brings: he is not like one beating the air, but he elicits from his good works a durable joy, without demanding the tribute of passing delights.

3. Poverty of
spirit.

3. The third benefit is Divine; by quenching this hollow rejoicing we attain to poverty of spirit, which is one of the beatitudes: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.'†

4. Prudence
and Delibera-
tion.

4. The fourth benefit of suppressing this Joy is, that we become gentle, humble, and prudent in our doings. We shall do nothing in a hurry, carried away by the concupiscible and irascible nature of this joy; neither shall we become presumptuous through overvaluing our good works under the influence of it; nor shall we be unconsciously blinded by it.

5. Union
with God

5. The fifth benefit is that we shall become pleasing unto God and man, delivered from the dominion of avarice and gluttony, spiritual sloth and envy, and a thousand other vices.

* S. Luke viii. 12.

† S. Matt. v. 3.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The fifth kind of goods, in which the Will has Joy: the Supernatural. Their nature, and the difference between them and Spiritual Goods. How Joy in them is to be directed unto God.

I HAVE now to speak of the fifth kind of goods in which the soul rejoices, and which I call Supernatural. By these I mean all those gifts and graces of God, which surpass our natural powers and capacities, called by theologians *gratis data*—such as the gifts of 'wisdom and understanding'* given to Solomon, and those mentioned by S. Paul, namely 'faith, the grace of healing, working of miracles, discerning of spirits, the interpretation of speeches, and the gift of tongues.'† Though these are all spiritual gifts, like those of which I am about to speak, still, owing to the great difference between them, I have made a distinction. These gifts have an immediate reference to the edification of others, and are given for that special end, as the Apostle saith: 'The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit,'‡ speaking of these gifts. But the spiritual gifts lie simply between the soul and God, in the intercourse of the Intellect and the Will, as I shall explain hereafter. There is, therefore, a difference between them in respect of their object. The spiritual gifts are concerned with God and the soul, but the supernatural gifts, with which I have now to do, are intended for the edification of others; they differ, too, in their nature, and consequently in their functions, and the doctrine concerning them is therefore of necessity different also.

As to the Supernatural gifts and graces, in this sense, I observe, with reference to self-denial in the matter of Joy, that they involve two grand Temporal and Spiritual benefits.

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XXIX.
Fifth source
of Joy,—
Supernatural
Goods.

Their object
the edifica-
tion of
others.

Their tem-
poral and
spiritual
benefits.

* 3 Kings iv. 29.

† 1 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

‡ 1 Cor. xii. 7.

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The Temporal benefits are the healing of the sick, giving sight to the blind, the raising of the dead to life, the casting out of devils, foretelling of future events, and others of this kind. The Spiritual and Eternal benefits are, that God is known and served through these works by him who doeth them, and by those for whom and before whom they are wrought.

We should
rejoice more
in loving God
than in
working
miracles.

Now as to the first benefit, namely, the temporal: these supernatural acts and wonders merit little or no rejoicing on the part of the soul, for without the spiritual benefit, they are of little or no profit to men, because of themselves, they are not means of Union with God—that being Charity. Moreover, they may be wrought in persons not in a state of grace and of charity; for they may be either the work of God, as in Balaam the impious prophet, or the work of the devil, as in Simon Magus, or the effects of mere natural but secret causes. These marvellous works, if any of them profit him who works them, are true, and the gifts of God.

S. Paul tells us what the value of these works is, when they are not accompanied by the second benefit, saying: 'If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not Charity, I am nothing.'* Many men who have thought much of their own good works, when asking to be admitted unto His glory, saying, 'Have not we prophesied in Thy name . . . and done many miracles in Thy name?' will receive for their only answer: 'Depart from Me, you that work iniquity.†

Man, therefore, ought to rejoice, not in the possession and exercise of these gifts, but in that he elicits from them the

* 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2.

† S. Matt. vii. 22, 23.

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second spiritual benefit, namely, serving God in true Charity, wherein consists the fruit of everlasting life. Our Lord rebuked His disciples when they returned to Him with joy because they had power over evil spirits, saying, 'Rejoice not in this, that spirits are subject unto you: but rejoice in this, that your names are written in Heaven.'* The meaning of which, according to sound Theology, is: Rejoice, if your names are written in the Book of Life. Man, therefore, ought not to rejoice, unless he is walking in the right way, doing his good works in Charity. For of what profit is anything in the sight of God which is not His love? Now Love cannot be perfect if it is not strong enough and wise enough to purify itself from all Joy in these things, and to find it only in doing the Will of God. It is in this way that the will is united to God in these supernatural goods.

CHAPTER XXX.

The evils resulting from the Will's rejoicing in this kind of goods.

HE who rejoices in Supernatural Goods falls, in my opinion, into three principal evils. He deceives and is deceived, loses faith, and becomes vainglorious.

Three evils of
Joy in Super-
natural gifts.

As to the first, it is very easy to deceive oneself and others, by rejoicing in these supernatural operations. The reason is that, in order to ascertain whether they are true or false, how and when they are to be exerted, it requires great deliberation and great light from God: now our rejoicing in, and esteeming, these operations, are a great impediment to this, partly because the joy in question dulls and obscures the judgment, and partly also because it makes us not only covet these operations extremely, but also inclines us to an unsea-

1. Liability
to deception.

* S. Luke x. 20.

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III.

Errors in the
time or mode
of manifest-
ing Super-
natural gifts.

sonable manifestation of them. Admitting even that these operations and powers be real, yet these two defects are enough to delude us: either we do not comprehend them as they ought to be comprehended, or we do not profit by them and employ them at the right time and in the right way. For though it be true that God, when He distributes these graces, gives also the light to see them, and the inward movement to manifest them at the right time and in the right way; still those who receive them, because of their self-seeking or some imperfection or other in the matter, may fall into great errors, by not using their gifts with that perfectness which God requires with respect to time and manner. We have an example in Balaam, who, contrary to the Will of God, undertook to curse the people of Israel. God was therefore angry with him, and sought to kill him.* Again, in S. James and S. John, who, carried away by their zeal, would have fire descend from heaven upon the Samaritans, because they refused to receive our Lord. For this He rebuked them.†

It is clear from this that imperfect persons, of whom I am speaking, may be influenced by certain imperfect feelings involved in the joy and esteem of these gifts, to manifest them at an improper time. For when they are free from the like imperfections, they are moved to manifest them only as, and when, God wills; in no other way is the manifestation of them convenient. This is the meaning of that complaint which God makes against certain prophets, saying: 'I did not send prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.'‡ And again in the same place: 'They cause my people to err by their lying, and by their wonders; when I sent them not, nor commanded them.'§ It is said in the same place that they prophesied the delusions of their

* Num. xxii. 22, 23.
† Jerem. xxiii. 21.

† S. Luke ix. 54.
§ Ib. 32.

own heart, which they would not have done had they not attached themselves in this abominable way to their gifts, using them as their own.

All this shows us that the evil of such rejoicing not only leads men to make an impious and perverse usage of the gifts of God, like Balaam and those prophets who, by the wonders which they wrought, deceived the people; but even to make use of them without having received them from God, like those who uttered their own fancies for prophecies, and published visions which themselves invented, or which the devil represented to them. For when Satan sees men with such dispositions as these, he opens for them a wide field, and supplies them with abundant materials, intruding himself in diverse ways: whereupon such men spread their sails to the wind, become shamelessly presumptuous, and prodigal in the usage of their great gifts.

The evil does not stop here, for joy in supernatural gifts, and the desire of them, reach so far that, if men have entered into a secret compact with Satan—it is such a compact that enables many to do what they are doing—they venture still further, and enter into an open and avowed compact, making themselves his disciples and allies by an express stipulation. Hence come wizards, enchanter, magicians, soothsayers, and sorcerers. This joy leads men so far, that they seek to purchase with money, not only these gifts and graces, as did Simon Magus, that they may serve the devil, but holy things also, and what I cannot write without trembling, things Divine. May God here show His great mercy! How hurtful to themselves, and ruinous to Christendom are such men, any one may easily perceive. All those magicians and soothsayers among the people of Israel, whom Saul destroyed out of the land,* had fallen into these great abominations and

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XXX.

How men
make a com-
pact with the
devil.

* 1 Kings xxviii. 3.

delusions, because they would imitate the true Prophets of God.

He who is supernaturally endowed ought, therefore, to cleanse himself from all desire of, and from all Joy in, the exercise of his supernatural gifts; and God, Who gives them supernaturally for the edification of the Church, in general, or of its members, in particular, will also supernaturally direct him in the use of them, in the right way and at the right time. As He commanded His disciples to take no thought beforehand how or what they should speak,* that being a supernatural act of Faith—so also is it His Will, the use of these gifts being of not less importance, that man should bide His time, because the exercise of these gifts is to depend upon His Will. Thus the disciples, in whom the gifts and graces were infused, prayed God to put forth His hand, so that the hearts of the people might bow down before the Faith. ‘Grant unto Thy servants, that with all confidence they may speak Thy Word, by stretching forth Thy hand to cures; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of Thy Holy Son Jesus.’†

2. Loss of Faith.

In two ways;
1. As to credibility.

The second evil, loss of Faith, may come from the first, and this in two ways. In the first place, it may concern others; for when a man undertakes to perform a miracle, out of season, and without necessity—over and above that this is to tempt God, which is a great sin—he may not succeed, and so the faith will lose credit and reverence among men. Though sometimes men may succeed in what they thus attempt, because God wills it for some reason or other, as in the case of the Witch of Endor—if it was Samuel himself who then appeared—they shall not always succeed; and when they do succeed, they are not the less in error and blameable, because they use their gifts inopportunately.

2. As to merit.

In the second place, the loss of Faith concerns those who

* S. Mark xiii. 11.

† Acts iv. 29, 30.

are endowed with supernatural gifts; in that they destroy the merits of it. For when men attach so much importance to miracles, they depart from the substantial exercise of faith, which is an obscure habit; and so where signs and miracles abound, there is the less merit in believing. ‘Faith has no merit,’ saith S. Gregory the Great, ‘where human Reason supplies proof.’* God works miracles when they are necessary for the Faith, or for other ends of His glory, and of His Saints. For this reason did God work many signs, before He showed Himself to His disciples; that they might believe without seeing, and so not lose the merit of faith in His resurrection, which they would have done had they seen Him first. He showed to Mary Magdalen first the empty sepulchre, and then the Angels announced His rising again; † for ‘Faith cometh by hearing,’ ‡ so that having heard, she might believe before she saw. And when He showed Himself unto her, it was as the gardener, § that He might thoroughly edify her in the faith, which in the warmth of His presence melted away. He sent the women to tell His disciples that He had risen; and afterwards they came to see the sepulchre. || He set on fire the hearts of the disciples on the road to Emmaus before they knew Him; for He was with them in disguise. And finally, He rebuked them because they did not believe those who told them of His resurrection; ¶ and in particular, S. Thomas—because he would have palpable proof of His resurrection—saying ‘Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed.’** Miracles are not pleasing unto God, for He rebuked the Pharisees because they would not believe without them, saying: ‘Unless you see signs and wonders, you believe not.’ †† Those, therefore, who will rejoice in

* Nec fides habet meritum, cui humana ratio prebet experimentum.

S. Mary Magdalen.

The two Disciples going to Emmaus.

S. Thomas.

The Pharisees.

* Hom. 26, in Evangel.

† S. John xx. 2; S. Luke xxiv. 6.

‡ Rom. x. 17.

§ S. John xx. 15.

|| S. Matt. xxviii. 10; S. John xx. 3.

¶ S. Luke xxiv. 15, 26.

** S. John xx. 29.

†† S. John iv. 48.

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these supernatural gifts, inflict upon themselves a grievous loss in the matter of faith.

3. Vain-glory.

The third evil is that men, because of their rejoicing in supernatural gifts, fall into vainglory or some other vanity. The mere act of rejoicing in them, if not purely in and for God, is vanity. This is evident from the fact that our Lord rebuked His disciples, because they rejoiced in that the evil spirits were subject unto them.* If that joy had not been vanity, our Lord would never have rebuked them for it.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The benefits of self-denial in the Joy of Supernatural graces.

First benefit,
— God glorified.1. By being
loved more
than His
gifts.

By denying itself in this joy, the soul gains two great benefits beside its deliverance from those three evils already described. It magnifies and exalts God, and it also exalts itself. God is exalted in two ways. Firstly when the heart and the joy of the will are withheld from all that is not God, and fixed upon Him alone. This is the meaning of David when he said: 'Man shall come to a deep heart, and God shall be exalted;† for if the heart be exalted above all things, the soul will be exalted also. And because it fixes itself upon God alone, God is exalted and magnified, making known to the soul His own Magnificence and Greatness; for He testifieth of Himself, what He is, in this elevation of the soul above all joy. Now this cannot be done unless the will is emptied of all joy in supernatural gifts, as it is written, 'Be still, and see that I am God,'‡ and again, 'In a desert land, and where there is no way, and no water, so in the sanctuary have I come before Thee, to see Thy power and glory.'§

* S. Luke x. 20.

† Ps. xlv. 11.

‡ Ps. lxiii. 7, 8.

§ Ps. lxii. 3.

As God, therefore, is exalted, when our joy is grounded on our detachment from all things, much more is He exalted when we refrain from joy in His more marvellous works to place it in Him alone; for these graces are of a higher nature by reason of their supernatural character, and therefore to detach ourselves from them to rejoice in God alone, is to give greater honour and glory to God than to them; for the more numerous and important are the things we disregard for the sake of another, the more we esteem and magnify him. Besides, God is exalted in another way when the will refrains from this joy: for the more we believe in God and serve Him without regard to signs and wonders, the more is He exalted in the soul; seeing that our faith in Him is higher than the teaching of signs and wonders.

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XXXI.2. Even when
His gifts are
Super-
natural.

The second benefit is the exaltation of the soul itself; for by withholding the will from rejoicing in signs and wonders, the soul is exalted in most pure Faith which God infuses into it and increases most abundantly. He increases also at the same time the two other theological virtues, Charity and Hope. Here the soul has the fruition of the highest Divine knowledge through the obscure and detached habit of Faith; of the delights of love through Charity, whereby the will rejoices in nothing but in the living God; and of the satisfaction of the will through Hope. All this is a wonderful benefit which essentially and directly tends to the perfect Union of the soul with God.

Second
benefit,—the
soul
ennobled.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The sixth kind of Goods in which the Will rejoices. Their nature.
The first division of them.

THE chief object of my book being the guiding of the spirit through these Spiritual Goods to the Divine union of the soul with God, it will be necessary for me, and for my Reader, now

Sixth and
last source of
Joy,—

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Spiritual
Goods.
1. Their
Importance.

that I am speaking of these goods which conduce the most to that end, to bestow particular attention on the matter. For it is quite certain that there are people who, because of their want of knowledge, make use of spiritual things in the order of sense only, leaving the spirit empty; so that there is scarcely any one, the better part of whose spirit is not corrupted by sensible sweetness, the water being drunk up before it reaches to the spirit, which is, therefore, left dry and barren.

2. Their
definition.

With reference then to my subject, I say, that by Spiritual Goods I mean all those that move us and help us towards Divine things, in the intercourse of the soul with God, and in the communications of God to the soul.

3. Divided
into
(1) Sweet.
(2) Bitter.
Each kind
divided into
a. Distinct.
β. Obscure.

I begin with the generic difference of these goods, namely, Sweet and Bitter. Each of these is again specifically divided. The Sweet Goods are of things clear, distinctly understood, and of things that are not so. The Bitter also are divided into clear and distinct, and confused and obscure.

4. They
pertain to
the Intellect,
Memory, and
Will.

These are also distinguished according to the faculties of the soul. Some, being cognitions, pertain to the Intellect; some, being affections, pertain to the Will; and others, being imaginary, pertain to the Memory. For the present I omit to speak of the bitter goods, because they relate to the Passive Night, and I shall have to speak of them hereafter. I omit also the sweet goods of things confused and indistinct that I may treat of them later; they relate to the general confused and loving knowledge wherein consists the Union of the soul with God. I passed it over in the second book, when I was distinguishing between the apprehensions of the intellect, reserving it for more careful consideration in the Book of the Obscure Night. I now proceed to speak of those Sweet Goods, which are of things clear and distinct.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Of the Spiritual Goods distinctly cognisable by the Intellect and the Memory. The conduct of the Will with respect to Joy in them.

My labour would be great here if I had now to treat of the manifold apprehensions of the Intellect and the Memory, teaching how to govern the Will with regard to rejoicing in them, if I had not already discussed them at considerable length in the second and in this book. Having there said how these two faculties are to be directed amid these apprehensions to the Divine union, and that the same applies to the will also, it is not necessary to return to the subject here, it being sufficient to repeat that as these two faculties are to be emptied of all such apprehensions, so the will also is to repress all joy whatever in them.

What I have there said of emptying the Memory and the Intellect of all these apprehensions is applicable to the Will; for seeing that the intellect and the other faculties cannot admit or reject without the intervention of the will, it is clear that the same principle applies to the one as well as to the other. Every explanation, therefore, that the subject requires may be found there, for all the evils and dangers there enumerated will befall the soul if it does not refer unto God all the joy of the will in these apprehensions.

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XXXIII.
Reformation
of the Will
analogous to
that of the
Intellect and
Memory.

Voluntas
præluet
Intellectui.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Of the Sweet Spiritual Goods which distinctly affect the Will.
Their diversities.

EVERYTHING that furnishes a distinct Joy to the Will may be classed under four heads: Motive, Provocative, Directive, and Perfective. I shall speak of these in order, and first of the

1. Motive
Goods.
2. Provoca-
tive.
3. Directive.
4. Perfective.

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III.

motive, which are Images, Pictures of Saints, Oratories, and Ceremonies.

First kind of distinct Sweet Spiritual Goods, —Motive; i.e. External means of Devotion.

In that which relates to Images and Pictures of Saints much vanity and empty joy may be found. For while they are of great importance in Divine service, and very necessary to move the will to devotion, as is evident from the sanction and use of them by our Holy Mother the Church—that is a reason why we should profit by them to quicken us in our sloth—there are many people who rejoice more in the painting and decoration of them than in the objects they represent.

Images and pictures are useful,
1. To honour the Saints.
2. To move the Will.

The Church ordains the use of images for two principal ends: that is, for the honour of the Saints, and for the moving of the will and the quickening of our devotion to them. And so far as they minister to this end, they are of great profit, and the use of them is necessary. Those pictures therefore are to be preferred which are most accurately drawn, and which most effectually excite the will to devotion; we ought to regard this more than the value, curious workmanship, and decorations. There are people, as I have said, who look more to the curious nature of the image and its value than they do to the Saint it represents. They so squander that inward devotion, which ought to be spiritually directed to the invisible Saint, in demonstrations of outward affection and curiosity, that the senses are pleased and delighted, and love and the joy of the will rest there. All this is an effectual hindrance to real spirituality, which requires the annihilation of the affections in all particular objects.

Should not be unbecomingly ornamented.

This is clearly visible in that hateful custom observed nowadays by certain persons who, not holding in abhorrence the vanities of the world, adorn the Sacred Images with those garments which a frivolous race daily invents for the satisfaction of its wanton recreations and diversions. They clothe the images with those garments which in them-

selves are reprehensible, and which the Saints have always held, and still hold, in detestation. It is thus that they conspire with the devil to procure some sanction for their vanities, involving the Saints therein, but not without offending them most deeply. The consequence is that all modest and sound devotion, which utterly rejects every trace of vanity, is with such people little more than the elaborate and superfluous decoration of images and curious pictures, to which they are attached and on which they base all their joy. You see people who are never satisfied with adding image to image, who reject them if they are not made after a particular pattern, and who must have them arranged in a particular order, so as to please the sense; meanwhile the devotion of the heart is very slight. They hold to their images as Michas to his idols, who when he lost them ran out of his house crying because they had been taken away;* or like Laban, who made a long journey to reclaim them, and in his anger searched for them in the tents of Jacob.†

A devout man grounds his devotion chiefly on the invisible; he requires but few images, and uses but few, and such as are more in harmony with Divine than with human taste; fashioning them, and himself upon them, according to the pattern of another world, and the habits of the Saints, and not of this; so that the fashion of this world may not only not excite the desire, but not even recur to the memory, through the sight of anything resembling it or appertaining unto it. Neither are his affections entangled by the images he uses, for if they be taken from him, he is not therefore distressed, because he seeks within himself the Living Image, which is Christ crucified, in Whom he desires rather that all things should be taken from him and that

CHAP.
XXXIV.
How bad taste offends Sanctify.

How frivolity takes the place of devotion.

How Images become Idols.

True devotion requires few Images, and those of a supernatural Beauty;

and seeks in the heart the living image of Christ Crucified.

* Judg. xviii. 23, 24.

† Gen. xxxi. 34.

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fection,—
what.

all things should fail him, even those which seemed most to draw him to God; and even when they are taken away from him he is still tranquil. The higher perfection of the soul consists in being tranquil and joyful amid the privation rather than the possession with the desire of, and affection for, these motives. Though it is a good thing to have in our possession these Images and means of greater devotion—for which reason we should choose always those which most promote it—yet it is not Perfection to be so attached to them as to be sorrowful when they are taken from us. Be assured of this, the more you cling to images or sensible motives the less will your devotion and prayers ascend upwards unto God. Though it be true that, because some images are better representations than others and more devotional, we may prefer the former to the latter, still it must be for that reason only, and there must be no kind of attachment lurking in that preference; lest—that which tends to raise our minds to God being forgotten—the means of devotion should become food for sense, immersed in the joy which springs from them: nor should that which has been made use of as a help to devotion through any imperfection become a hindrance, as it sometimes does, even not less so than an attachment to any other object whatever.

Some images
may be
preferred to
others,—
why.Folly in
regard to
Rosaries.

Granting that some excuse for this may be admitted in the matter of Images, because of our inadequate perception of that detachment and poverty of spirit which perfection requires, at least none can be admitted in the case of that imperfection so generally practised with regard to Rosaries. You will scarcely meet with anyone who has not some weakness in this matter. Men take care that their Rosaries are of a certain workmanship rather than another, of a certain colour or material, and with particular ornaments. One rosary does not contribute more than another towards the hearing of our prayers: he is heard who tells his beads

in the simplicity and integrity of his heart, not thinking of anything but how he may please God the most; and not valuing one rosary more than another, except only for the Indulgences attached to it.

Such is our vain concupiscence, that it clings to everything; it is like the dry rot consuming the good and the bad wood. What else is it, when thou pleasest thyself with a curious rosary, seeking one of a particular make rather than of another, but to rejoice in the instrument? Why frequentest thou a particular image, not considering whether it stirs thee up to a greater love of God, but whether it be more curious or valuable than another? Certainly, if thy desire and thy joy were in pleasing God only, thou wouldest not regard anything of this kind. It is very vexatious to see spiritual persons so attached to the fashion and workmanship of devotional objects, to what is merely motive, given up to the curiosity and empty joy which they minister. Such persons are never satisfied, they are perpetually changing one thing for another: spiritual devotion is forgotten amid these sensible means; men attach themselves to them just as they do to any worldly ornaments; and the issue is no slight detriment to their soul.

CHAP.
XXXIV.Worldliness
in Prayer.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The subject continued. The ignorance of some people in the matter of Images.

I HAVE much to say of the ignorance of some people with regard to Images: so great is their folly that they have more confidence in one image than in another, influenced therein solely by their preference of the one over the other. This conduct on their part implies great ignorance of the ways of God, of the service and honour due to Him Who chiefly

How
miraculous
Images are to
be regarded.

BOOK
III.

God sometimes works miracles at particular places,—why.

Worship of Images relative.

Dissipation in pilgrimages.

regards the faith, and interior purity of the suppliant. God sometimes works more miracles at one image than at another of the same kind—though there be a great difference in the workmanship—in order that the devotion of people may be excited there more than elsewhere. The reason why God works miracles and grants graces at one image rather than at another is, that the strangeness of His intervention may stir up the slumbering devotions and affections of the faithful. As the sight of the image serves to kindle our devotion, and perseverance in prayer—both being means to move God to hear and grant our petitions—so before a particular image, because of our prayers and devout affections, God continues to work miracles and to bestow His graces. The faith and devotion with which the image is regarded passing on to the Saint whom it represents.

As to Images then, let us never dwell upon the curious workmanship they may exhibit, so as to have more confidence in some than in others on that account, for this would be great ignorance; let us esteem those the most by which our devotion is most excited. Thus God, for the greater purification of this formal devotion, when He grants graces, and works miracles, does so, in general, through images not very well made, nor artistically painted or adorned, so that the faithful may attribute nothing to the work of the artist. And very often our Lord grants His graces by means of images in remote and solitary places. In remote places, that the pilgrimage to them may stir up our devotion, and make it the more intense. In solitary places, that we may retire from the noise and concourse of men to pray in solitude, like our Lord himself. He who goes on a pilgrimage, will do well to do so when others do not, even at an unusual time. When many people make a pilgrimage, I would advise staying at home, for in general, men return more dissipated than they were before. And many become pilgrims

for recreation more than for devotion. If faith and devotion be wanting, the image will not suffice. What a perfect living image was our Saviour upon earth; and yet those who had no faith, though they were constantly about Him and saw His wonderful works, were not benefited by His presence. This is the reason why He did no miracles in His own country.*

I wish to mention here certain supernatural effects of some images on particular persons. God attaches at times a special influence to certain images, so that the form of them, and the devotion they excite, remain impressed on the mind of the beholder as if they were still present before his eyes. And again, when they are recalled by the memory, the same influence is excited as at the first time they were seen, sometimes more vividly, at others less so; other images even of more perfect workmanship produce no such effects.

Many persons also have a devotion to images of a certain fashion and not to others. In some, this is nothing more than mere natural fancy or taste, just as we are pleased with one man's looks more than with another's. They will have naturally a liking for them, and their imagination recalls them more vividly, though not so beautiful in themselves as others, because they are naturally attracted to that particular form and fashion. Thus, some persons will suppose that the fancy they have for a certain image is devotion, while in reality it is perhaps nothing more than natural taste and liking.

At other times, it happens that men, while gazing at a particular image will see it move, change colour, make signs, or speak. This, and the supernatural effects just spoken of, are indeed very often real and good effects, the work of God, either to increase devotion, or to support a soul in its weakness, or to prevent frequent distractions, and also very often

CHAP.
XXXV.
Our Saviour
a Living
Image.

Love of art,
or sense of
the beautiful,
not Devotion.

* S. Matt. xiii. 58; S. Luke iv. 24.

false, the work of the evil spirit to deceive and ruin souls. I shall give instruction on the whole of this subject in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

How the Joy of the Will in Sacred Images is to be referred to God, so that there shall be no hindrance in it, or occasions of error.

As Holy Images are very profitable, in that they put us in mind of God and His Saints, and move the will to devotion when we use them in the ordinary way, as we ought; so also are they occasions of great delusions if, when they are the subjects of supernatural effects, we know not how to conduct ourselves as we ought to do in our progress onwards towards God. One of the means by which the devil makes an easy prey of incautious souls, and impedes their progress in true spirituality, is the exhibition of strange and unusual things in connection with images; whether they be those material images which the Church has sanctioned, or those fantastic images represented to the mind, of some particular Saints, or the image of himself transformed into an angel of light,* in order to delude our souls. The devil, in his cunning, hides himself within those very means which are given us as a remedy and support, that he may seize upon us when we are least upon our guard. Holy souls will therefore be ever circumspect in regard to good things, for that which is evil carries its own witness always with it.

I give but one direction, and that is sufficient, for the avoidance of those evils into which souls may fall with regard to images, and for the purgation of the will from joy in them, and for the guidance of the soul to God by means of them,

* 2 Cor. xi. 14.

Satan's use of
Images.

Caution in
regard to
good things.

which is the object of the Church in the use of images. The evils to which the soul is liable are either that it is hindered by them in its flight upwards unto God, or that it uses them in a mean and ignorant way, or that it falls into delusions with reference to them. Now the direction I wish to give is this: we should strive, seeing that images are but motives to invisible things, to move, affect, and gladden the will only in the living spirit which the image figures. Let the faithful soul, therefore, take care that, while contemplating an image, the senses be not absorbed in it, whether that image be material or in the imagination, of beautiful workmanship or of rich adornment, and whether the devotion it excites be spiritual or sensible. Let him not regard these outward accidents, nor dwell upon them, but venerate the image, as the Church commands, and lift up his mind at once from the material image to the living spirit whom it figures, with the sweetness and joy of the will resting on God, or on the Saint invoked, devoutly, in mental prayer; so that what is due to the living and the spiritual may not be wasted on material and sensible objects. He who shall do this will never be deluded, and the mind and senses will not be hindered from advancing onward with great freedom unto God. The image, too, which supernaturally excited devotion, will do so the more abundantly when our affections are thus elevated instantly to God. For whenever He grants us these and other graces, He does so by inclining the affection and joy of the will to that which is invisible. It is His Will also that we should do the same ourselves, by annihilating the powers and satisfaction of our faculties in all visible and sensible things.

Direction
how to use
Images;—
as a means,
not as an end.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Motive Goods continued. Oratories and places of prayer.

I THINK I have now sufficiently explained how the spiritual man, in the matter of Images, may fall into as great imperfections—perhaps more dangerous ones—as in the matter of temporal and bodily goods. I say perhaps more dangerous, for in considering, and speaking of, these images as holy things, men make too sure of themselves, and cease to be afraid of attachment to them in a mere natural way. Thus they frequently deceive themselves very much, thinking themselves most devout because they delight in holy things; and after all, perhaps, this may be nothing more than natural taste and inclination, which is gratified here as it might have been by anything else.

Vanity in the
decoration of
Oratories.

The issue is—I am going to speak about Oratories—that some people are never satisfied in adding image to image in their oratories, taking pleasure in the order and neatness of their arrangements, to the end that they may be well furnished and beautiful to the eye. God is not their object in one arrangement more than in another—perhaps less so, for the delight they experience in these decorations is so much stolen from the reality. It is very true that all decorations and all reverence in the matter of images are exceedingly little in comparison with what they represent—and therefore those who treat them with no great decency and reverence are deserving of all blame, as well as those who paint them so clumsily that they rather quench than kindle devotion; and I wish the authorities would prohibit such persons from painting and sculpture because of their gross unskilfulness—but what has that to do with the attachment which you have to these decorations and exterior ornaments when they engross your senses and make heavy your heart, so that you cannot

God should
have the best.

draw near unto God, and love Him, and forget all these matters for His sake? If you are deficient in this through carefulness about outward things, not only will He not be pleased with you, but He will punish you also, because you have not sought His pleasure, but your own, in all things.

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XXXVII.

You may see this truth most clearly in that triumphal procession when our Lord entered into Jerusalem. The people sung hymns of joy and strewed branches in the way, but Christ was weeping,* for their hearts were far from Him while they received Him with outward show of honour. ‘This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.’† We may say of them, that they formed that procession in honour of themselves rather than of God. It is the same with many at this day, for where great Festivals are being celebrated, men rejoice more in the recreation they furnish—whether in seeing or being seen, in the banquet or other worldly comfort—than in rendering true service unto God.

Christ weeps
over Jerusa-
lem,—why.

Such inclinations and intentions are not pleasing unto God. Much less do they please Him who, when they are making preparations for a great solemnity, invent ridiculous and undevout actions to create laughter among the spectators, that men may be the more distracted; and who make such arrangements as shall please the multitude instead of such as shall quicken devotion among them. What shall I say of those who celebrate great feasts for ends not belonging to them? of those who make them serve their private interests? of those who are more intent on their personal advantage therein than on the service of God? This they know, and God also Who sees it; and in whichever way the feast is thus observed, let them remember, they keep it for themselves and not for God. What men do to please themselves or others

How men
keep the
Feasts of
God in
honour of
themselves.

* S. Matt. xxi. 9; S. Luke xix. 41.

† S. Matt. xv. 8.

BOOK
III.

God dis-
honoured in
His own
Feasts.

God will not account as done for Himself. Yea, many keep His Feasts with solemnity, and yet He is angry with them as He was with the children of Israel, for He slew thousands of them, when they sung and danced before the golden calf, thinking they were observing a feast in honour of God; * or as He was with Nadab and Abiu, the sons of Aaron, whom He slew with the censers in their hands, because they offered strange fire upon His altar; † or as with him who sat among the guests, not having on a wedding garment, and whom He commanded to be cast, bound hand and foot, 'into the exterior darkness.' ‡

Satan at
Festivals,
like a
merchant in
a Fair.

This shows us how intolerable to God must be these irreverences in those assemblies which are held in His honour. O Lord, my God, how many feasts are kept by the children of men in which the devil is more honoured than Thou? Satan rejoices in these assemblies, for he profits by them like a merchant in a Fair. How often hast Thou to say of them: 'This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me,' § because they serve Me in vain? The chief ground for the service of God is that He is what He is. Other and lower considerations ought not to enter into the question.

Chief ground
for the
service of
God,—what.

I return to the subject of Oratories. Some people adorn them more for their own pleasure than for God's; some treat them with so little respect, that they think no more of them than of their ordinary rooms; and some do not treat them with so much respect even, for they have more pleasure in what is profane than in what is Divine. But let me now leave this, and speak of those who proceed in a more cunning way—of those people who consider themselves devout. Many of these take such delight in their oratories and in the adorn-

* Exod. xxxii. 19, 28.

† S. Matt. xxii. 11-13.

‡ Levit. x. 1, 2.

§ Ib. xv. 8.

ing of them, that they waste in such occupations all the time which they ought to have spent in prayer and interior recollection. They do not see that by not disposing themselves for interior recollection and tranquillity of mind, they are as much distracted by such occupations as by any other worldly occupation, and that they are every moment troubled by such attachment, especially if it be attempted to separate them from their oratories.

CHAP.
XXXVII.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The right use of Churches and Oratories. How the soul is to be directed through them unto God.

As to the guidance of the soul onwards to God through this kind of goods, I may observe that it is lawful, and even expedient, for beginners to feel a sensible pleasure in Images, Oratories, and other visible objects of devotion, because they are not yet entirely weaned from the world, so as to be able to leave the latter wholly for the former. They are like children to whom, when we want to take anything from them which they hold in one hand, we give something to hold in the other, that they may not cry, having both hands empty. The spiritual man, if he is to advance, must deny himself in all those tastes and desires in which the will has pleasure, for true spirituality has but slight connection with any of these things, inasmuch as it consists solely in interior recollection and mental converse with God. For though the spiritual man makes use of Images and Oratories, yet it is only as it were in passing. The mind dwells in God, forgetting all sensible objects. And though it is better to pray where there is the greatest neatness, nevertheless we should choose that place where the senses are least likely to be entertained, and the mind most likely to ascend upwards unto God. On this

Sensible
Devotion
expedient for
beginners,—
why.

Neatness in
churches a
reasonable
ground of
preference.

BOOK
III.Worship of
God must be
spiritual.

subject we must listen to the answer of our Lord to the woman of Samaria. She asked Him which was the true place of prayer, the mountain or the temple. He replied that true prayer was not tied to the mountain, but that those who prayed in spirit and in truth were they who were pleasing to His Father. 'The hour cometh, and now is, when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father also seeketh such to adore Him. God is a spirit, and they that adore Him must adore Him in spirit and in truth.'*

And though Churches and quiet places are set aside and prepared for Prayer—a church ought to be used for no other purpose—nevertheless, in this matter of intimate intercourse with God, that place ought to be chosen which least occupies and allures the senses. It must, therefore, not be a place agreeable and delightful to sense, such as some people search for, lest instead of serving to recollection of mind, it minister to the recreation and satisfactions of sense. For this end, it is well to make choice of a solitary and even wild spot, so that the mind may ascend firmly and directly to God, without hindrance or detention on the part of visible things. Visible things sometimes, it is true, help to elevate the soul, but it is when they are instantly forgotten, and the spirit reposes on God. For this reason our Saviour, in general, chose to pray in solitary places, where there were no attractions for the senses—herein giving us an example—but which tended to lift up the soul to God, such as mountains, which are elevated spots, and generally barren, furnishing no resources for sensible recreation.

He, therefore, who is truly spiritual looks only to interior recollection in oblivion of all things, and for that end chooses a place that is most free from all visible sweetness and at-

* S. John iv. 23, 24.

Prayer best
made in
solitary
places.Example of
our Saviour.CHAP.
XXXVIII.

tractions, withdrawing his thoughts from all that surrounds him, so that in the absence of created things, he may rejoice in God alone. It is wonderful how some spiritual persons are wholly intent on arranging their oratories, and providing places for prayer suited to their tastes and inclinations, and making little or nothing of interior recollection, which is the really important matter. If they attended to this, these arrangements of theirs would have been to them not pleasure but mere weariness.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Continuation of the same subject.

THE reason, then, why some spiritually-minded persons never enter into the true joys of the spirit, is, that they never wholly cease to rejoice in outward and visible things. Let such reflect that if a visible Church and Oratory be a fitting and appropriate place for prayer, and images motives thereunto, they must not so use them as to have all their sweetness and joy in them, and so forget to pray in the living temple, which is the interior recollection of soul. S. Paul, to remind us of this, says: 'Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*' and our Lord: 'Lo, the kingdom of God is within you;†' to the same effect tend the words already cited: 'They that adore Him must adore Him in spirit and in truth.†' God will make no account of your oratories, and the places you have so well prepared, if you attend more to the pleasure which they furnish than you do to interior detachment, which is spiritual poverty, and which consists in denying yourself in all that you may possess.

* 1 Cor. iii. 16.

† S. Luke xvii. 21.

‡ S. John iv. 24.

Inward
devotion
necessary.

BOOK
III.
Directions
how to pray.

You must, therefore, if you would purge the will from joy, and the vain desire for it, and direct that joy to God in your prayers, look only to this, that your conscience be pure, your will wholly with God, and your mind earnestly fixed upon Him; and that you choose a place for your prayers, the most solitary and unfrequented possible, and there apply the whole joy and satisfaction of your will to the calling upon God and glorifying His name. As to the trifling joys and satisfactions of outward things, regard them not, but labour to deny yourself in them. For if the soul becomes habituated to the sweetness of sensible devotion, it will never advance to the power of spiritual joy which is to be found in spiritual detachment by means of interior recollection.

CHAPTER XL.

Of some evils to which men are liable who indulge in the sensible sweetness which results from objects and places of devotion.

Evils of
attachment
to sensible
sweetness in
Prayer;
1. Interior.

THE spiritual man is subject to many evils in this matter if he will walk therein in the way of sensible sweetness. These evils are Interior as well as Exterior. As to the first: he will never attain to that interior recollection which consists in overlooking and forgetting all sensible sweetness, nor will he acquire substantial self-recollection, and solid virtue.

2. Exterior.

As to the second, he unfits himself for praying in all places alike, and he can only pray in those which are to his taste. Thus he will frequently neglect his prayers, because, as they say, he can pray only out of his own book.

Besides, this affection for particular places is the source of many inconsistencies; for those who indulge it never continue in the same place, nor even in the same state of life; at one time here, at another there; to-day in one cell, to-morrow in another; they make their arrangements in one

CHAP.
XL.

oratory to-day, and the next in another. Of such people are those whose life is spent in changing their state and manner of living. As these people are influenced solely by that fervour and sensible sweetness which they find in spiritual things, and as they never do violence to themselves so as to become spiritually self-reclected by the denial of their will and by voluntary endurance of inconveniences; so whenever they see a place which seems to them better adapted for devotion, or a state of life better suited to their tastes and inclinations, they run after it at once, and abandon that wherein they were before. Being thus under the dominion of sensible sweetness, they are eager in the search after novelty, for sensible sweetness is uncertain and rapidly passes away.

CHAPTER XLI.

Of the three kinds of devotional places. How the will is to regulate itself in the matter.

THERE are three kinds or varieties of places by means of which God is wont to move the will to devotion. The first is a certain disposition of the ground—whether on account of the landscape, or of groves, or of its loneliness—which naturally tends to excite devotion. It is profitable to make use of this, provided the will ascends upwards to God, and the circumstances of the place be at once forgotten. For in order to secure the end we must not dwell on the means or the motives longer than necessary. If we set about to refresh our senses, and seek for sensible sweetness, what we shall find will be spiritual dryness and distractions; for true satisfaction and spiritual sweetness are to be found only in interior recollection. Therefore, when we are in such a place, we should forget it, and strive to converse inwardly with God, as if we were not

Places
become
devotional,
1. From
Natural
beauty.

there. If we give way to the sweetness of the spot, searching for it in every way, that will be a seeking after sensible refreshment, and instability of purpose rather than spiritual rest. This was the way of the ancient hermits who in the wildest deserts chose a small corner for themselves, sufficient for a most narrow cell, and there they buried themselves. In such an one remained S. Benedict for three years, and another bound himself with a rope that he might not step beyond its length. Many others also, too numerous to mention, have imposed similar restraints upon themselves. Those holy men well knew that if they did not mortify the appetite for spiritual sweetness they never would be able to attain to it, and become spiritual themselves.

2. From
Association.

The second kind is something special, for there are some places, no matter whether desert or not, where God is wont to bestow most sweet spiritual favours on some persons in particular. In general the hearts of those who have received such favours are inclined to that place, and they feel at times a great and anxious desire to return; though when they do, they do not find what they found there before; for it is not in their power. God bestows these favours when, how, and where He wills; He is not tied to time or place, neither is He subject to any man's will.

Three
reasons for
choosing a
particular
place for
Prayer.

Nevertheless it is well to return to such a place, provided all attachment to it be wanting, and to pray there sometimes. There are three reasons in favour of this. First, it appears that God, though not bound to place, wills that He should be glorified there by the object of His favours. The second, by going there the soul is the more reminded of its duty of thanksgiving for the graces there received. The third is, that remembrance of past graces quickens devotion. It is for these reasons that men ought to revisit such places, and not because they think that God has obliged Himself to bestow His favours there in such a way as not to bestow them

elsewhere; for in the eyes of God the human soul is a more becoming place than any earthly spot.

This principle is found in the Holy Scriptures, for we read that Abraham built an altar in the place where God appeared to him, and there called upon His name, and that he visited the place again on his return from Egypt, and called upon God again at 'the altar which he had made before.'* Jacob also consecrated the place where he saw 'the Lord leaning upon the ladder'; for he 'took the stone which he had laid under his head, and set it up for a title, pouring oil upon the top of it.'† Agar, too, in reverence, gave a name to the place where the Angel appeared to her, saying, 'Verily here have I seen the hinder parts of Him that seeth me.'‡

The third kind are certain special localities which God has chosen that men may there call upon Him and serve Him. Such a place was Mount Sinai where He gave His law unto Moses.§ Such also was that place which He showed unto Abraham, where the Patriarch was to sacrifice his son.|| And such too was Mount Horeb, whither He commanded our father Elias to go, and where He was to show Himself unto him.¶ Of this kind also is Mount Garganus which S. Michael, appearing there to the Bishop of Siponto, marked out for the service of God, saying: 'I am the guardian of this place, let an oratory be built here in honour of the Angels.'** The most glorious Virgin by a miraculous sign—snow in summer—chose a site in Rome for a Church in her honour, which Joannes Patricius built.†† God knoweth why He chose these places for Himself. All that we need know is that all is for our good, and that He will hear our prayers there, and wherever else we pray in perfect faith. Though there is far greater reason why we

Examples of
Abraham,
Jacob, and
Agar.

3. By the
Will of God.

Mt. Sinai.

Mt. Horeb.

Mt. Gar-
ganus.

S. Maria
Maggiore in
Rome.

All places fit
for the
Prayer of
Faith.

* Genes. xii. 8; xiii. 4.

† Ib. xxviii. 13, 18.

‡ Genes. xvi. 13.

§ Exod. xxiv. 12.

|| Genes. xxii. 2.

¶ 3 Kings xix. 8.

** Brev. Rom. in Fest. App. S. Mich. lect. 6.

†† Ib. in Fest. S. Mariæ ad Nives.

should be heard in these places, dedicated to His service, because the Church has consecrated them for that special end.

CHAPTER XLII.

Of other motives to Prayer adopted by many; namely, many Ceremonies.

How
external
observances
become
superstitious.

THE useless joys and the imperfection of attachment, in which many persons are involved, in the matter of Prayer, are perhaps in some degree excusable, because they are indulged in somewhat innocently. But the great reliance which some have on a variety of Ceremonies invented by persons of unenlightened minds, deficient in the simplicity of faith, is utterly intolerable. I pass by those ceremonies which comprise certain strange words or phrases signifying nothing, and other matters, not of a sacred character, which an ignorant, rude, and suspicious people intermingle with their prayers. These are clearly evil and involve sin, and many of them imply a secret compact with Satan, whereby men provoke God to anger and not to mercy. I do not mean to speak of these, but only of those ceremonies, which being not of this suspicious class, many persons nowadays adopt in their prayers through an indiscrete devotion. People attribute such efficacy to them, and have such faith in the forms and ceremonies which they throw round their prayers and spiritual exercises, that they imagine their prayers are useless, and unheard by God, if they fail in any one of these singularities, or overstep these arbitrary limitations. They have much more confidence in these forms than they have in real earnest prayer; and this is a great dishonour and insult offered unto God. For instance a Mass must be said with so many candles, neither more nor fewer; by such a priest, at such an hour, neither earlier nor later; on such a day, neither before

nor after. Prayers must be offered up, or visits made to a church so often, in such a way, at such a time, with such ceremonies or gestures, neither earlier nor later, nor in any other way. The person who is to undertake this must have such and such qualities. They believe that if any one of these ceremonies be neglected all is to no purpose. There are a thousand other absurdities of the same kind.

What is still worse, and not to be borne, is, that some people will have it that they have felt the effects of this, or that they have obtained what they asked for, or that they know they shall obtain it when all these ceremonious practices have been duly observed. This is nothing less than to tempt God, and grievously to provoke Him to wrath, so much so that occasionally the evil spirit is permitted to deceive such people, and to make them feel or see things utterly at variance with the welfare of their soul. They bring this upon themselves by the self-love which they manifest in their prayers, and by their desire to fulfil their own will rather than the Will of God. Such persons, because they do not place their whole trust in God, will never come to any good.

CHAPTER XLIII.

How the Joy and Strength of the Will is to be directed in these devotions.

LET such people then know that the more they rely on their ceremonies the less is their confidence in God, and that they will never obtain their desires. There are some people who labour more for their own ends than for the glory of God. Though they know that God will grant their prayer if it be for His service, and that He will not, if it be not; still, because of their self-love and the hollow joy which they have in it, they will multiply their prayers beyond measure. Now if they

Prayer must
seek the Will
of God.

BOOK
III.
Order in
Prayer.

were to attend to something else of more importance, they would do better: namely, if they set about the purification of their own conscience, and applied themselves to the affair of their own salvation, omitting all prayers which have not this for their immediate object.

If they do this, they will obtain that which concerns them most, and they will obtain beside all else, though they did not pray for it, in a better and readier way than if they had directed all their energies to it. We have for this the promise of our Lord Himself, Who tells us, 'Seek ye,' therefore, first the kingdom of God and His Justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.* Such seeking is most pleasing unto God, and 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 what we pray for, namely, our eternal salvation, but all that He sees to be expedient and profitable for us, though we ask it not, according to the words of the Psalmist, 'The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth.'† They call upon Him in truth who pray for that which is most true, namely, their salvation, as the Psalmist adds, in the same place, 'He will do the will of them that fear Him, and He will hear their prayer and save them. The Lord keepeth all them that love Him.' To be 'nigh' unto men is to satisfy them, and to give them what never entered even into their thoughts to ask for.

The Will of
God contains
our Temporal
and Eternal
Happiness.

Examples of
Solomon and
Abraham.

We have an illustration of this in the history of Solomon. He asked of God wisdom to govern the people—a prayer that was acceptable unto Him—and the answer of God was: 'Because this choice hath pleased thy heart, and thou hast not asked riches and wealth and glory, nor the lives of them that hate thee, nor many days of life; but hast asked wisdom

* S. Matth. vi. 33.

† Ps. cxliv. 18, 19, 20.

CHAP.
XLIII.

and knowledge to be able to judge My people, over which I have made thee king: wisdom and knowledge are granted to thee; and I will give thee riches and wealth and glory, so that none of the kings before thee, nor after thee, shall be like thee.* God kept His promise, and made his enemies live in peace, and pay him tribute. God also, when He promised Abraham to multiply the posterity of his lawful son as the stars of heaven, added: 'I will make the son also of the bondwoman a great nation, because he is thy seed.†

The powers of the will, therefore, and the joy it has in prayers, are to be referred to God: without leaning upon ceremonies and private observances which the Catholic Church neither adopts nor sanctions; we must resign to the priest the celebration of Mass, he stands in her place, and has received from her the order of its celebration. Men must not seek out new inventions, as if they knew more than the Holy Ghost and the Church. If they are not heard when they pray in the simplicity of the Church, let them be sure of this—God will not hear them for their own inventions, however numerous they may be.

The Church
our Guide in
Ceremonies.

As to vocal prayer and other devotions, let no man rely on ceremonies and forms of prayer other than those which Christ and His Church have taught us. It is quite clear that, when His disciples said unto Him, 'Teach us to pray,‡ He told them all they were to do in order to be heard of the Eternal Father. He knew His will. He then taught them only the seven petitions of the *Pater Noster*, which include all our wants, spiritual and temporal. He did not teach them many, and other forms of words and ceremonies. He had before told them not to use many words when they prayed, saying, 'When you are praying, speak not much . . . for your Father knoweth what is needful for you.'§ Only

The Lord's
Prayer is
enough.

* 2 Paral. i. 11, 12.

† S. Luke xi. 1.

‡ Genes. xxi. 13.

§ S. Matth. vi. 7, 8.

BOOK
III.

He charged them with great earnestness to persevere in prayer—that is, the *Pater Noster*—saying, ‘that we ought always to pray, and not to faint.’* He did not teach us a variety of prayers, but to repeat often, with care and fervour, these petitions—for they contain the whole Will of God and all our wants also. He Himself, when He fell on His face in the garden and prayed three times to the Eternal Father, thrice repeated the self-same words of the *Pater Noster*, saying, ‘My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt;’†—that is, Father, if I must drink this chalice, Thy Will be done.

The Prayer
in the
Garden of
Gethsemani.Two places of
Retirement.

The rites and ceremonies which He taught us to observe in our prayers are reduced to one of two; either to retire into our chamber, where, away from the tumult and presence of men, we may pray with most pure and perfect heart—‘When thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret;’‡ or to withdraw into the lonely wilderness, as He did, in the better and more tranquil hours of the night.

All hours
suitable for
devotions.The *Pater
Noster* com-
prehends all
prayers.

There is thus no necessity for determined seasons, nor for appointed days, nor for strange methods, nor for words of double meanings, nor for other prayers than those which the Church employs, and in the sense in which she employs them; for all prayers are comprehended in the *Pater Noster*. I am not, by this, condemning, but rather approving, those fixed days which some persons occasionally set apart for their devotions, such as Novenas, and the like: what I condemn is the reliance which men have on the ceremonies and self-devised observances with which they keep them. This is what Judith also did when she rebuked the people of Bethulia, because they had fixed a time within which God was to have mercy upon them. ‘Who are ye,’ said the

* S. Luke xviii. 1. † S. Matth. xxvi. 39. ‡ S. Matth. vi. 6.

Prophetess, ‘that tempt the Lord? This is not a word that may draw down mercy, but rather that may stir up wrath and enkindle indignation.’*

CHAP.
XLIII.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Of the second kind of Distinct Goods in which the Will vainly rejoices.

THE second kind of Distinct Sweet Goods in which the will vainly rejoices, is that which provokes or persuades us to serve God. This I have called Provocative. In this class of goods are Preachers who may be considered in two points of view: one, concerning themselves, the other, those who hear them. Both in preaching and in hearing, all require to be reminded that the joy of the will must be directed unto God.

Second kind
of distinct
sweet
Spiritual
Goods,—
Provocative.

As to the preacher, he must bear in mind—if he is to profit his hearers, and not to be puffed up with empty joy and presumption—that his function is more spiritual than vocal: for though it depends on audible words, its power and efficacy is not in the words, but in the spirit which utters them. However high the doctrine he preaches, however adorned his eloquence and sublime his style, the fruits of his sermons will in general be no better than his own spirit. For though it be true that the word of God is effectual in itself, as it is written, ‘He will give to His voice the voice of power,’† yet fire, which has the power of burning, will not burn without adequate fuel. Preaching depends for its effects on two conditions: one on the part of the preacher, the other on the part of the hearer: but in general the fruitfulness of preaching is in proportion with the dispositions of the preacher. Hence the proverb, Such the master, such the dis-

Advice to
Preachers
and Hearers.Preaching
more
spiritual
than vocal.

* Judith viii. 11, 12.

† Ps. lxxvii. 34.

BOOK
III.
Fruits of
Preaching in
proportion to
dispositions
of Preacher.

ciple. When the seven sons of Sceva, a chief priest of the Jews, attempted to cast out devils like S. Paul, the evil spirit turned upon them in a fury, saying, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?*' and drove them out of the house naked and wounded. This befell them because of their improper dispositions, and not because Christ would not that they should invoke His name; for when the disciples forbade him to cast out devils in His name, who was not a disciple, He rebuked them, saying, 'Do not forbid him: for there is no man that doth a miracle in My name, and can soon speak ill of Me.†' But He is angry with those who teach His law and keep it not, and who not being spiritual themselves, preach spirituality to others. 'Thou, therefore,' saith the Apostle, 'that teachest another, teachest not thyself; thou that teachest that men should not steal, stealest.‡' And the Psalmist saith, 'To the sinner God hath said, Why dost thou declare My justice, and take My covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hast hated discipline and cast My words behind thee?§' Such persons have not that spirit which is fruitful in good.

A good life
the best
sermon.

It is generally observed, so far as we can judge, that the better the life of the preacher, the greater the fruit, though his style may be homely, his eloquence scanty, and his subject common, for warmth proceeds from the living spirit within. Another kind of preacher will produce scarcely any fruit at all, notwithstanding his fine style and his subject. For though it is true that a good style and action, high doctrines, and correct expression have a greater effect when they accompany true spirituality; still when that is wanting, though the senses be charmed, and the intellect delighted, but little or no substantial warmth reaches to the will. The will remains dull,

* Acts xix. 15.

† Rom. ii. 21.

‡ S. Mark ix. 38.

§ Psalm xlix. 16, 17.

and weak as before in good works, though marvellous things have been marvellously told it, but which serve only to please the ear, like a concert of music or the sound of bells. But the spirit does not go beyond its limits, and the voice has no power to raise the dead from the grave. Of what use is it to me to listen to one kind of music which pleases me more than another, if it does not move me to act? Though men may be wonderful preachers, yet their sermons are soon forgotten, when they kindled no fire in the will. This sensible delectation in sermons is not only almost fruitless in itself, but it also keeps back the hearer from true spirituality; for he goes no deeper into the matter than the outward circumstances of the sermon, and praises the preacher for this and that peculiarity, running after him for such reasons rather than for any edification he derives from him. S. Paul sets this before us very clearly, saying: 'And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not in loftiness of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of Christ . . . my speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in showing of the spirit and of power.*'

CHAP.
XLIV.

End of
preaching
not merely
to please the
ear, taste, or
intellect—
but to move
the will.

It was not the intention of the Apostle, neither is it mine, to find fault with a good style, correct diction, and eloquence. These things are valuable to a preacher, as they are in all kinds of affairs; for as a noble expression elevates and restores what is fallen low, so, on the other hand, a mean style ruins even what is noble.

Value of a
good style.

* 1 Cor. ii. 1, 4.

THE
OBSCURE NIGHT OF THE SOUL.

VOL. I.

Y

THE
OBSURE NIGHT OF THE SOUL.

—♦—
ARGUMENT.

I BEGIN this book with the stanzas which I have undertaken to explain. I shall then explain them line by line. The first and second stanzas describe the effects of the spiritual purgations of our sensitive and spiritual nature. The rest, six in number, describe the various and wonderful effects of spiritual illumination, and union with God in love.

STANZAS.

I

In an Obscure Night,
With anxious love inflamed,
O, happy lot!
Forth unobserved I went,
My house being now at rest.

Song of the
soul in the
Divine Union
of Love.

In darkness and ^{Security} ~~obscurity~~ (see p. xlviii)
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,
And seeing nought myself,
Without other light or guide
Save that which in my heart was burning.

STANZAS.

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 but He 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,
 He reposed and slept;
 I cherished Him, and the waving
 Of the cedars fanned Him.

VII

Then His hair floated in the breeze
 That blew from the turret;
 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;
 I fainted away, abandoned,
 And, amid the lilies forgotten,
 Threw all my cares away.

OBJECT OF THE PRECEDING STANZAS.

Before entering on the explanation of these stanzas I must premise that they are the song of the soul in the State of Perfection, in union with God by love; after passing through

those deep tribulations and distresses, in the spiritual exercise of the strait way of eternal life. This is the way, as our Saviour saith in the Gospel, by which the soul must ordinarily travel to the high and Divine union with God. '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 exults in having traversed it to the perfection of love. This is the substance of the first stanza. The strait way is with great propriety called the Obscure Night, as it appears from the following stanzas. The soul, then, having travelled on this strait road, where so many blessings have come upon it, thus rejoiceth.

* S. Matth. vii. 14.

STANZAS.

After weeping in the night comes joy in the morning.

BOOK I.

OF THE NIGHT OF SENSE.

*In an Obscure Night,
With anxious love inflamed,
O, happy lot!
Forth unobserved I went,
My house being now at rest.*

EXPLANATION.

BOOK
I.
The Obscure
Night.

1. Its defini-
tion.

2. Means of
entering it.

3. Joy in
having passed
through it.

HERE the soul describes the way and manner of its departure, as to all selfish and other affections, dying thereto and to itself by real mortification, so that it may come to the sweet and pleasing life of love in God. It went forth, from itself and from all things, in an Obscure Night, by which is meant purgative contemplation—as I shall hereafter explain—which leads the soul to deny itself and all besides. This departure of the soul was effected in the strength and fervour of love with which the Bridegroom inspired it 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 motions.

CHAPTER I.

Of the Imperfections of Beginners.

In an Obscure Night.

SOULS enter this Obscure Night when God is drawing them out of the state of Beginners, which is that of those who meditate in the spiritual way, 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 the nature of this night through which the soul has to pass, and why God leads men into it, it is necessary to touch upon certain characteristics of beginners, that they may perceive the weakness of their state, take courage, and desire to be led of God into this night, where the soul is established in virtue and prepared 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 the Obscure Night.

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.

The Grace of God,* like a loving mother, as soon as the

* Wisd. xvi. 25.

CHAP.
I.

Three states;
1. Of Begin-
ners.
2. Of Pro-
ficients.
3. Of the
Perfect.

Beginners en-
couraged by
sweetness.

BOOK
I.

soul is regenerated in the new fire and fervour of His service, treats it in the same way; for it is then furnished, without labour on its own part, with spiritual milk, sweet and delicious, in the things of God, and in devotional exercises with great delight; God giving to it the breasts of His own tender love, as a mother to her 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 are the use of the Sacraments and the frequentation of Divine Offices.

Selfish spirituality of Beginners.

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 being 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.

Work proportioned to habit.

Imperfections in the matter of the seven capital sins.

To make this more evident, 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 with 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, and also how great are the blessings of this *Obscure Night* of which I am about to speak; seeing that it cleanses and purifies the soul from all these imperfections.

CHAPTER II.

Of some 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 to teach it, instead of learning it. They condemn others in their minds when they see that they are not devout in their own way. Sometimes also they give expression in words to that feeling, showing themselves herein to be like the Pharisee, who in the act of prayer boasted of his own good works and despised the Publican.*

CHAP.
II.
First Imperfection—
Spiritual
Pride.

This fervour, and the desire to do such and other like acts, is frequently fed by Satan in order that men of this kind may grow in pride and presumption: he knows perfectly well that all the virtuous works of people in this state 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 both in word and act 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.‡

Sometimes, also, when their spiritual masters, such as

* S. Luke xviii. 11, 12. † S. Matth. vii. 3. ‡ Ib. xxiii. 24.

BOOK
I.Devices of
self-love.1. Seeking
praise.2. External
signs of de-
votion.3. Artful
Confessions.

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 spirit with those who, they think, will commend and extol their state. They avoid, as they would death, those who depreciate their feelings 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 make many exterior movements, give vent to sighs and practise divers ceremonies; and sometimes, too, they fall into a kind of rapture in public rather than in private—whereunto Satan contributes—and they are pleased when others witness it.

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 not suppose they are 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 what is their own, and to be anxious that neither their confessor nor anyone else should think them of the least importance.

CHAP.
II.Pride of im-
patience with
self.

Some beginners, too, make very light of their faults occasionally, 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, 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. In this respect they resemble the foolish Virgins, who, with untrimmed lamps, went about in search of oil, saying: 'Give us your oil, for our lamps are gone out.'*

Some, too, fall deeply into these imperfections, and into great evils by reason of them. Some, however, fall into them less than others, and some have to contend with little more than the first motions of them. But scarcely anyone can be found who, in his first fervours, did not fall into some of them.

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 edify themselves in humility, not only looking on their own works as nothing, but also dissatisfied with themselves: they look upon all others as much better than themselves, they regard them with a holy envy in their anxiety to serve God as well 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 is that 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. So great is what they in their love would fain do, that all they

Conduct of
the humble
beginner.

* S. Matt. xxv. 8.

BOOK
I.

Marks of
pure, simple,
and true
spirituality.

are doing seems nothing. This loving anxiety so importunes and occupies them that they never consider whether others are doing good or not, and if they themselves should ever do good, it is in the conviction that all others are much better than themselves. They think slightly of themselves, and wish others to do so also, to make no account of them, and to despise what belongs to them; and, 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.

Persons of this kind, in great tranquillity and humility, are very desirous to learn the things that are profitable to them from anyone, be he who he may—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.

But these 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 are not anxious to speak about their own state, because they think so lightly of it that they are, as it were, ashamed to speak of it to their confessors, for it seems to them unworthy of any mention whatever. But they have a great desire to speak of their shortcomings and sins, or of what they consider not to be virtues: 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 Spirit of the Divine Wisdom dwells in these humble souls, He moves and inclines them to keep his treasures secretly within, and to cast out the evil. God gives this grace together

CHAP.
II.

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

Persons of this kind will give their hearts' blood for him who serves God, and will aid him to the utmost of their powers. When they commit any imperfection they bear up under it with humility, in gentleness of spirit, in loving fear of God, and hoping in Him. But the souls who in the beginning travel thus towards Perfection are 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 Obscure Night those souls whom He will purify from all these imperfections in order to their further advancement.

How the
humble man
bears his own
imperfec-
tions.

CHAPTER III.

Of the imperfections of 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 disconsolate and querulous because they do not find the comfort they expected 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 spiritual poverty, to which they ought to apply themselves. Besides, they load themselves with images, rosaries, and crucifixes, 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.

Second Im-
perfection,—
Spiritual
Avarice.

Relics
etc.

BOOK
I.

I condemn here that attachment and clinging of the heart to the form, number, and curiosity 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 in them; 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 imperfection; and the soul, if it is to go on unto Perfection, must root out that feeling utterly.

Real devotion
must spring
from the
heart.Two exam-
ples of the
spirit of
Poverty.

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 by a common pin bent backwards, until I took it away. This was a person not deficient in sense and intellect. 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 quite clear that the cost or workmanship of these contributed nothing to it.

The humble
man begins
with Gene-
rosity.

Those beginners, therefore, who go on well, do not rely on visible instruments, neither do they burden themselves with them, neither do they seek to know more than is necessary for them, so that they may act rightly, for their sole object is to be well with God and to please Him; their avarice consists in that. With a noble generosity they give away their possessions; and their delight is to learn how to want all things for the love of God and their neighbour, disposing of everything according to the laws of this virtue; because, as I have said, the sole object they have in view is real Perfection, to please God in all things and themselves in nothing.

Real Perfec-
tion,—what.

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 this Obscure Night. But it is expedient that the soul, so far as it can, should

CHAP.
III.

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 qualified 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 obscure fire, as I am going to explain.

God alone can
make Saints.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the imperfection of Luxury, spiritually understood.

MANY beginners fall into other imperfections, over and above those in connection with the capital sins. I pass them over now, to avoid prolixity, touching on some of the principal ones, which are as it were the source and origin of the rest.

Third Imper-
fection,—
Spiritual
Luxury.

As to the sin of Luxury, passing over what it is to commit it—my object being to speak of those imperfections which have to be purged away in the Obscure 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, owing to 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 motions of sensuality are felt; and sometimes even when they are deeply absorbed in prayer, or engaged in receiving the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. These motions not being in their power, proceed from one of three sources.

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

First source,
—Sensible
sweetness.

BOOK
I.Law of the
flesh and of
the spirit.

delighted together, the whole nature of man is moved in that delectation according to its measure and character. The mind is moved to delight itself in God—that is the higher part of our nature; 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, while in spirit it is praying, is in the senses troubled, to its great disgust, with the rebellious movements of the flesh passively. As these two parts, the higher and the lower, form but one subject, man, they mutually participate in their respective passions, each in its own way; for, as the Philosopher tells us, all that is received is received according to the capacity of the recipient. And so in these beginnings, and even when the soul has made some progress, the sensitive part, being still imperfect, when spiritual delight flows into the soul, mingles occasionally of its own therewith. But when the sensitive is already cleansed in the purgation of the Obscure Night, it is no more 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 in the way of the Spirit, in an admirable manner of which it partakes, united with God.

Second
Source,—the
Devil.

The second source of these rebellious motions is the Evil Spirit, who, in order to disquiet the soul during prayer, or when it is 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 neglect them altogether, for they imagine that they are more liable to these assaults during prayer than at other times. This is certainly true; for he then assails them more than at other times, in order to lead them to intermit their prayers. This is not all;

CHAP.
IV.

for he represents to them then, most vividly, the very filthiest images, and occasionally in close relations with certain spiritual things and persons, the thought whereof is profitable to the soul, 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 afflicted 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 Obscure Night which purifies them wholly.

The third source of these depraved movements which war against the soul is usually the fear of them which men have conceived beforehand. This fear, which a sudden remembrance occasions, in what they see, speak, or think of, makes them suffer these trials without fault on their part.

Third
source
Fear.

Sometimes, when spiritual persons are speaking of spiritual things, or doing good works, they become conscious of a certain energy and elasticity arising out of the recollection of persons whom they have seen, and they go on with a certain measure of vain joy. This also proceeds from spiritual luxury in the sense I speak of, and is accompanied at times by a certain complacency of the will.

Some, too, form spiritual friendships with others, the source of which is this 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 remorse of conscience. When this affection is purely spiritual, the love of God increases 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 resemblance and harmony between them. But

Test of
purely
spiritual
affection,—
what.

BOOK
I.

when this affection springs out of mere 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 increases, that of God cools down, and men forget Him by reason of that affection of sense, and remorse of conscience is the result.

Difference
between
huma
and
Divine Love.

On the other hand, if the love of God increases, the human love decreases, 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 explain it. 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 increases it in the soul. This is the difference between these two affections, whereby we may distinguish between them. When the soul enters into the Obscure 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 lost sight of, as I shall explain hereafter.

In the
Obscure
Night the
affections
are ruled by
Reason.

CHAPTER V.

Of the imperfections of Anger.

Fourth Im-
perfection,
Anger and
Peevish-
ness,—how
caused

MANY beginners, because of their inordinate appetite for spiritual sweetness, generally commit 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

* S. John iii. 6.

CHAP.
V.

they are at times intolerable to all about them. This happens to them generally after great sweetness in prayer; and so, when that sensible sweetness is past and gone, 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 hardship and aridities of the Obscure Night.

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

Impatience
with self or
others
contrary to
humility.

Others, again, when they detect their own imperfections, become angry at themselves with an impatience that is not humble. They are so impatient with their shortcomings that they would be saints in a day. Many of these form many and grand resolutions, but, being self-confident and not humble, the more they resolve, the more they fall, and the more angry at themselves they become. They have not patience enough to wait for God's help; this is also opposed to spiritual meekness. There is no perfect remedy for this but in the Obscure Night. There are, however, some people who are so patient, and who advance so slowly in the desire for spiritual progress, that God wishes they were not so patient.

Saints not
made in a
day.

Festina
lente.

CHAPTER VI.

Of the imperfections of Spiritual Gluttony.

I HAVE much to say of the fourth[?] capital sin, which is Spiritual Gluttony, for there is scarcely one among beginners,

Fifth Imper-
fection,—
Spiritual
Gluttony.

BOOK
I.

however well he may go on, who does not fall into many of the imperfections connected with this sin, in his case, owing to that sensible sweetness which is at first to be found in spiritual exercises.

Folly of exterior, without interior, mortification.

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 conceal their austerities from those whom they are bound to obey, and some even practise them when they are expressly commanded to abstain. These are full of imperfections—unreasonable people, who undervalue submission and obedience, which is the penance of 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 for the sweetness which attends it.

Penance of Reason, Obedience.

Obedience better than Sacrifice.

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

CHAP.
VI.

evil has so grown upon some, that they lose all desire to do their spiritual duties the instant obedience enjoins them; because their sole satisfaction consisted in following their own inclinations, which, in their case, had better, perhaps, have been unattended to.

Many of these importune their spiritual directors to allow them to do what they have set their minds upon: they extort that permission by force, and if it be refused, they mope like children, and become discontented; they think they are not serving God whenever they are thwarted in their wishes. 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 gratify themselves, is to serve and please God.

Folly of self-direction.

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 approbation of the minister and steward of Christ, purely out of their own head; and conceal the fact from their director. This eagerness for Communion makes them confess themselves 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 entreat 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 some chastisement for their rashness.

Self-love in unadvised frequent communion.

These persons, when they communicate, strive with all

BOOK
I.

their might to find some sensible sweetness in the act, instead of worshipping in humility and praising God within themselves. So much are they given up to this, that they think, when they derive no sensible sweetness from Communion, 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 requirements of God, which demand the purest faith.

Invisible
grace better
than sensible
sweetness.

How persons
seek, not
God, but
themselves,
even in
prayer.

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. And therefore, when they once miss their accustomed 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. In short, they are like children who are not influenced by Reason, but by their inclinations. They waste themselves 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

CHAP.
VI.

their part would grow into great evils. For this reason, it is most expedient that they should enter into the Obscure Night, that they may be cleansed from this childishness.

They who are bent on sensible sweetness, labour under another very great imperfection: weakness and remissness on the rugged road of the Cross, for the soul that is given to sweetness naturally sets its face against the pain of self-denial. They labour under many other imperfections also, which have their origin here, of which our Lord will heal them in due time, through temptations, aridities and trials, elements of the Obscure 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 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 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 Obscure Night. And I hasten on with the description of these imperfections, that I may enter on the explanation of it.

Desire for
Spiritual
sweetness
enfeebles the
will.

Way of
Spiritual
sobriety
what?

CHAPTER VII.

Of the imperfections of Envy and Spiritual Sloth.

BEGINNERS are not free from many imperfections in the matter of Envy and Spiritual Sloth. Many of them are wont to experience emotions of displeasure at the contemplation of other men's goodness. They are sensibly afflicted when others outstrip them on the spiritual road; they cannot endure to hear them praised. They are vexed with other men's virtues, and are sometimes unable to restrain themselves from contradiction when they are commended; they

Sixth and
seventh
Imperfections,—
Envy and
Spiritual
Sloth.

BOOK
I.Holy Envy
of Charity.Cause and
effects of
Spiritual
Sloth.Perfection is
to do the
Will of God.

depreciate them as much as they can, and feel acutely because they are not thought so well of themselves, for they wish to be preferred above all others. All this is at variance with that charity of which the apostle 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.

As to Spiritual Sloth, beginners are wont to find their most spiritual occupations irksome, and they avoid them therefore as repugnant to their desire for sensible sweetness, for being addicted to it in spiritual things, they loathe them when this sweetness fails. If they miss but once their accustomed sweetness in prayer—it is expedient that God should deprive them of it at last—they will not resume it; at other times they omit it, or return to it with a bad grace. Thus, under the influence of spiritual sloth they turn aside from the Way of Perfection—which is the denial of their will and pleasure for God—preferring to it the gratification of their own will, which they serve herein rather than the Will of God. Many of these will have it that God should will what they will, and are afflicted when they must will what He wills, and reluctantly submit their own to His Will. The result is that they frequently imagine that what is not according to their will is also not according to the Will of God; and, on the other hand, that what pleases them is also pleasing unto God. They measure Him by themselves, and not themselves by Him, in direct contradiction to the teaching of the Gospel; 'He that shall lose his life for My sake, shall find it.'† That is, he who shall give up his own will for God shall have it, and he who will have it, he shall have it never.

They also find it wearisome to obey when they are com-

* 1 Cor. xiii. 6.

† S. Matth. xvi. 25.

CHAP.
VII.Prayer
sometimes
irksome,—
why.True spiri-
tual joys of
the Cross.Good fruits
of the
Obscure
Night.God alone
can purify
the soul.

manded to do what 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 will walk at their ease, gratifying their will along the spiritual road, to enter on the 'strait way that leadeth unto life,'* is repugnant to their feelings and produces heaviness of heart.

Let this account of the many imperfections 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 Obscure Night. 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 a way most different from their own, makes them grow in virtue. After all our exertions to mortify ourselves in our actions and passions, our success will not be perfect, or even great, until God Himself shall do it for us in the purgation of the Obscure 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 obscure, and a subject so difficult.

CHAPTER VIII.

Explanation of the first line of the first stanza: 'In an Obscure Night.'

'IN an Obscure Night.' This night—I have already said that it is Contemplation—produces in spiritual men two sorts of

* S. Matth. vii. 14.

BOOK
I.Two
Nights,—
1. Of the
Senses.2. Of the
Spirit.First sub-
jects Sense to
reason ;Second
unites
Reason to
God.

darkness or purgations conformable to the two divisions of man's nature into sensitive and spiritual. Thus one night or Sensitive Purgation, wherein the soul is purified or detached, will be of the senses, harmonizing them with the spirit. The other is that night or Spiritual Purgation wherein the soul is purified or detached in the spirit, and which harmonizes and disposes the soul for union with God in love. The sensitive night 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.

Both
painful.

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 in fact, I shall discuss it briefly—for being of ordinary occurrence, it is the matter of many treatises—that I may proceed with the discussion of the spiritual night, of which very little has been said, either by word of mouth or in writing, and of which little is known even by experience.

First more
common
than the
second.The Sensitive
Night,—
how and why
God sends it.

As the conduct of beginners in the way of God is mean, in harmony with their tastes and self-love, and as God wills their advancement, and to draw them out of their mean way of loving Him to the heights of the Divine love; to rescue them from the grovelling work of sense and reflections, where they so scantily and unseemly feel after Him; to elevate them to the practice of spirituality, where they may commune with Him more fully, and in greater freedom from their imperfections—being now experienced in the ways of virtue, persevering in meditation and prayer, through the sweetness of which they have been able to disentangle their affections from the things of this world, and acquired some spiritual strength so as to curb their desires; and being now capable

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VIII.

of bearing their burdens and enduring aridities, without going back to that more pleasant time when their spiritual exercises abounded in delights, and when the sun of Divine favours shone more clearly upon them as they think, God changes that light into darkness, and seals up the door of the fountain of the sweet waters of the Spirit, which they tasted in God as often and as long as 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.'*

Now, at last, God leaves them in darkness so deep that they know not whither to betake themselves with their imaginations and reflections. They cannot now advance a single step with their meditation, as they did before, the inward sense being, as it were, suffocated in that 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 now find nothing but insipidity and bitterness. For now God, 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.

Recollected persons enter the Obscure 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 it is requisite to do even at the commencement of the blessed Night of Sense. In general, there elapses no great length of time after they have begun

Time and
conditions of
entering the
Sensitive
Night.

* Apoc. iii. 8.

BOOK
I.

before they enter the night of sense, and most of them do enter it, because they generally suffer aridities. The Holy Scriptures throughout, but especially in the Psalms and the prophetic books, furnish many illustrations of the night of sense—it is so common; but, to avoid prolixity, I omit them for the present, though in the course of my treatise I shall have occasion to make use of some of them.

CHAPTER IX.

Of the signs by which it may be known that the spiritual man is walking in the way of this Night or Sensitive Purgation.

Three tests to distinguish the Sensitive Night from sin, tepidity, or bodily weakness.

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

1. No desire of, or sweetness in, creatures.

The first is when men find no comfort in the things of God, and none also in created things. For when God leads the soul into the Obscure Night in order to wean it from sweetness and to purge away its sensitive desires, He does not allow it to find sweetness or comfort anywhere. It is then probable, in such a case, that this aridity is not the result of sin 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, be it much or little, in proportion to the affection we regard it with. But still, inasmuch as this absence of pleasure in the things of Heaven and of earth may proceed

CHAP.
IX.

from bodily indisposition or a melancholy temperament, which frequently cause dissatisfaction with all things, the second sign and condition become necessary.

The second sign 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 tepidity; for the peculiarity of tepidity is the absence of great application to, and of interior solicitude for, the things of God. There is, therefore, a great difference between aridity and lukewarmness, for the latter consists in great remissness of the will and resolution, and in the want of all solicitude about serving God; but the 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 constitutional melancholy—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 case, all that it does is to cause disgust and the ruin of the physical constitution, without those desires of serving God which belong to the purgative aridity. In this aridity, though the sensitive 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.

The cause of this aridity is that God transfers to the spirit the goods and energies of the senses, which, having no natural fitness for it, become dry, parched up, and empty; for the sensitive nature of man is not naturally adapted for that which belongs to the spirit simply. Thus the spirit having been tasted, the flesh becomes insipid and remiss; but the

2. Longing anxiety for God.

Difference between aridity and lukewarmness.

Influence of melancholy and physical causes.

Purgative aridity,—how and why produced.

BOOK
I.

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 spiritual palate having been accustomed to sensible sweetness, the eyes of the soul are still fixed upon it. 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 obscure night, it cannot taste of the spiritual good, but rather of aridity and distaste, because it misses that which it enjoyed with so much facility before.

The sensitive
appetite like
the Israelites
in the
Wilderness.

These, whom God begins to lead through the solitudes of the wilderness, resemble the children of Israel, who, though God began to feed them, as soon as they were come into the wilderness, with the manna of heaven, which 'serving every man's will, was turned to what every man liked,'* were more sensible to the loss of the onions and flesh of Egypt—for their taste had been formed to them and had revelled in them—than to the delicious sweetness of the angelical food. So in the midst of the manna 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 melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic.'† Our appetite becomes so depraved that we long for miserable trifles, and loathe the unchangeable good of Heaven.

The will
strengthened
by sensible
aridity.

But when these aridities arise in the purgative way of the sensitive appetite, though the spirit is at first without any sweetness, for the reasons I have given, yet is it conscious of strength and energy to act because of the substantial nature of its interior food, which is the commencement of Contem-

* Wisd. xvi. 21.

† Numb. xi. 5.

CHAP.
IX.

plation, obscure and dry to the senses. This contemplation is in general secret, and unknown to him who is admitted into it. Together with this aridity and emptiness the soul feels a longing for solitude and repose, being unable to fix the thoughts on anything distinctly, or even to desire to do so.

Now, if they who are in this state knew how to be quiet, to disregard every interior and exterior work, the accomplishment of which they labour after, and to be without solicitude about everything but the resignation of themselves into the hands of God, and a loving interior obedience to His voice, they would have, in this tranquillity, a most delicious taste of interior ^{deception} refreshing. This refreshing is so delicate that, in general, it eludes our perceptions if we are in any degree anxious to feel it, for it works in the soul when most tranquil and free, and is like the air which vanishes whenever we shut our hands to grasp it.

Peace found
in humble
resignation.

The words of the Bridegroom which he addressed to the Bride are applicable to this matter: 'Turn away thy eyes from me, for they have made me flee away.'* Such 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. The matter was far otherwise once. The reason is this: God works in the soul, in the State of Contemplation, that is, when it advances from meditation to the state of the proficient, in such a way as to seem to have bound up all the interior faculties, leaving no support in the Intellect, no sweetness in the Will, no reflections in the Memory. Therefore, at this time, all that the soul can do of itself ends only in disturbing the interior peace, and hindering the work which God is carrying on in the spirit amid the dryness of sense. This

* Cant. vi. 4.

peace, being spiritual and delicate, effects a work that is quiet and delicate, pacific and utterly alien to the former delights, which were most palpable and sensible. This is that peace of which the Psalmist spoke when he said, 'God will speak in me, for He will speak peace unto His people.'* This brings us to the third sign.

3. Inability to meditate by Imagination and discursive Reflection.

The third sign we have for ascertaining whether this aridity be the purgation of sense, is an 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 He did formerly, in consecutive reflections, by which we arranged and divided our knowledge, but in pure spirit, which admits not of successive ideas, and in an 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 support or commence any reflections, nor use them ever afterwards.

It is understood here that this embarrassment and aversion of the senses does not arise out of any bodily ailment. When it arises 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 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 it be that they are advancing to perfection. They, however, who are not walking in the Way of Contemplation, meet with a

* Ps. lxxxiv. 9.

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.

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 spiritual way, which is Contemplation. God does not elevate to perfect contemplation everyone that is tried in the spiritual way, and He alone knoweth why. Hence it is that these persons are never wholly weaned from the breasts of meditations and reflections, but only at intervals and at certain seasons.

Not all spiritual persons reach Contemplation.

CHAPTER X.

How they are to conduct themselves who have entered the
Obscure Night.

DURING the aridity of the Night of Sense—when God effects the change of which I have spoken, when He leads the soul out of the way of sense into that of the spirit, from Meditation to Contemplation, where it is helpless so far as its own powers are concerned—spiritual persons have to endure great afflictions, not so much because they are in the state of aridity, but because they are afraid that they have missed the way; thinking that they are spiritually ruined, and that God has forsaken them, only because they find no support 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 object of meditation—they think when they cannot do this, and are not conscious of their labour, that they are doing nothing—but with great dislike and interior unwillingness on the part

Cause of the afflictions of the Sensitive Night,—what.



of the soul, which enjoys its state of quietness and rest. While they change from one condition they make no progress in the other, because, by exerting their own spirit, they lose that spirit which they had in 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 labours are in vain; for they will find nothing, and that because they are turning back to their former habits.

Necessity of right instruction.

Under these circumstances, if they meet with no one who understands their case, 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 they make efforts 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 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 no imagination or reasoning can reach the second.

Confidence in God.

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 obscure night of the spirit, if they shall merit an entrance into it.

Conduct to be observed in the Sensitive Night.—Patience and Perseverance.

The conduct to be observed by spiritual men in the night of sense is this: Let them in nowise have recourse to meditations, for the time is now past, and let them leave their soul in quietness and repose, though they may think they are doing nothing, that they are losing time, and that their tepidity

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 what they shall think or meditate, contenting themselves 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 belonging to their present state.

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 occupation, seeing that in prayer and meditation they are become helpless; yet let them be patient with themselves, and remain quiet, for what they are uneasy about is their own satisfaction and liberty of spirit. If they were now to exert their interior faculties, they would only impede 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 what he may have done will be spoiled. So when the soul interiorly reposes, 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 efforts it makes to acquire support in affection 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 offering no impediment to 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,

CHAP.
X.
The repose
of Love.

God will do
His own
work in the
soul.

BOOK
I.

which this obscure and secret contemplation induces and establishes within it.

Meditation on the Life and Passion of Christ an aid to the highest Contemplation.

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 support 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 the secret, pacific, and loving infusion of God, which, if it be admitted, will set the soul on fire with the spirit of love, as I shall show in the explanation of the following verse.

Contemplation an infusion of God.

CHAPTER XI.

STANZA I.

With anxious love inflamed.

Second line of first stanza,— Earnest longing for God.

THE burning fire of love, in general, is not felt at first, for it has not begun to burn, either because of our natural want of purity, or because the soul, not understanding its own state, has not given it a peaceful rest within itself. Sometimes, however, whether that be the case or not, a certain anxiety about God arises; and the more it grows, the more the soul feels itself touched and inflamed with the love of God, without knowing how or whence that feeling arises, except that at times this burning so inflames it that it longs earnestly after God. David in this night said of himself, 'My heart hath been inflamed, and my reins have been changed, and I am brought to nothing, and I knew not.*' That is, 'my heart hath been

* Ps. lxxii. 21, 22.

inflamed' in the love of contemplation; 'my reins,' that is, my tastes and affections also, have been changed from the sensitive to the spiritual way by this holy dryness, and in my cessation from them all, 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.

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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. Such, also, was the feeling of David when he said, 'My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God.*' It is as if he had said, my thirst is a strong living thirst. We may say of this thirst, that being a living thirst, it kills. Though this thirst is not continuously, but only occasionally, violent, nevertheless it is always felt in some degree.

Martyrdom of Divine love.

I commenced by observing that this love, in general, is not felt at first, but only the aridity and emptiness of which I am speaking; and then, instead of love, which is afterwards enkindled, what the soul feels amidst its aridities and the emptiness of its faculties is a general painful anxiety about God, and a certain misgiving that it is not serving Him. But a soul anxious and afflicted for His sake, is a sacrifice pleasing unto God. Secret contemplation keeps the soul in this state of anxiety, until, in the course of time, having purged the sensitive 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

Love not felt at first, but after suffering.

* Ps. xli. 3.

BOOK
I.

do, in the obscure night and dry purgation of the desire, is to suffer, healing its many imperfections and practising many virtues, that it may become meet for this Divine love, of which I speak while explaining the following line:

Third line,—
'O happy
lot!'

O happy lot!

When God establishes the soul in the obscure night, that He may purify, prepare, and subdue its inferior 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 God—the soul acquires such great advantages, though it seems not so, that it looks upon it as great happiness to have escaped from the bondage of the senses in that happy night, and therefore it sings—'O happy lot!'

Fourth line,
—The escape
from the
Sensitive
Appetite.

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.'

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, limited, and fitful ways, for such are the ways of man's sensitive 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 obscure 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 towards the acquirement of virtue. 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

to all affections and operations of the soul, from all created things, in this obscure 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 at 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!'

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XI.
Happiness of
leaving the
creature for
the Creator.

The narrow gate is the night of sense. The soul detaches itself from sense that it may enter into that night, 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 the Divine union. This road, because so strait, dark, and terrible—for there is no comparison 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 proceed now to speak with the utmost brevity of the blessings of the night of sense, that I may pass on to the other.



CHAPTER XII.

Of the benefits of the Night of Sense.

THIS night and purgation of the appetite is full of happiness to the soul, involving grand benefits, though it seems 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 milk of the breast and the delicate food of children, and gives it bread with the crust to eat; when He makes it eat the bread of the strong, which is presented, in the aridities and darkness

Joy at the
weaning of
the soul from
the goods of
the Sensitive
Appetite.

Ⓢ S. Matt. vii. 14.

Ⓜ Gen. xxi. 8.

BOOK
I.Benefits of
the Night of
Sense.

1. Infused Contemplation.
2. Knowledge of our own vileness.

of sense, to the spirit emptied and dried of all sensible sweetness; namely, the bread of infused Contemplation. This is the first and principal benefit, and from which almost all the others flow.

Of these, the first is a knowledge of our own selves and our own vileness. For over and above that this knowledge ordinarily includes those favours which God bestows on the soul, 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, willing to humble the people 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, 'Lay aside thy ornaments;' that is, lay aside thy holiday garments, and put on thy common vestments, that thou mayest know what treatment thou hast deserved. 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.'

Here the soul learns the reality of its own misery, which before it knew not. For in the day of its festivity, 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 explicitly say so, yet, on account of the satisfaction it feels, some such feeling still clings to it. But when it has put on the garments of heaviness, of aridity and abandonment, when its previous lights have become darkness, it will then possess in reality that excellent and necessary virtue of self-knowledge, counting

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itself for nothing, and having no satisfaction in itself, because it sees that of itself it does and can do nothing. 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 then many imperfections and ignorances clung to it; but now in the garb of aridity, it derives not only those fruits of which I am speaking, but others also of which I shall presently speak, and much more than I can speak of, as from their proper source and fount of self-knowledge.

In the next place, the soul learns to commune with God with more reverence and gentleness; and this is always necessary while it converses with the Most High. Now, in its prosperous days of sweetness and consolation, the soul was less observant of reverence, for the favours, of which it was then the object, rendered the appetite somewhat bold with God, and less reverential 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 ventured, without further consideration, to draw near, till God commanded him to stop, 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 refrain from advancing, 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 meanness in the sight of God, for such a state of mind became him when about to listen to the Divine words.

The temper of mind to which Job was brought in order

* Exod. iii. 5.

† Ib. 6.

3. Reverence
for God.Example of
Moses.

BOOK
I.
Example of
Job.

that he might converse with God, was not that of delight and grandeur, such as he had before. God left him in misery, naked on a dung-hill, persecuted by his friends, filled with sorrow and grief, covered with worms:* then it was that the Most High, Who lifteth up 'the poor out of the dunghill,'† 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.

4. Spiritual
Illumination.

And now that I am on this subject, I must here point out another great benefit of the Obscure Night and aridity of the sensitive appetite. It is this: God, verifying the words of the Prophet, 'Then My light shall rise up in darkness,'§ enlightens the soul, so that it shall confess, not only its own misery and meanness, but also His Grandeur and Majesty. Not only does the extinction of desires, and the suppression of sensible joy and consolation, purify the intellect for the reception of the truth—for sensible joys and desires even of spiritual things obscure and perplex the mind—but the trials and aridities of sense also enlighten and quicken the intellect; as it is written, 'Vexation alone shall make you understand what you hear.'|| 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 influence—in a supernatural way, in the obscure and arid night of contemplation, which He could not do before, when it was given up to its former sweetnesses and joys.

The Prophet sets this truth before us with great clearness, saying, 'Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand the hearing? Them that are weaned from the milk, that are drawn away from the breasts.'¶ The

* Job ii. 8; xxx. 17, 18.
§ Is. lviii. 10.

† Ps. cxii. 7.
|| Is. xxviii. 19.

‡ Job xxxviii.
¶ Ib. 9.

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temper of mind, then, meet for the Divine influence is not so much the milk of spiritual sweetness, nor the breasts of sweet reflections in the sensitive powers, such as the soul once enjoyed, as the absence of both the one and the other. And 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. We must be like the Prophet, who said of himself, 'I will stand upon my watch, and fix my foot upon the tower, and I will watch to see what will be said to me.'* To stand upon the watch, is to cast off all desires; to fix the foot, is to cease from all reflections of sense, that we may behold and understand what God will speak to us. Thus out of this obscure night springs first the knowledge of oneself, and on that, as on a foundation, is built up the knowledge of God. 'Let me know myself,' saith S. Augustine, 'and I shall then know Thee, O my God,' for, as Philosophers say, one extreme is known by another.

* Noverim me
Domine et
cognoscam
Te.

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 the words of the Psalmist, which so clearly describe the power of this night in bringing men to the knowledge of God: 'In a desert land, and where there is no way, and no water; so in the sanctuary have I come before Thee, to see Thy power and Thy glory.'† The Psalmist does not say—and it is worthy of observation—that his previous sweetness and delight were any dispositions meet for the knowledge of the glory of God, but rather that aridity and weaning from the sensitive faculties, which are here meant by the 'barren land.' Neither does he say that his reflections and meditations on Divine things, with which he was once familiar, had led him to the knowledge

* Habac. ii. 1.

† Ps. lxii. 3.

BOOK
I.

and contemplation of God's power, but, rather, his inability to meditate on God, to form reflections by the help of his imagination, which he describes by a 'land where there is no way.' The means, therefore, of attaining to the knowledge of God, and of ourselves, is the Obscure Night with all its aridities and emptiness; though not in the fulness of the other night of the spirit; for this knowledge is, as it were, the beginning of the other.

5. Humility.

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, spiritual pride. The humility acquired by self-knowledge purifies the soul from all the imperfections into which we fell in the day of our prosperity. For now, seeing ourselves so dried up and miserable, it does not enter into our thoughts, even for a moment, to consider ourselves better than others, or that we have outstripped them on the spiritual road, as we did before; on the contrary, we acknowledge that others are better than we are. Out of this grows the love of our neighbours, for we now esteem them, and no longer judge them as we used to do, when we looked upon ourselves as exceedingly fervent, and upon others as not. Now we see nothing but our own misery, which we keep so constantly before our eyes that we can look upon nothing else. This state is admirably described by David himself in this obscure 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 prevail upon himself to speak of it; and he was silent as to the good of others, because of the pain he felt in the knowledge of his own wretchedness.

6. Love of our
neighbours.

7. Docility.

In this state, too, men are submissive and obedient in the

* Ps. xxxviii. 3.

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XII.

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

CHAPTER XIII.

Of other benefits of the Night of Sense.

THE imperfections of spiritual avarice, under the influence of which the soul coveted all spiritual goods, and was never satisfied in the practices of devotion, because of its eagerness for the sweetness it found therein, become now, in this arid and obscure night, sufficiently corrected. For when the spiritual man finds no more sweetness and delight, as he was wont to do, in spiritual things, but rather bitterness and vexation, he has recourse to them with such moderation that he loses now, perhaps, through defect, what he lost before through excess. Though, in general, to those who are come 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 more sweetness in them.

8. Liberty of
spirit.

The soul is purified, also, from those impurities of spiritual luxury of which I have spoken before, in this aridity and loathing of the senses which it now finds in spiritual things; for those impurities proceed, in general, from the sweetness which flowed occasionally from the spirit into the sense.

9. Spiritual
Purity.

The imperfections of spiritual gluttony, from which the soul is delivered in the obscure night, have been discussed in

BOOK
I.
10. Spiritual
Temperance.

a former chapter,* though not all, because they cannot be numbered. I shall not enumerate 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. Suffice it, then, to say, that the soul, in addition to the benefits already mentioned, gains, in this night, innumerable others, in its resistance to spiritual gluttony. It is set free from those imperfections there enumerated, and from many other evils greater than those described, into which too many fall, as we learn by experience, because they have not corrected their desires in the matter of spiritual gluttony. For when God, in this arid and obscure night, so curbs the desire and bridles concupiscence that the soul can scarcely feed at all upon the sensible sweetness of heavenly or of earthly things—and this so continuously that the soul corrects, mortifies, and controls its concupiscence and desires, so that the very forces of its passions seem to be broken down—marvellous benefits flow forth from that spiritual temperance, in addition to those I have mentioned; for, through mortifying concupiscence and the desires, the soul dwells in spiritual tranquillity and peace; because, where concupiscence and desire have no sway, there is no trouble, but, rather, the peace and consolations of God.

11. Holy fear
of God.

Another benefit is this, a perpetual recollection of God, with fear lest we should be going back on the spiritual way. This is a great benefit, and not the least, of aridity and the purgation of the appetite, for the soul is cleansed thereby from those imperfections which disfigured it through the affections and desires, the effect of which is to obscure and deaden the soul.

12. Patience,
Love, and
Peace.

Another great benefit of this night is, the practice of many virtues at once; such as patience and longsuffering, which are

* Chap. vi.

CHAP.
XIII.

well tried in these aridities, when men persevere in their spiritual exercises without sweetness or comfort. The love of God is practised, because men are no longer attracted by sweetness and consolation, but by God only. The virtue of fortitude also is practised, because amid the hardships, and the absence of sweetness, which the soul now endures, it gathers strength from weakness, and so becomes strong: finally, all the virtues, cardinal, theological, and moral, are practised amidst these aridities.

David tells us from his own experience that the soul gains these four benefits in this obscure night, namely, delight of peace, constant recollection of God, pureness of soul, and the practice of all virtues. 'My soul,' saith he, 'refused to be comforted; I remembered God and was delighted, and was exercised, and my spirit swooned away.' He adds also: 'I meditated in the night with my own heart, and I was exercised, and I swept my spirit'* clean of all affections.

The soul is purified also in this aridity of the desires from the imperfections of envy, anger, and sloth, and 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 neighbours. It is no longer impatiently angry with itself because of its own faults, nor with its neighbours for theirs; neither does it avoid with a kind of dislike the things of God, nor utter unseemly complaints because He does not perfect His work at once. As to envy, the soul is now charitably disposed towards everyone, and if any remain, it is no longer vicious as before, when the soul was afflicted at the preference shown to others, or at their greater progress; 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.

13. Gentle-
ness with
God, self, and
others.

14. Holy
Emulation.

* Ps. lxxvi. 3, 4, 7.

BOOK
I.15. Fortitude
amid aridi-
ties.

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 appetite.

Other innumerable benefits flow from this arid contemplation; for, in the midst of these aridities and hardships, 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.

16. Twelve
Fruits of the
Holy Ghost.

Finally, inasmuch as the soul is purified of all affections and sensitive desires, it attains to liberty of spirit, wherein it acquires the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost. 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 sensible delight and sweetness are quenched, the devil, the world, and the flesh have no weapons wherewith to assail it.

These aridities, then, make the soul love God in all pureness, for now its operations depend no longer upon the pleasure and sweetness which it found in its works—as perhaps was the case when that sweetness was present—but only in the desire it has to please God. The soul is not now presumptuous and self-satisfied, as perhaps it may have been in the day of its prosperity, but timid and diffident of self, deriving no satisfaction whatever from self-contemplation. Herein consists that holy fear by which virtues are preserved and grow. This aridity quenches concupiscence, and subdues our natural spirits; 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 any comfort or sweetness in any spiritual act or practice.

The fear of God and anxiety for His service increase in this arid night; for as the breasts of sensuality, which nourished and sustained the desires that clung to them, become dry, nothing remains in that aridity and detachment but an anxious desire to serve Him, which is most pleasing unto God, as it is written: 'a sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit.*'

When the soul beholds the many and great benefits which have fallen to its lot in this arid purgation 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 sensitive desires and affections, unobserved, so that none of my three enemies were able to hinder me. These enemies of the soul so bind and imprison it, that it cannot go forth out of itself to the liberty of the perfect love of God, by the help of its tastes and desires; without which they can do nothing against it.

And, therefore, when the four passions of the soul, joy and grief, hope and fear, are subdued by persevering mortifications, when the natural sensitive appetite is lulled by continual aridities, when the concert of the senses is silent, and when the interior powers have ceased from discursive reflections—this is the household of man's lower nature—these enemies cannot hinder the spiritual liberty of the soul, and the house thereof remains tranquil and at rest.

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,

* Ps. l. 19.

CHAP.
XIII.17. Anxious
desire for the
service of
God.Last benefit,
—Deliver-
ance from the
World, the
Flesh, and
the Devil.

BOOK
I.

concupiscence quenched, the desires subdued and lulled to sleep in the blessed night of sensitive purgation, the soul began to set out on the way of the spirit, the way of proficients, which is also called the Illuminative Way, or the way of infused contemplation, wherein God Himself nourishes and refreshes the soul without the help of any active efforts that itself may make. Such as I have said is this night and purgation of the senses.

Trials of the
Night of
sense.

But this night, in their case, who are to enter into that other more awful night of the spirit, that they may go forwards 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, but 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 afflict 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.

1. The sting
of the flesh.

This night is also occasionally attended by the spirit of blasphemy; the thoughts and conceptions are overrun with intolerable blasphemies, and, at times, suggested to the imagination with such violence as almost to break forth in words; this, too, is a heavy affliction.

2. The spirit
of blas-
phemy.

Again, another spirit, called by the Prophet, 'the spirit of giddiness,'* is sent to torment them. This spirit so obscures their judgment that they are filled with a thousand scruples and perplexities; 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 horrors of this night, most like to that which passes in the night of the spirit.

3. The spirit
of giddiness.

* Is. xix. 14.

God ordinarily sends these violent storms and temptations, in the night of sensitive purgation, upon 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 habituate 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, exercised, and tried, in temptations and afflictions, the senses thereof will never attain to wisdom. '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 the most effectual for purging the sensitive nature from all sweetness and consolations, to which, by reason of our natural infirmities, we are addicted, and most capable of really humbling the soul that it may be prepared for its coming exaltation.

CHAP.
XIV.

The soul
purified for
the Divine
Union by
suffering.

But how long the soul will continue in this fast and penance of sense no one can with certainty tell. It is not the same in all men, neither are all men subjected to the same temptations. These trials are measured by the Divine will, and are proportioned to the imperfections, many or few, which are to be purged away: and also to the degree of union in love to which God intends to elevate a particular soul; that is the measure of its humiliations, both in their intensity and duration.

Duration and
intensity of
trials deter-
mined by
God;

Those who are endowed with the capacity for suffering, and who have force sufficient to endure, are purified in more intense trials, and in less time. But those who are weak are

And pro-
portioned to
strength of
the soul.

* Ecclus. xxxiv. 9, 10, 11.

† Jerem. xxxi. 18.

BOOK
I.

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 onward 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.

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 go forwards to so blessed and exalted 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,

O Domine,
pati et
contemni
pro Te!

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. It must spend some time, perhaps years, after quitting the state of beginners, in exercising itself in the state of proficient. In this state—like a man 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 ever experienced in the beginning before it entered the sensitive night; its imagination and faculties being no longer tied down, as hitherto, to spiritual thoughts and reflections, it now rises at once to most tranquil and loving contemplation, and finds spiritual sweetness without the fatigue of meditation. But 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 mutual connection between our higher and lower nature, man being an individual, the purgation of sense, however violent it may have been, is not finished and perfect—it will never be without some 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

CHAP.
I.

Description
of a soul
which has
passed
through the
Sensitive
Night.

BOOK
I.

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CHAP.
I.
Description
of a soul
which has
passed
through the
Sensitive
Night.

spirit, though not so lasting as that 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 whom He does not raise 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 occasionally, 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 obscure contemplation are, however, never so intense as is that awful night of contemplation of which I am speaking, and into which God purposely leads the soul, that He may elevate it to the Divine union.

That sweetness and interior delight, which the proficient 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 sensitive purgation. And as the senses are now more pure, they can taste of the sweetness of the spirit in their way with greater facility; but since the sensitive part of the soul is weak, without any capacity for the strong things of the spirit, they who are in the state of proficient are liable, by reason of the spiritual communications which reach to the sensitive part, to great infirmities and sufferings, and physical derangements, and consequently weariness of mind, as it is written: 'the corruptible body . . . presseth 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 sensitive part which has a share in them.

Here is the source of ecstasies, raptures, and dislocation of the bones which always happen whenever these communica-

Cause of
ecstasies,—
what.

* Ps. cxlvii. 17.

† Wisd. ix. 15.

tions 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 them 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 proficient to enter into the night of the spirit, I will now proceed to point out certain imperfections and dangers to which they are liable.

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 like removing a fresh, and an old, stain. For, as I have said, the purgation of sense is merely the gate and entrance of contemplation, and serves rather to harmonise sense and spirit than to unite the latter with God. The stains of the old man still remain in the mind, though not visible, and if they be not removed by the strong soap and lye of the purgation of this night, the mind cannot attain to the pureness of the Divine union.

They suffer also from a certain dulness of mind, and natural rudeness which every man contracts by sin; a 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 proficient are subject to these habitual imperfections, which

Habitual
imperfec-
tions of
Proficients.
1. Roots of
sin.

2. Dulness
of mind.



BOOK.
II.

cannot coexist with the perfect State of Union with God in love.

Actual im-
perfections of
Proficients.

But all are not subject to actual imperfections in the same way; some, whose spiritual goods are so much on the surface, and so much under the influence of sense, fall into certain improprieties and dangers, of which I spoke in the beginning. For as they admit into their minds and senses so many communications, so that they have frequent imaginary and spiritual visions—for this happens together with other spiritual impressions to many of them in this state, wherein the devil and their own proper fancy delude the soul—and as Satan is wont with so much sweetness to insinuate, and impress such things upon them, 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 with all their might against these visions and impressions. For now the devil causes them both to believe in 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.

1. Self-
deception.

2. Pride and
presumption.

Now, too, Satan fills them with pride and presumption; under the influence of vanity and arrogance they make a show of themselves in the performance of exterior acts which have an appearance of sanctity, such as ecstasies and other phenomena. They become bold with God, losing holy fear, which is the key and guard of all virtue. Many of them become so entangled in manifold delusions, and so inveterate have their falsehoods grown, that their restoration to the pure road of virtue and real spirituality is exceedingly doubtful. They fall into this miserable condition because, too confident in themselves, they gave way to these spiritual apprehensions and impressions when they began to advance on the road of spirituality.

I have much to say of these imperfections, and how much

more incurable they are than the others, because they are considered as more spiritual than those which preceded them, but I shall pass on. One thing, however, I must say, to show how necessary for the further advancement of the soul the Spiritual Night is, that there is no one 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. Besides, and I have said it before, inasmuch as the spiritual communications reach also to the lower part of the soul, they cannot be as intense, pure, and strong, as it is necessary they should be for the purpose of the Divine union; 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 these apprehensions—these communications will guide it on the road of obscure and pure faith, 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.

CHAP.
II.
Necessity of
the Spiritual
Night for
Perfection.



CHAPTER III.

Introduction.

PROFICIENTS, then, have had experience of these sweet communications, in order that the sensitive part of the soul, allured and attracted by the spiritual sweetness overflowing into the senses, may be harmonised and united with the spiritual part; both parts having to eat of the same spiritual food, each in its own way, off the same dish of their one individuality, that they might be prepared, united and conformed, for the sufferings of the sharp and rough purgation of the spirit which is

True
Spiritual
sweetness
harmonizes
sense with
spirit, and
gives courage
to the will.

* Os. ii. 20.

BOOK
II.

The Sen-
sitive Night
a re-forma-
tion of the
appetite.

The Spiritual
Night a
purgation of
sense and
spirit
together.

Necessity of
Courage.

before them. In that purgation the two parts of the soul, the spiritual and the sensitive, 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. Hence it follows that the night of sense may and should be called a certain re-formation and bridling of the appetite rather than purgation, because all the imperfections and disorders of the sensitive part having their strength and 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 the 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, united together in spirit, they 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 inferior part be not redressed, and if it have acquired no courage in God, in the sweet communions with Him subsequently enjoyed, nature would have given way, unprepared for the trials of this night.

The intercourse of proficients with God is still most mean, because the gold of the spirit is not purified and refined. They think 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 yet reached Perfection, which is Union with God in love. But in the state of perfection, 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

^{*} 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

putting on 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.'[†] He now denudes the faculties, the affections, and feelings, spiritual and sensitive, interior and exterior, leaving the intellect obscure, the will dry, the memory empty, the affections of the soul in profoundest affliction, bitterness, and distress—withholding from the soul the former sweetness it had in spiritual things, that this privation may be one of the principles, of which the mind has need, in order that the spiritual form of the spirit, which is the union of love, may enter into it and be one with it.

All this our Lord effects in the soul by means of this pure and obscure contemplation, as it is described in the first stanza. True, I have explained that in the beginning of my work, on the night of sense, yet its chief signification belongs to 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.

CHAPTER IV.

The first stanza spiritually explained.

*In an Obscure 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 poverty, unsupported by any apprehensions, in the obscurity of the intellect, in the conflict of the will, in the affliction and distress of memory, lost in the obscurity in pure faith,

^{*} Ephes. iv. 24.

[†] Rom. xii. 2.

CHAP.
III.
Means of
the final
purification
of the soul.

Paraphrase
of the first
stanza
according
to the second
Night.

BOOK
II.

which is the Obscure Night of all the natural faculties, the will alone touched by grief and affliction, by the anxieties of my 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.

Transformation of Memory, Intellect and Will in the Night of the Spirit.

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 intercourse and operations of my own to those of God; that is, my intellect 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.

My will went forth out of itself transformed into the Divine will, 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 no more in the things of God in a human way, and the memory also is transformed into the 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.

CHAPTER V.

Obscure Contemplation is not a night only, but pain and torment also for the soul.

In an Obscure Night.

Night of the Spirit,—its definition.

THIS Obscure 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

CHAP.
V.

The Will passive save to consent and attend.

teaches the soul and instructs it in the perfection of love, without efforts on its own part beyond loving attention to God, listening to His voice and admitting the light He sends, without understanding how this is infused contemplation. It is the loving Wisdom of God that produces special effects in the soul, for it prepares it, by enlightening it for union with God in love: that loving Wisdom, which by enlightening purifies the blessed spirits, is that which here purifies and enlightens the soul.

But it may be said: Why do we call the Divine Light, which enlightens the soul and purges it of its ignorances, the Obscure 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 obscure also.

Why is the Divine Illumination called Night?

To prove the truth of the first reason we assume a principle of Philosophy, namely, the more clear and self-evident Divine things are, the more obscure 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 greater the darkness of our visual organs; for the sun, in its own strength shining, overcomes them, by reason of their weakness, and deprives them of the power of seeing. So when the Divine light of contemplation shines into the soul, not yet perfectly enlightened, it causes spiritual darkness, because it not only surpasses its strength, but because it obscures it and deprives it of its natural perceptions.

Answer.
1. It is dark to imperfect faculties from excess of light.

It is for this reason that S. Dionysius and other Mystic Theologians call infused contemplation a ray of darkness, that is, for the unenlightened and unpurified soul, because the great supernatural light of contemplation overcomes the

S. Dionysius.

forces of the natural intellect and deprives it of its natural way of understanding. David also hath said the same thing: '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 obscure and blind, unable to ascend so high. And in another place the same truth is declared: 'At the brightness that was before Him the clouds passed'[†] 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 obscure darkness in the intellect.

2. It is painful from the meeting of contraries.

This obscure 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 coexist 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 effected by contemplation. I shall show this to be the case by the following induction.

First pain.—Darkness of Self revealed in the Light of God.

In the first place, because the light and wisdom of contemplation is most pure and clear, and because the soul, within which it shines, is impure and dark, that soul which is the recipient must greatly suffer. Eyes afflicted by humours suffer pain when the clear light shines upon them; and the pain of the soul, by reason of its impurity, is immense when the Divine light 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

^{*} Ps. xcvi. 2.

[†] Ib. xvii. 13.

were set against God. So grievous and painful is this feeling—for the soul feels as if God had abandoned it—that it was one of the heaviest afflictions of Job when he was in his trial. 'Why hast Thou set me opposite to Thee, and I am become burdensome to myself?'^{*} The soul sees distinctly in this clear and pure light, though obscurely, its own impurity, and acknowledges its own unworthiness before God and all creatures. And what pains it still more is the fear it has that it will never cease to be unworthy, and that all its goodness is gone. This is the fruit of that profound depression, under which the mind labours, in the knowledge and sense of its own wickedness and misery. For now the Divine and obscure light reveals to it all its wretchedness, and it sees clearly that of itself it can never be otherwise. To the same effect are the following words of the Psalmist: 'For iniquities Thou hast chastised man, and Thou hast made his soul pine away as a spider.'[†]

CHAP.
V.
Examples of
Job and
David.

In the second place, the pain of the soul has its sources in its natural and spiritual weakness; for when the Divine contemplation flows within 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 those times when the Divine contemplation seizes upon it with a greater degree of vehemence; for sense and spirit, as if bowed down by a heavy and dark burden, suffer and groan in agony so great that death itself would be a relief. This was the experience of Job when he cried, 'I will not that He contend with me with much strength, nor that He oppress me with the weight of His greatness.'[‡] The soul bowed down by this burden of oppression feels itself so removed out of God's favour that it thinks—and it is so in truth—that all things which consoled it formerly have utterly failed it, and that no

Second pain.—Weakness of self felt, under the strength of God.

^{*} Job vii. 20.

[†] Ps. xxxviii. 12.

[‡] Job xxiii. 6.

BOOK
II.

To the weak
soul the
gentle hand
of God feels
heavy.

one is left to pity it. Job, in like circumstances, has said, 'Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, at least you my friends, because the hand of the 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 felt to be so heavy and oppressive, though neither pressing nor resting on it, but merely touching it, and that, too, in mercy; for He touches the soul not to chastise it, but to load it with His graces.

CHAPTER VI.

Of other sufferings of the soul in this night.

Third pain,
—Loss of God
felt in
conscious un-
worthiness.

THE third suffering and affliction of the soul is the consequence of the meeting of the two extremes together — the human and the Divine: the latter being the purgative contemplation; the human, being the soul itself. When the Divine touches the soul to renew it and to ripen it, so as to make it Divine, to detach it from its habitual affections and qualities of the old man, to which it clings and adheres most closely, it so breaks and bruises it, swallowing it up in profound darkness, that the soul seems to perish and waste away, at the sight of its own wretchedness, by a cruel spiritual death. It feels 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 this obscure death that it may attain to the spiritual resurrection for which it hopes. David describes the nature of this pain and suffering — though it really baffles description — saying, 'The sorrows of death surrounded me . . . the sorrows

Death before
the new life.

* Job xix. 21.

CHAP.
VI.

of hell encompassed me. . . . In my affliction I called upon the Lord, and I cried to my God.*

But the greatest affliction of the 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. This belief in its own abandonment is a most grievous and pitiable affliction. David experienced the same trials when he said, 'Like the slain sleeping in the sepulchres, of whom Thou art mindful no more; and they are cast off from Thy hand. They have laid me in the lower pit, in the dark places, and in the shadow of death. Thy wrath is strong over me; and all Thy waves Thou hast brought in upon me.† For, in truth, when the soul is in the pangs of purgative contemplation, the shadow of death and the pains of hell are most acutely felt, for these consist in the sense of its being without God, that He has abandoned it in His wrath and has cast it down beneath the burden of His heavy displeasure. All this and even more the soul feels, 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.‡

The soul
feels aban-
doned by
God and
man.

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 deep, in the heart of the sea, and a flood hath compassed me: all Thy billows and Thy waves have passed over me. And I said, I am cast away out of the sight of Thine eyes: but yet I shall see Thy holy 'emple again,'—this is the purgation of the soul that it may

* Ps. xvii. 5, 6, 7.

† Ib. lxxxvii. 6, 7, 8.

‡ Ib. 9.

see God—'the waters have compassed me about even to the soul, the deep hath enclosed me, the sea hath covered my head. I went down to the lowest parts of the mountains: the bars of the earth have shut me up for ever.'* The bars of the earth are the imperfections of the soul which prevent it from the enjoyment of this sweet contemplation.

Fourth
pain,—
Emptiness of
self felt in
the fulness of
God.

The fourth kind of pain is caused by another excellence peculiar to this Obscure Contemplation, the sense of God's Majesty and Greatness. This makes the soul conscious of the other extreme, its own poverty and misery; and this is one of the chief sufferings of this purgation. The soul is made conscious of a profound emptiness, and an utter 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, its faculties devoid of all apprehensions, and the spirit abandoned in darkness. And, inasmuch as God is now purifying it in its sensitive and spiritual substance, in its interior and exterior powers, it is necessary for it that it should become empty, poor and abandoned, arid, destitute and obscured. For the sensitive part is purified in aridities, the faculties in the absence of all apprehensions, and the spirit in the obscure darkness.

Now God effects this by means of Obscure Contemplation, wherein the soul not only suffers from the absence and suspension of all natural support and apprehensions, which is a most painful trial—like a person held by the throat and suffocated—but all its affections, and the imperfect habits contracted in the world, are also purged away, annihilated, emptied out of it, or consumed within it, as the rust and mould of metal is burnt away in the fire. But as these things are most deeply rooted in the soul, the sufferings and

* Jon. ii. 4—7.

interior trials which it has to endure are heavy, and in addition to the destitution and emptiness, natural and spiritual, of which I have spoken. The words of the Prophet are now fulfilled:—'Heap together the bones which I will burn with fire: the flesh shall be consumed, and the whole mixture shall be sodden, and the bones shall dry away.'* This describes the pain which the soul suffers in the sensitive and spiritual parts when it is in this state of emptiness and poverty. And so the Prophet proceeds, saying: 'Set it also empty upon hot burning coals, 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.'†

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. And therefore the soul, 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 consumed away in its innermost substance in this absolute poverty wherein it is as it were lost. This truth is clearly taught us by the Psalmist, saying: 'Save me, O God, for the waters are come in even unto my soul. I stick fast in the deep mire; and there is no sure standing. I am come into the depth of the sea: and a tempest hath overwhelmed me. I am weary of crying, my jaws are made hoarse, my eyes have failed, whilst I hope in my God.'§

Here God is humbling the soul that He may exalt it 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

* Ezech. xxiv. 10.

† Wisd. iii. 6.

‡ Ib. xxiv. 11.

§ Ps. lxxviii. 2—4.

BOOK
II.
Purgatory in
this life.

only at intervals in their greatest violence. They are occasionally so acute, that the soul seems to see hell and perdition open before it. They who are in this state, are those 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 he who passes through this state in the present life, and is purified, either enters not into Purgatory, or is detained there but a moment, for one hour here is more than many there.

CHAPTER VII.

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

THE afflictions of the will, and its trials here are also immense; they occasionally pierce the soul with a sudden recollection of the evils that environ it, and of the uncertainty of any relief. To this is superadded the memory of past happiness; for souls of this kind, when they enter into 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. This was the experience of Job also; for he said: '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 my bowels on the earth. He hath torn me with wound upon wound; He hath rushed in upon me like 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

Fifth pain,—
the memory
of past
happiness.

* Job xvi. 13—17.

are the torments of this night, and so many are the illustrations of them furnished by the Holy Writings, that time and strength would fail me were I to attempt to enumerate them. For beyond all doubt, all that can be said of them will fall short, and the illustrations before us will enable us to form some conjecture as to the others.

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 here what the Prophet Jeremias has said of it: 'I am the man that see my poverty in the rod of His indignation. He hath led and brought me into darkness, and not into light. Only against me He hath turned again and again His hand all the day. He hath made my skin and my flesh old; He hath broken my bones. He hath built round about me, and He hath compassed me with gall and hardship. In dark places He hath placed me as the everlasting dead. He hath built round about against me, that I go not forth. He hath made my fetters heavy. Yea, and when I cry and ask, He shutteth out my prayer. He hath shut up my ways with square stones. He hath made my paths crooked. He is become to me as a bear lying in wait; as a lion in secret places. He hath turned aside 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 into my reins the daughters of His quiver. I am made a laughing-stock to all my people, their song all the day. He hath filled me with bitterness, He hath inebriated me with wormwood. And He hath broken my teeth one by one; He hath fed me with ashes. And my soul is repelled from peace; I have forgotten good things. And I said: My end and my hope is perished from the Lord. Remember my poverty and transgression, the wormwood and the gall. I am mindful and remember; and my soul languisheth within me.'*

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VII.

Lamentation
of the
Prophet
Jeremias.

* Lament. iii. 1—20.

BOOK
II.

The suffering
soul worthy
of com-
passion.

These lamentations of the Prophet, which so vividly depict the sufferings of the soul, refer to those trials and afflictions 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 in store, and of which this night is the source—since God will raise up good things for it out of this darkness, and bring light over the shadow of death, as it is written: ‘He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth up to light the shadow of death;’* so that His light shall be as extensive as the darkness that is past; ‘the darkness thereof and the light thereof are alike,’† —nevertheless, on account of the immense sufferings it endures, and the great uncertainty of any relief—for it imagines that its calamities will never come to an end, God having made it to ‘dwell in darkness as those that have been dead of old,’ the spirit is in anguish within it, and ‘the heart within’ it ‘is troubled’—its condition is one of deep suffering, and greatly to be pitied.

It derives no
relief from
spiritual
advice.

Besides, the soul derives now no consolation from the advice that may be given it, or from its spiritual director, because of the loneliness and desolation which overwhelm it in this obscure night. Though its confessor may set before it in many ways the grounds of comfort which are to be had in the blessings which these its sufferings imply, yet the soul will not believe him. For being absorbed in the sense of the evils that environ it, and seeing clearly its own misery, it imagines that its spiritual director, not seeing what itself sees and feels, speaks as he does without comprehending its case. It is pained anew instead of being comforted, for it considers that his counsel is no remedy of the evil it suffers from, which is most true; for no relief, no remedy is possible for that pain

* Job xii. 22.

† Ps. cxxxviii. 12.

—this the more so, inasmuch as the soul is powerless here, like a prisoner in his dark cell bound hand and foot, unable to move or see, and shut out from all help whatever—until our Lord shall have accomplished the purgation of the soul in His own way; 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.

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 obscure 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, when they are most purely spiritual, that when trials return, the soul thinks they will never end, and that all its goodness has 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.’*

The reason of this is that the actual enjoyment of one thing in the mind is inconsistent with the enjoyment of its con-

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VII.
God the only
consolation.

Duration and
intermission
of spiritual
sufferings.

* Ps. xxix. 7.

BOOK
II.

How one
intense
emotion
excludes its
contrary.

trary; but this is not the case quite in the sensitive part of the soul, because of the weakness of its apprehensions. But as the spirit is not yet wholly purified and cleansed from the affections of the inferior nature, though more resolute and consistent now, it is still liable to pains, so far as it is under the dominion of these affections. This is evident in the life of David, for when his state changed, he was in affliction though he had said in the day of prosperity, 'I shall never be moved.' Thus the soul, in the actual enjoyment of spiritual blessings, but not observing the radical imperfections and impurity which still remain, thinks that all its trials are over. This thought, however, is of rare occurrence, for until the spiritual purgation is complete, the sweet communications of God are rarely so abundant as to conceal the root that remains behind, in such a way that the soul shall not be profoundly 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 that there is an enemy lurking within, who, though he may be subdued and lulled, will yet return in his strength and assault it as before.

The soul
still
conscious
of imper-
fections and
of danger.

Vicissitudes
of joy and
sorrow.

And so it comes to pass, for when the soul is most secure it is then plunged 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 goodness is gone from it for ever. Experience cannot teach it: the blessings that flowed out of its former trials, during which it thought that its sufferings would never end, cannot prevent it from believing, in its present trials, that all goodness has perished from it, and that it will never be again with it as it was before. Its present convictions are so strong, grounded on actual feelings, as to destroy within it all the occasions of joy. Thus the soul in this purgation though it seeks to please God, and is ready to die for Him a thousand deaths—for souls thus tried love God with great

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VII.

sincerity—nevertheless finds no relief, but rather an increase of pain herein. For seeking God alone to the exclusion of aught else, and seeing its own miserableness to be so great, 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 hateful not only in the eyes of God, but of all creatures also for ever; it grieves to see within itself sufficient grounds why it should be abandoned of Him whom it so loves and so longs for.

CHAPTER VIII.

Other trials of the soul in this state.

ANOTHER source of affliction and distress to the soul in this state is that, as the obscure night impedes the exercise of the faculties and affections, it cannot elevate the mind and affections to God as before, nor pray to Him. It thinks itself to be in that state described by the Prophet when he said, 'Thou hast set a cloud before Thee, that our prayer may not pass through.*' This is the meaning of the words I have quoted before—'He hath shut up my ways with square stones.'† If at any time it prays, it prays with so much aridity, without sweetness, as to think that God neither hears nor regards it; as the Prophet complains, saying, 'Yea, and when I cry, and entreat, He shutteth out my prayer.'‡ And, in truth, this is the time for the soul to put its 'mouth in the dust,'§ suffering in patience this purgation.

Sixth pain,
—Inability
to fix the
attention on
God or
Divine
things.

It is God Himself Who is now working in the soul, and the soul is therefore powerless. It cannot pray or give great attention to Divine things. Neither can it attend to temporal matters, for it falls into frequent distractions, and the

* Lam. iii. 44.

† Ib. iii. 9.

‡ Ib. iii. 8.

§ Ib. iii. 29.

BOOK
II.Loss of
mental
power.

memory is so profoundly weakened, that many hours pass by at a time without its knowing what it has done or thought, what it is doing or is about to do; nor can it give the least heed to what it is occupied with, notwithstanding all its efforts.

Inasmuch, then, as the intellect is purified from its imperfect perceptions, the will from its affections, and the memory, also, from all knowledge and reflections, it is necessary that the soul should be annihilated herein, according to the words of the Psalmist, referring to this purgation: 'I am brought to nothing, and I knew not.*' This 'knowing not' extends to these follies and failures of the memory. These wanderings and failures of memory are the result of interior recollection, by which the soul is absorbed in contemplation. 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 obscure spiritual light of contemplation, and detached from all affection for, and apprehension of, created things. This continues regularly in proportion to the intensity of its contemplation.

Faculties of
the soul
absorbed in
God.

Thus, then, the more pure and simple the Divine light when it shines on the soul, the more does it obscure 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 obscured and annihilated. It seems strange to say, that the purer and clearer the supernatural light the more is the soul obscured, and that it is less obscured when that light is less pure. But this may be easily explained, if we keep in mind the philosophical axiom that supernatural things are more obscure to the intellect the more clear they are in themselves. Thus the ray of high contemplation, transcend-

* Ps. lxxii. 22.

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VIII.The light of
reason dim in
the Light of
God.

ing as it does the natural powers, shining on the soul with its Divine light, makes it dark, and deprives it of all the natural affections and apprehensions which it entertained in its own natural light. Under these circumstances, the soul is not only left in darkness but in emptiness also, as to its powers and desires, both natural and spiritual, and in this emptiness and obscurity is purified and enlightened by the Divine spiritual light, without its ever thinking of its presence, but rather thinking of the darkness that surrounds it.

As a pure ray of light, unreflected by any object, is almost invisible, but becomes visible by being reflected, so the spiritual light which envelopes the soul is, by reason of its pureness, invisible or imperceptible; but when it strikes against any object, that is, when we use it to discern between truth and falsehood, or any particular matter relating to perfection, it then becomes visible at once, and the soul perceives it then much more distinctly than it did before it entered this obscurity. In the same way it perceives the spiritual light which it has for discerning easily the imperfection which is present, as in the case of a ray of light, which of itself is not visible, but which if the hand or any object be passed across its course, the hand becomes instantly visible, and the presence of the sun's light is detected. The soul, therefore, inasmuch as this light is perfectly pure clear and universal, disconnected from all particular objects of the intellect, natural or Divine—its powers are emptied and annihilated with respect to all such apprehensions—most easily and comprehensively understands and penetrates within all things, whether of heaven or of earth, according to the saying of the Apostle: 'The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*' It is to this universal and pure knowledge those words refer, which the Wise Man spoke by

An analogy,
—Natural
light per-
ceptible only
when
reflected by
objects.

* 1 Cor. ii. 10.

BOOK
II.Marks of a
purified
mind,—what.

the Holy Ghost, 'Wisdom reacheth everywhere by reason of her purity;'^{*} that is, because not connected with any particular object of the intellect or affections. The characteristic of a mind purified and annihilated as to all particular objects of affection and of the intellect, is to have pleasure in nothing and to have no particular understanding; abiding in emptiness, obscurity, and darkness; embracing all things in its grand comprehensiveness; fulfilling mystically the words of the Apostle, 'having nothing and possessing all things,'[†] for such poverty of spirit merits such a blessing.

CHAPTER IX.

How it is that this Night enlightens the mind while it brings darkness over it.

Light, love
and liberty
found in the
night of the
spirit.

It remains for me now to explain that this blessed night, though it obscures the mind, does so only to enlighten it; and though it humbles it and makes it miserable, does so only for the purpose of exalting and setting it free; and though it impoverishes it and empties it of all it holds, 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 the primary elements which enter into the composition of all natural substances have no colour, taste, nor smell peculiar to themselves, so that they shall combine with all colours, all tastes, and all smell, so the mind must be pure, simple, and detached from all natural affections, actual and habitual, in order that it may freely participate 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 preeminent way. And without this purgation it is altogether impossible to taste of the abundance

^{*} Wisd. vii. 24.[†] 2 Cor. vi. 10.Illustration
from the
primary
elements of
matter.CHAP.
IX.

of these spiritual delights. For one single affection remaining in the soul, to which the mind may cling either habitually or actually, is sufficient to prevent all perception and all communication of the interior sweetness of the spirit of love, which contains within itself all sweetness supremely.

As the children of Israel, merely on account of that single affection, or remembrance which they retained of the fleshpots of Egypt, could not taste the delicious bread of angels, the manna in the desert, which had 'the sweetness of every taste,' and 'turned to what ever man liked,'^{*} so the mind which still clings actually or habitually to any one affection or particular mode of apprehending, 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 and different kind than those which are natural, and in order to be actually and habitually enjoyed, require the annihilation of the latter. It is therefore expedient and necessary, if the soul is to advance to these heights, that the obscure night of contemplation should annihilate it first, and destroy it in all its meannesses, changing it into darkness, aridities, loneliness, and emptiness; for the light that is given it is a certain Divine light of the highest nature, surpassing all natural light, and not cognisable by the natural intellect. If the intellect is to be united with that light, and become divinely transformed 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 obscure contemplation.

This obscurity must continue so long as it is necessary to destroy the habit, long ago contracted, of understanding things in a human way, and until the Divine enlightening

One selfish
affection or
apprehension
may make
Perfection
impossible.Because the
natural
cannot of
itself reach
the Super-
natural.^{*} Wisd. xvi. 20, 21.

BOOK
II.

shall have taken its place. And inasmuch as the power of understanding, previously exerted, was natural, the darkness now endured is profound, awful, and most afflictive, because it reaches to, and is felt in, the innermost depths of the spirit. And inasmuch as the affection of love, communicated in the Divine union is Divine, and therefore most spiritual, subtile, delicate, and most interior, surpassing all natural sense and affection, the imperfectness 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. And this must be done, in order that the will, in the fire of obscure contemplation, wasted, withered, and deprived of all selfishness—like the liver of the fish 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 whenever it shall be divinely transformed, and wherein all its former contrarities actual and habitual shall be expelled.

Purification
of grace
equal to
habits of
nature.

The soul
prepared by
suffering for
the Spirit of
God.

Moreover, in order to attain to the Divine union, for which obscure contemplation 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

* Tob. viii. 2.

† Is. lxiv. 4; 1 Cor. ii. 9.

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IX.

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 obscure contemplation which is the state of union with God.

And because the soul is to attain to a certain sense, to a certain 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, for the light and grace of the Holy Ghost differ from those of sense, the Divine from the human—it is necessary that the mind should be brought low, and inured to hardships in all that relates to 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 notions, 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. For this night is drawing the mind away from its ordinary and common sense of things, and attracts 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 spell, and is amazed at all that is around it—all that it hears and sees, which seem to it to be most strange, though in reality always the same. The sources of this feeling are that the soul has become a stranger to the ordinary sense of things, in order that being brought to nothing therein, it might be formed divinely anew. Now this belongs more to the next life than to this.

The soul—
an exile in
the world—
at home in
God.

The soul suffers these afflictive purgations of the spirit that it may be born again to the life of the spirit through the Divine influence, and in these pangs bring forth the spirit of salva-

In the
spiritual
night false
peace is
lost; true
peace is
found.

tion, fulfilling the words of the Prophet: '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 the night of contemplation disposes the soul for that tranquillity and interior peace which is so full of delight as, in the words of Scripture, to 'surpass all understanding,'† it is necessary that the former peace of the soul, which, because involved in so many imperfections, was no peace, though it seemed to be a twofold peace, namely, of sense and spirit, should first of all be purified, and the soul disturbed and repelled from 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 off from peace.'‡

This is a painful unsettling, full of misgivings, imaginations, and interior struggles, in which the soul, at the sight and in the consciousness of its own misery, imagines itself to be lost, and all its goodness to have utterly perished. In this state the mind is pierced by sorrow so profound as to occasion spiritual groans and cries; at times it gives audible vent to them and tears break forth, if there be any strength left, though this relief is but rarely granted. The royal Prophet has well described this state, being one who had experience of it, saying, 'I am afflicted and humbled exceedingly; I roared with the groaning of my heart.'§ This proceeds from great sorrow; for sometimes the sudden and sharp recollection of the miseries that environ the soul, produces such pain and suffering that I know not how to describe them 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, this

* Is. xxvi. 17, 18.

† Lam. iii. 17.

|| Job iii. 24.

† Phil. iv. 7.

§ Ps. xxxvii. 9.

sense of pain, occasionally so grows as to overflow the soul and drown it, so fills all its affections and energies with spiritual sorrows as to defy all exaggeration.

Such is the work wrought in this night that hideth the hopes 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.'* The mouth 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 give it no rest.

This warfare and combat are deep, because the peace hoped for is most deep: the spiritual sorrow is most interior, refined, and pure, because the love to be enjoyed is 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 deeper the foundation. 'My soul fadeth within myself,' saith Job, 'and the days of affliction possess me.'† 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, gifts, and virtues, both in the substance of the soul and in the powers thereof, it is necessary for it that it should consider and feel itself 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 the Prophet, 'I have forgotten good things.'‡

Let us see why it is that the light of contemplation, so sweet and lovely to the soul that nothing is more desirable — for it is that whereby the Divine union takes place, and whereby the soul in the state of perfection finds all

Great works
require great
labour.

Beginning of
Contempla-
tion pain-
ful,—why.

* Job. xxx. 17.

† Ib. xxx. 16.

‡ Lam. iii. 17.

BOOK
II.Self the cause
of suffering.

the good it desires—produces these painful beginnings and awful results? The answer is easy, and is already given in part; this is not the effect of contemplation and the Divine inflowing, from which comes sweetness rather than pain. The cause is in our imperfection and weakness, and in the dispositions of our soul, which is not fit for the reception of that sweetness. And so, when the Divine light shines in upon the soul, it makes it suffer in the way described.

CHAPTER X.

Explanation of this purgation by a comparison.

Analogy of
the action of
fire, to dry,
blacken,
purify, and
ignite fuel.

To make what I have said, and what I have still to say, more clear, I find it necessary here to observe that this purgative and loving knowledge, or Divine light, 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 then blackens it and soils it, and drying it by little and little, makes it light and consumes away its accidental defilements which are contrary to itself. Finally, having eaten and set on fire its outward surface, it transforms the whole into itself, and makes it beautiful as itself. Thus fuel subject to the action of fire retains neither active nor passive qualities of its own, except bulk and specific weight, and assumes all the qualities of fire. It becomes dry, then it glows, and glowing, burns; luminous, it gives light, and burns much lighter than before. All this is the effect of fire.

We theorise in this way concerning 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 renders its condition apparently worse than it was before. For while

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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 obscure 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 the Divine regard, but even as a loathsome object in the eyes of God.

The comparison which I have instituted will enable us to understand what I have said, and what I purpose still to say.

In the first place, we 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.

In the second place, the sufferings of the soul here 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, from its being incapable, previous to its purgation, of receiving this Divine light, sweetness, and delight. This is the source of its sufferings. So the fuel, too, is not transformed into fire, at the instant of their contact, if it be not previously prepared for burning.

This is the experience of the Wise Man, who thus describes his sufferings before his union with, and possession of, wisdom: ‘My entrails were troubled in seeking her; therefore shall I possess a good possession.’†

In the third place we learn incidentally 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 to expiate,

The Analogy
of fire
shows;1. The same
cause purifies
and trans-
forms the
soul.2. Weakness
and imper-
fection the
source of
suffering,3. And cause
of Pur-
gatory.

* Wisd. vii. 11.

† Ecclus. li. 29.

which are the matter on which that fire seizes; for 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.

4. Transformation of love equal to purification by suffering.

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 more the fuel is prepared for the fire the more it burns; though the soul is not always conscious of this burning of love within it, but only now and then, when the ray of contemplation shines upon it not so strongly. Then the soul is enabled to see, and even to enjoy, the work that is going on; it seems as if the hand of the artificer was 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 may see in itself that good which it could not see while the process was going on. Thus, when the flame ceases to envelope the fuel it burns, we see clearly how much of it has been enkindled.

5. Deeper fire, greater sufferings.

In the fifth place we learn how it is that, after alleviations of its pains, the soul suffers again more intensely and sensibly than before. For after the manifestation of the work that has been done, when the outward imperfections have been expelled, the fire of love returns again to purge and consume away that which is interior. Now the suffering of the soul 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.

6. The soul conscious of remaining imperfections.

In the sixth place, we learn that the soul, though it rejoices intensely in these intervals of peace—so much so that it seems to think its trials over, never to return, even while it is cer-

tain that they will soon recur again—cannot but feel, if it observes a single root of imperfection behind—and that is sometimes observed—that its rejoicing is incomplete. It seems as if that root threatened to spring up anew, and when that is the case, it does so quickly. Finally, that which still remains to be purified and enlightened within cannot now be concealed from the soul in the presence of what has been already purified. Thus that portion of the material 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 that it can never recover its former prosperity; for in these most interior sufferings all exterior goodness becomes invisible.

Keeping this illustration, then, before our eyes, and remembering what I have said, on the first line of this stanza, concerning this obscure night and its fearful characteristics, it may be as well to abandon the subject of these afflictions of the soul, and to enter on the matter of the fruit of its tears and their blessed issues, celebrated by the soul in the following lines.

'O Domine,
aut pati, aut
mori.'



CHAPTER XI.

A vehement passion of Divine Love the fruit of these sharp afflictions of the soul.

With anxious love inflamed.

HERE the soul speaks of the fire of love which, in the night of painful contemplation, seizes upon it as material fire on the ^{wood} fuel it burns. This burning, though to a certain extent resembling that which takes place in the sensitive part of the soul, is still, in one sense, as different from it as the soul is different from the body, the spiritual from the sensitive. For

Foretaste of
God in the
night of
the spirit.

BOOK
II.

this is a certain fire of love in the spirit whereby the soul, in its dark trials, feels itself wounded to the quick by a certain impression and foretaste of God, though it understands nothing distinctly, because the intellect is in darkness.

Love of God
infused into
the purified
soul.

The mind is now conscious of a deep affection of 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 qualities, which are chiefly actions of God, in the soul rather than of the soul, which is consenting unto them in simplicity and love. It is, however, the love of God only which, uniting itself with the soul, produces this warmth and force and temper and passion, or, as the soul calls it, burning. The more the desires are restrained, subdued, and disabled for the enjoyment of the things of heaven and earth, the more space does this love find for itself in the soul, and better dispositions for its reception, so that it may unite itself with that soul, and wound it. This takes place during the dark purgation in a wonderful way, for God has so weaned the faculties, and they are now so recollected in Him, that they are unable to take pleasure as they like in anything whatever.

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, so that the soul may acquire greater strength and fitness for the strong union of love which God is communicating in the purgative way; and in which the soul must love Him with all its strength, with all the desires of sense and spirit, which it could never do if the faculties thereof were dissipated by other satisfactions. The Psalmist prepared himself thus for the strong love of the Divine union, for he said, 'I will keep my

strength for Thee;'^{*} that is, all my capacity, all the energy of my faculties and my desires, neither will I suffer them to rejoice in anything but Thee.

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XI

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, spiritual and sensitive, so that their harmonious combination may direct all its energies and all its forces towards the real and perfect fulfilment of the first commandment of the law, which comprehends within its scope the whole nature and gifts of man; namely, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength.'[†]

Concentration
of
powers of
the soul on
God.

When all the desires and energies of the soul are thus recollected in this burning of love, and the soul 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 with 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 after it, in proportion to the past experience of it? For the touch of this love and of the Divine fire so dries up the spirit, and enkindles its desires for satisfying 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.'

No satiety in
Divine love.

This is the reason why the soul says, 'With anxious love inflamed.' In all its works and thoughts, employments and opportunities, the soul loves in many ways and longs after

^{*} Ps. lviii. 10.

[†] Deut. vi. 5.

[‡] Ps. lxii. 2.



BOOK
II.Anxious
longing of
the soul for
God.

God. This longing is so manifold in its forms, always and everywhere abiding, that the soul has no rest, feeling itself to be wounded, inflamed with anxiety; its then state is thus described by holy Job: '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 lie down to 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.'* The soul is in perplexity, it cannot comprehend itself, neither the things of Heaven nor of earth, and is filled with sorrows even till darkness, which — taking the words of Job in their spiritual sense, adapted to the subject before us — is pain and suffering, without the hope of light, or of any spiritual good.

Its two
causes,—
1. Spiritual
darkness.2. Infused
Love of God.

The anxieties of the soul while on fire with love is very great, 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 itself which burns within it is the other, and that inflames it marvellously, and excites it through the loving wound it has inflicted upon it. These two and simultaneous anxieties are thus referred to by the Prophet: 'My soul hath desired Thee in the night;' that is, in my misery. This is one kind of pain which proceeds from the obscure night, 'Yea, and with my spirit within me in the morning early I will watch to Thee.' † This is the other suffering of desire and anxiety, which proceeds from love, in the bowels of the spirit; that is, the spiritual affections. The soul, however, is conscious, amidst these obscure and loving anxieties, of a certain companionship therein and interior strength, which is so great that, if the burden of this oppressive obscurity were removed, it

* Job vii. 2—4.

† Is. xxvi. 9.

would oftentimes feel itself desolate, empty, and weak. The reason is that the force and courage of the soul flow passively from the obscure fire of love; and so, when that fire ceases to envelope it, the darkness, the strength, and fire of love cease at the same time.

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CHAPTER XII.

How this awful night is like Purgatory. How the Divine Wisdom illuminates men on earth with that light in which the Angels are purified and enlightened in Heaven.

WHAT I have said enables us to see how the obscure night of loving fire purifies the soul in the darkness, and in the darkness also sets it 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 men 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!'* for cleanness of heart is nothing else but the love and grace of God. 'Blessed are the clean of heart,' saith our Saviour, and it is as if he had said, blessed are those who love, for blessedness can come of nothing less than love.

Two
Purgatories.Difference
between
them.Cleanness
heart,—
what.

The following words of the Prophet also, 'From on high He hath cast a fire in my bones, and hath taught me,' † show plainly that the soul is purified and 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: 'The Words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried by fire.' ‡ Obscure contemplation infuses

The infused
wisdom of
love.

* Ps. l. 12.

† Lam. i. 13.

‡ Ps. xi. 7.

into the soul love and wisdom simultaneously, to every one according to his necessity and capacity, enlightening the soul, and cleansing it of all its ignorances, according to the words of the Wise Man, 'He hath enlightened my ignorances.'*

Infused love
and know-
ledge of the
Angels.

Here, also, we learn that the wisdom which purifies the ignorance 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 and enlightens the human soul. All the works of the Angels, and all the inspirations they suggest, are, in Holy Scripture, truly and properly said to be their work and God's: for, ordinarily, His inspirations flow through the angels who receive them, each choir from the other instantaneously, as the light of the sun penetrates many windows at once, arranged one behind the other. It is quite true that, in one sense, the light of the sun pierces all, yet each window conveys that light to the next, modified according to the nature of the glass which transmits it, and somewhat weaker, according to the distance from the sun. 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 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 in obscurity, distressingly and painfully—as the sun's rays are painful to weak eyes—till the fire of love shall have spiritualised and refined him, so

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

that being made pure like the Angels he may be able to receive with sweetness the union of God's inflowing love. There are souls who, in this life, are more perfectly enlightened than even Angels. But, in the meantime, this contemplation and loving knowledge come upon the soul through trials and loving anxiety.

The soul is not always conscious of this burning and anxiety of 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 intellect is being purified 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 intellect 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. 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.

Increasing
in holiness is
advancing in
knowledge.

This kindling of love, in the union of these two faculties, the intellect and the will, is to the soul a great treasury of delight, because it is certain that the foundations of the perfection of the union of love, for which the soul hoped, are laid in that obscurity. But 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. For other degrees of this union, lower than this, which are of ordinary occurrence, so intense a purgation is not required.

Joy of the
union of
Intellect and
Will in God.

* Ps. xxxviii. 4.

BOOK
II.

CHAPTER XIII.

Other sweet effects of the dark Night of Contemplation.

Benefits of
the Spiritual
Night;

1. Illumina-
tion of the
Intellect.

2. Pure
spiritual
affections of
the Will.

THIS fire of love throws some light upon the sweet effects wrought in the soul by the obscure Night of Contemplation; for occasionally, amid the obscurity, the soul receives light — 'light shineth in darkness' * — the mystical influence flowing directly into the intellect, 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 time, and enkindles love deeply, tenderly, and strongly; for, as I have said, the more the intellect is purified the more perfectly and exquisitely, at times, are the intellect and the will united. 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 intellect.

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 the night of sense. For though the senses also have their part in this, because they share in the afflictions of the spirit; yet the root and living force of the thirst of love are felt in the higher portion of the soul, that is, in the spirit — conscious of what the soul feels, and of the absence of what it desires; still all the pains of sense, though incomparably greater than those of the sensitive night, are as nothing, because of the interior conviction that one great good is wanting, for which there is no compensation possible.

Observe here that, although this burning of love is not felt in the beginning of the spiritual night, because the fire of love

* S. John i. 5.

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XIII.

has not yet done its work, God communicates to the soul, instead of it, so great an appreciative love of Himself that its greatest trials and deepest afflictions in this night are involved in the thought which harasses it, namely, that it has lost God, and that He has abandoned it. It may, therefore, be said that from the first beginning of this night the soul is full of anxiety, arising at one time from the appreciation of God, at another from the burning fire of love; and the greatest of its sufferings is this doubt: for if it could be persuaded that all is not lost, and that the trials it undergoes are, as in truth they are, for its greater good, and that God is not offended, it would make no account whatever of its afflictions, but rather rejoice in them, knowing that it is serving God. For the appreciation with which it regards God is so great, though in darkness and unconsciously, that not only would it endure its trials joyfully, but also die a thousand times to please Him. But when the fire of love and the appreciation of God together have seized on the soul, it then gains such strength and energy, and such eager longing after God, the effect of this glowing love, that it boldly disregards all considerations, and sets everything aside, in the inebriating force of love, and, without reflecting on its acts, it conducts itself strangely and extravagantly, that it may meet Him whom it loveth.

This is the reason why Mary Magdalen, though noble herself, heeded not the guests, high and low, who were feasting in the house of the Pharisee. She considered not that her presence was inopportune, and that tears were unseemly at the feast, provided she could, without delay, or waiting for another occasion, reach Him for whom her soul was wounded and on fire.* This is that inebriating force and daring of love, which, when she knew that her Love was

Example of
S. Mary
Magdalen

* S. Luke vii. 37.

BOOK
II.Love
inebrates.

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 of love that she asked Himself, whom she took for the gardener, and who, she thought, had robbed the sepulchre, where he had laid the Body of her Lord. '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 admitted the fact and the less so, because she intended to take It away herself.

Love thinks
all things
possible.

This conduct of Mary Magdalen proceeded from the vehemence and energy of her love: for love thinks all things possible, and that all men have interests identical with its own; it cannot believe that there is anything to occupy men, or anything to be sought for by them, except that which occupies itself, and which itself is seeking, for it considers that there can be no other occupation or desire beyond its own. Thus, when the Bride went out into the streets and broadways of Jerusalem seeking for her Beloved, she, believing that all were employed, like her, in searching for Him, adjured them, if they found Him, to tell Him that she languished with love.†

Love
impatient.

So strong was Mary's love that she intended, if the gardener had told her where he had hidden her Lord, to take Him away, in spite of the prohibition. Of 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, in the purifying darkness, in the affections of the will. As a lioness or a bear, robbed of its whelps, whom it cannot

* S. John xx. 15.

† Cant. iii. 2. v. 8.

CHAP.
XIII.

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 that of Rachel, when she said, 'Give me children, otherwise I shall die.*'

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, equality, and assimilation with the object beloved, so as to attain to the perfection of itself. And as the soul has not yet attained to the perfection of love, because it has not attained to union with God, the hunger and thirst for that which it has not—namely union, and the strength which love communicates to the impassioned will—render it bold and daring in its wishes, though the intellect, because it is in darkness, tells at the same time that it is an unworthy and miserable object.

Conscious
unworthi-
ness recon-
ciled with
ardent
aspiration,—
how.

I am not disposed here to omit an explanation of the fact why it is that the Divine light, being always light, does not illuminate the soul the moment it surrounds it, as it does at a later time, instead of bringing with it darkness and troubles. This question has been already partially answered, and I now answer it more fully. The darkness and misery of which the soul is conscious proceed not from the Divine light which shines around it, but are in the soul itself, and it is the light which enables it to see them. When the Divine light shines in upon the soul, the soul sees nothing at first but what is immediately before it, or rather what is within it, its own darkness and misery. Now, by the mercy of God, it sees

Misery of
the soul seen
in the Divine
Light.

* Gen. xxx. 1.

BOOK
II.

what it saw not before, because the supernatural light had not shone round about it. This is the reason why, in the beginning, the soul is conscious of nothing but of its own darkness and misery. But when it has been purified by the knowledge and perception of them, it will have eyes to discern the blessings of the Divine light; and when its darkness and imperfections shall have been removed, it will then behold the great benefits and blessings of this happy night.

Great mercy
of God in
restoring
youth to the
soul.

This explains 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 sensitive and spiritual parts, from all affections and imperfect habits in all temporal, natural, sensitive, and spiritual respects; by obscuring its interior faculties, and emptying them of all objects, by correcting and drying up all its sensitive and spiritual affections, by weakening and wasting the natural forces—which the soul never could have done of itself—by causing it to die, as it were, to all that is not God, that, being wholly denuded and stripped of its former clothing, it may clothe itself anew in God. Thus the soul's 'youth shall be renewed like the eagle's,'* clothed with 'the new man, which according to God is created in justice.'†

Intellect,
Will and
Memory
born anew
to a super-
natural life.

Now this is nothing else but the supernatural light shining on the intellect, so that the human intellect becomes one with the Divine. In the same way Divine love so inflames the will 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 also is affected in like manner; all the desires and affections too are changed Divinely according to God. Thus the soul will be of Heaven, heavenly, Divine rather than human.

All this, as is clear from what I have said, is the work of God, who effects it, during this night of the soul, enlighten-

* Ps. cii. 5.

† Ephes. iv. 24.

CHAP.
XIII.

ing it and setting it on fire in a Divine way with an anxious solicitude for God alone, and for nought besides.

It is with great propriety and justice 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.

CHAPTER XIV.

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

THE happy lot sung in the first of these lines is the result of that which is described in the two lines that follow. The soul describes itself as one who, for the better execution of his purpose, goes out of his house by night, in the dark, the inmates of which being at rest so that none of them could hinder him. The soul having to perform a heroic and rare action, such as that of being united to the Beloved, sallies out, because the Beloved is to be found only without, in solitude. Thus the Bride desired to find him without: '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 all its inferior operations, passions, and desires are at rest in this night. These are the inmates of its house which when awake ever hinder its good, hostile when it attempts to set itself free from them. These are they to whom our Lord referred when He said, 'A man's enemies shall be they of his own household.'†

The soul
leaves the
house of self-
indulgence.

Thus it is necessary that the operations and motions of passion and desire should be lulled to sleep in this night in

* Cant. viii. 1.

† S. Matt. x. 36.

BOOK
II.

The passions
subdued, the
soul goes
forth to God.

order that they may not obstruct the supernatural blessings of union with God in love, for while they continue to enervate and act those blessings are unattainable. All movement and action on their part, instead of helping, hinder the reception of the spiritual blessing 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 interfere in the matter with their own inferior actions and base inclinations.

It was a happy thing for the soul that God in this night put those of its household to sleep, that is, all the powers, passions, affections, and desires which belong to the sensitive and spiritual part, so that it might 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 is delivered from the house of its sensitive appetite! None can understand it, I think, except that soul which has experienced it. Such a 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 how that the life of the spirit is true liberty and riches, involving innumerable blessings, some of which I shall speak of while explaining the following stanzas, when it will clearly appear, what good reasons the soul has for describing the passage of this awful night as a happy lot.

CHAPTER XV.

Explanation of the second stanza.

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

THE soul continues to speak of certain characteristics of the obscurity of this night, again referring to the happiness of which it is the cause. It is replying to an implied objection, and says in substance, let no man suppose that among the tormenting anxieties, doubts, misgivings, and terrors of that night of obscurity, it had run any risk of being lost; yea rather, it had found safety in the darkness, because the obscurity enabled it to escape from its enemies who were ever impeding its departure. In that obscurity it changed its garments, and disguised itself in three colours, of which I shall speak hereafter.* It sallied forth by a most secret ladder, unknown to the whole of its household—which, as I shall show, is a living faith—in such secrecy, for the better execution of its purpose, that it could not possibly be in greater security; and the more particularly so, because in the purgative night, the desires, passions, and affections of the soul are asleep, mortified, and subdued; and these, if awake and active, would never have consented to that departure.

CHAP.
XV.

The second
stanza an
answer to an
objection.

CHAPTER XVI.

How the soul journeys securely when in darkness.

In darkness and security.

THE darkness, of which the soul here speaks, relates, as I have said,† to the desires, and to the interior sensitive and

* In ch. xxi.

† Ch. iii.

BOOK
II.

Means of the
safe journey
in the spi-
ritual night.

spiritual powers, which are all to be deprived of their natural light in this night; so that, being purified herein, they may be supernaturally enlightened. The sensitive and spiritual desires are lulled to sleep and mortified, unable to relish anything either human or Divine: the affections are thwarted and brought low, incapable of excitement, and having nothing to rest upon; the imagination is fettered, and unable to make any profitable reflections, the memory is gone, the intellect is obscured, and the will, too, is dry and afflicted, and all the faculties are empty, and, moreover, a dense and heavy cloud overshadows the wearied soul, and alienates it, as it were, from God. This is the obscurity in which the soul says that it travels securely.

Security
found in self-
mortifica-
tion,—why.

The cause of this security is evident: 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 what is not becoming it. It is therefore clear that the soul is secure against error therein, when all these operations and movements have ceased. The soul is then 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.

Man
destroys;
God saves.

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 sensitive—and its good the work of God only. When the soul is hindered from giving way to these evils, the blessings of

* Os. xiii. 9.

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the Divine union descend upon it forthwith, in its desires and faculties which that union will render heavenly and Divine. If, therefore, while this obscurity lasts, the soul will look within, it will see how slightly the desires and the faculties have been diverted towards vain and unprofitable matters, and that it is secure against vainglory, pride and presumption, empty rejoicing, and many other evils. It is quite clear, therefore, that the soul which is in this obscurity is not only not lost, but that it gains much, for it acquires virtue.

But here a question arises to this effect: 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 obscured by Him in this night that they cannot enjoy Him or occupy themselves with Him as with other things, but are, in a certain sense, less able to do so? To this I reply, that it is then very necessary for the soul to be clear of its own operations and devoid of all pleasure even in spiritual things, because its faculties and desires are base and impure; and even if they have pleasure in, and are familiar with, Divine and supernatural things, it can be only in a low way.

Why are the
natural
faculties ob-
scured?

It is a philosophical axiom that all that is received is received according to the condition of the recipient. From this principle 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—ought to be obscured with regard to the Divine way, so as to secure their perfect purgation. They are to be weaned, purified, and annihilated first, in order that they may lose their own low mode of acting and receiving, and that they may be thus disposed and tempered for the reception and fruition of what is Divine in a lofty and sublime way; but this they can never do if the old man do not die first. Every spiritual gift, if it cometh not down from the Father of

Because in
themselves
they are in-
capable of
perfect union
with God.

lights into 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, is still not Divinely nor perfectly enjoyed.

Natural taste
and facility
not spiritual
fervour.

As to this I might here show, were this the proper place to do so, that there are many whose tastes and affections, and the operations of whose faculties, are directed to God and to spiritual things; who perhaps imagine all this to be supernatural and spiritual, when in reality it is nothing more, perhaps, than mere natural and human acts and desires. 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 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, obscured and subdued, in their natural state, so far as their capacity and operations are concerned, until they lose all their strength.

The soul delivered from
itself and
prepared for
God.

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 takes thee by the hand, guides thee safely in thy blindness, along a road and to an end thou knowest not, and whither thou couldst

never travel guided by thine own eyes, and supported by thy own feet.

The reason why the soul not only travels securely when in obscurity, but also makes greater progress, is this: In general the soul makes greater progress in the spiritual life when it least thinks so, yea, when it rather imagines that it is losing everything. 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 what 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 visit a new country but by new ways which he knows not, and by abandoning those he knew, so the soul when it advances in the spiritual life, travels in obscurity, not knowing the way. God Himself, being the guide of the soul in its blindness, it may well exult and say, 'In darkness and security,' as soon as it has penetrated the mystery of its state.

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 enjoyment the soul does nothing but show its own weakness and imperfections. And in suffering, too, the soul practises and acquires virtue, and becomes pure, wiser, and more cautious.

There is another more particular reason why the soul travels securely when in obscurity. This reason is derived from the consideration of the light itself, or obscure wisdom. The obscure night of contemplation so absorbs the soul, and brings it so near unto God, as to defend it, and deliver it

Four reasons
why the dark
road is safe;
1. God is the
Guide.

2. Suffering
gives
strength.

3. The way
enlightened
by Divine
Wisdom.

BOOK
II.
God the
health of the
soul.

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: God compels it to observe a particular diet, and to abstain from all noxious things, the very appetite for them being subdued. The soul is treated like a sick man respected by his household, who is 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.

The soul
guarded by
the obscurity
of Divine
Contempla-
tion.

Obscure contemplation, which brings the soul so near unto God, is the origin of all these measures, and they are all measures of security to guard the soul. For in truth the nearer the soul is to God, the more obscure the darkness, and the more profound the obscurity, because of the soul's weakness. The nearer a man reaches to the sun the greater the darkness and suffering its light occasions, because of the weakness and impureness of his vision. So great is the spiritual light of God, surpassing all understanding, that the nearer we approach it, the more does it blind us. This is the meaning of those words of the Psalmist: 'He made darkness the covert, the pavilion round about Him, dark waters in the clouds of the air,'* which is obscure contemplation and the Divine wisdom in souls, of which they have experience as of a thing near to the pavilion where He dwells, when God brings them near to Himself. Thus, what in God is light and supreme splendour, is to man obscure darkness, as S. Paul saith,† and as the royal Prophet explains it in the same place: 'At the brightness that was before Him the clouds passed,'‡ that is, over the human intellect, 'the light of which,' saith the Prophet, 'is darkened with the mist thereof.' §

* Ps. xvii. 12.

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

‡ Ps. xvii. 13.

§ Is. v. 30.

O wretched condition of this life wherein the truth is so hardly known! That which is most clear and true, is to us most obscure and doubtful, and we 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 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 obscurity, if he is to journey in safety from his domestic foes, his own senses and faculties.

Well hidden and protected then is the soul in the dark waters close to God. For as the dark waters are a pavilion for Him, so they are also to the soul perfect safety and protection, though in darkness, where it is hidden and protected from itself, and from all the injuries that created things may inflict. It is of souls thus protected that the Psalmist spoke when he said: '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 obscure contemplation against all the assaults of men. To be protected in this 'tabernacle from the contradiction of tongues,' is to be engulfed in the dark water. 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. Such a soul may well say, 'In darkness and security.'

* Ps. xxx. 21.

CHAP.
XVI.
Difficulties
in knowing
Truth the
misery of
this life.

God the Ta-
bernacle of
protection.

BOOK
II.4. Courage
and vigilance
acquired at
the outset.

Another reason, not less conclusive, why the soul, though in darkness, proceeds securely, is derived from that courage which it acquires as soon as it enters within the dark, painful, and obscure water of God. Though it be dark, still it is water, and therefore cannot but refresh and invigorate the soul in all that is most necessary for it, though it does so painfully and in obscurity. 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 obscure love is so intensely vigilant 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 security.'

CHAPTER XVII

Obscure contemplation is secret.

By the secret ladder, disguised.

Three points
of explanation;
1. 'Secret.'
2. 'Ladder.'
3. 'Dis-
guised.'

I HAVE three things to explain in reference to the three words of this line. Two of them—'secret' and 'ladder'—belong to the obscure night of contemplation of which I am speaking, and the third—'disguised'—belongs to the way of the soul therein. As to the first, the soul calls the obscure contemplation, by which it goes forth to the union of love, a

secret ladder, and that because of two characteristics of it. First, this obscure contemplation is called secret, because it is, as I have said before, the mystical theology which Divines call secret wisdom, and which according to S. Thomas is infused into the soul most especially by love, in a secret hidden way in which the natural operations of the intellect and the other faculties have no share. And because the faculties of the soul cannot compass it, it being the Holy Ghost Who infuses it, as the Bride saith in the Canticle,* in an unknown way, we call it secret.

And, in truth, it is not the soul only that is ignorant here, but everyone 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 purifies the soul, but afterwards also, 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 similitude to describe it by, so as to make known so profound an intelligence, so delicate an infused spiritual impression. Yea, and if it could have a wish to speak of it, and find terms to describe it, it would always remain secret still. This interior wisdom, so simple, general, and spiritual, enters not into an intellect entangled and covered over by any forms or images subject to sense, as is sometimes the case, and therefore the imagination 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

CHAP.
XVII.First point.
The way
secret.1. Hidden
from self,2. And from
the devil.3. Hidden in
its effects.4. Incapable
of adequate
expression.

* Cant. vi. 11.

BOOK
II.Contem-
plation beyond
language,—
why?

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 we describe that which does not enter in by the senses?

Such is the nature of the Divine language, that the more interior, infused, and spiritual it is, the more it transcends all human intelligence; the powers of the senses, interior and exterior, cease, and their harmonies become mute.

Examples of
Jeremias and
Moses.

The Holy Writings supply both proofs and illustrations of this principle. Jeremias shows the impossibility of revealing and expressing the words of God: 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 impossibility, 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 was not only more incapable of speaking than before,† but was so 'terrified' that he 'durst not behold;‡' that is, the imagination itself became weak and silent. The wisdom of contemplation is the language of God addressed to the soul, purely spiritual, and the senses are not spiritual, so they do not perceive it, and so it remains a secret from them, they cannot understand it nor explain it.

Difficulties of
Contempla-
tives with
their direc-
tors.

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,

* Jerem. i. 6.

† Exod. iv. 10.

‡ Acts vii. 32.

CHAP.
XVII.

or contented, that they have a feeling of God, and that all goes well with them, as they think; but they cannot explain their state, except by general expressions like these. 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, and the senses participate in them; 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.

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 beyond the usual degree of this hiding, the soul is sometimes so absorbed in this secret abyss that it beholds itself distinctly carried away from all created things to a wild and profound solitude where no human being can reach it, to an interminable desert, which is the more delicious, sweet, and lovely, the more it is profound, vast, and lonely, and the more secret is the soul, the more it is raised up above all created things. The abyss of wisdom so exalts and elevates the soul, bringing it within the course of 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 sense, 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, were it not for 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.

5. It hides
the soul in
the abyss of
Wisdom.

This property of being secret, and of surpassing all natural

BOOK
II.

6. It leads
the soul to
union with
hidden God.

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 being divinely ignorant. For, to use the language of mystical theology, these things are neither understood nor known when they are sought, but when they are found and practised. This is the meaning of the following words of the Prophet: 'There is none that is able to know her ways, nor that can search out her paths.*' The royal Prophet also, speaking of this way of the soul, says: 'Thy lightnings enlightened the world, the earth shook and trembled, Thy way is in the sea, and Thy paths in many waters, and Thy footsteps shall not be known.'† All this in its spiritual meaning refers to the subject before us.

Contempla-
tion an in-
fusion of the
secret Wis-
dom of God.

'The lightnings that enlightened the world' is the illumination of the faculties of the soul in the Divine contemplation, the 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 cannot be known, is to say that this way to God is secret, and as hidden from the senses of the soul, as the way of one who walks over the waters is from the senses of the body, and whose footsteps cannot be known. The footsteps of God in those souls which He is drawing to Himself, making them great in the union of His wisdom, have also this peculiarity, that they are not known. Thus we find these words in the book of Job, impressing upon us this truth, 'Knowest thou the great paths of the clouds, and perfect knowledge?'‡ By this are meant the paths and ways of God, in which He makes souls great and perfect in His wisdom; these are meant by the clouds. Contemplation, therefore, by which God guides the soul, is secret wisdom.

* Baruch iii. 31.

† Ps. lxxvi. 19, 20.

‡ Job xxxvii. 16.

CHAPTER XVIII.

How this secret wisdom is also a ladder.

I NOW proceed to the second part, to show 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 treasures of heaven. This is well expressed by the royal Prophet when he says, 'Blessed is the man whose help is from Thee: in his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps, in the vale of tears, in the place which he hath set. For the Lawgiver shall give a blessing; they shall go from strength to strength: the God of Gods shall be seen in Sion;*' He is the treasure of the citadel of Sion, that is blessedness.

We may call it a ladder, also, because as the steps of one and the same ladder serve to descend as well as to ascend by, so those very communications which the soul receives in secret contemplation raise it up to God and make it humble also. For those communications which really come from God have this property, that they humble and exalt the soul at one and the same time. In the spiritual 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.'† And as the virtue of humility is greatness, for the trial of the soul therein, God is wont also to make it ascend by this ladder that it may descend, and descend that it may ascend; for thus are fulfilled the words of the Wise Man, 'Before

CHAP.
XVIII.

Second point.
The way a
ladder.
1. By it the
soul ascends
to God by
Contempla-
tion,

2. And de-
scends in
regard to self
by humility.

* Ps. lxxxiii. 6, 7, 8.

† S. Luke xiv. 11.

BOOK
II.

destruction the heart of a man is exalted, and before he be glorified it is humbled.*

3. It expresses the vicissitudes of the spiritual life.

If the soul will reflect on the nature of a ladder—I omit what is spiritual and not felt—it will see at once the ups and downs of this road; how after prosperity come storms and trials, 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 observed a vigil previous to 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 with it. The reason is that 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 must of necessity be tried in the one and the other—in the first which exalts it, in the second which 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. The ladder of contemplation, which comes down from God, is shadowed forth by that ladder which Jacob saw in a dream, and the angels of God 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 of 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,

Two conditions of Perfection,—
(1) Love of God.
(2) Contempt of self.

The ladder of Jacob's dream.

* Prov. xviii. 12.

† Gen. xxviii. 12, 13.

where, in general, we lose instead of gaining—we look upon as the more advantageous for us.

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 S. Bernard and S. Thomas, and because it is not possible to distinguish them in this life as they are in their own nature, because the ladder of love is so secret that it can be weighed and measured by God only.

CHAP.
XVIII.

4. It is the science of love.

Love the unitive virtue.

CHAPTER XIX.

The mystic ladder has ten degrees. Explanation of the first five of them.

THE steps of the ladder of love, by which the soul, ascending from one to another, rises upwards to God, are ten in number. The first degree of love makes the soul languish to its great profit. Here was the Bride when she said, '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 for the glory of God; for the soul faints away as to sin and all things whatsoever that are not

First step,—
The languishing of love.

* Cant. v. 8.

God for God's sake, as the Psalmist testifies: 'My spirit hath fainted away'* from all things after Thy salvation; as it is more fully expressed in another place: 'My soul hath fainted after Thy salvation.'† As a sick man loses all appetite and the taste of his 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, its colour fades away. The soul does not fall into this languishing state except through the vehement heat which descends into it from above, which is the mystic fever, according to the words of the Psalmist, 'Thou didst send thine inheritance a free rain, O God, and it was weakened, but Thou hast made it perfect.'‡ This languishing and fainting away of the soul, which 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.

Second step,
—The search
for God.

On the second step the soul is unremitting in its search after God. Thus the Bride sought Him in her bed by night; she had fainted away there when on the first step of the ladder, and found Him not. She added, '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 Magdalen did not remain even with the angels at the sepulchre.** So anxious is the soul now that it

* Ps. cxlii. 7.
§ Cant. iii. 1, 2.
** S. John xx. 14.

† Ps. cxviii. 81.
|| Ps. civ. 4.

‡ Ps. lxxvii. 10.
¶ Cant. iii. 4.

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.

On the third step of the loving ladder, the soul worketh, and is fervent, and faints not. Of this step spoke the royal Prophet when he said, 'Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, he shall delight exceedingly in His commandments.*' If fear, the fruit of love, produces this delight, what will be the effect of love itself? On this step of the ladder the soul looks on great things as little, on many as few, and on length of time as a moment, by reason of the burning fire which consumes it. 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?

Third step,—
Good works.

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 die for Him a thousand times it would be comforted. It looks upon itself as unprofitable in all it does, and on its whole life as worthless. Another most wonderful effect is that it looks upon itself as being in truth the very worst of all, for two reasons: first, because its love continues to show it what God deserves at its hands; and secondly, because it acknowledges to itself that even the great things it does for God are imperfect and faulty. Hence confusion of face and affliction when it compares the meanness of its own

Charity is not
puffed up,—
why.

* Ps. cxi. 1.

† Gen. xxix. 20.

conduct with the Majesty of God. On this third step the soul is very far from giving way to vainglory or presumption, or from condemning others. These anxious and other effects of the same kind are wrought in the soul when on the third step of the ladder, and so the soul acquires strength and courage to ascend to the fourth.

Fourth step,
—Suffering
without
weariness.
'Amor om-
nia seava et
immania
prorsus fa-
cilia et prope
nulla efficit.'

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 S. 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 she expressed her longing for the last, saying: '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.† The spirit is now so strong, and has so subdued the flesh, 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. All it cares for now is how it shall please God, and serve Him in some measure as He deserves to be served, and in some degree corresponding with the graces it has received, and this at any and every cost.

The spirit re-
gardless of
the flesh.

Disinterested
love.

The spiritual man now is saying in his 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 as we ought, so as to bind Thee to show us Thy mercy continually.

* Serm. LXX de Verb. Evan. Matth. Opp. tom. v. p. 383. Ed. Ben.
† Cant. viii. 6.

This degree of love is exceedingly high, for now the soul, earnest in its love, follows after God in the spirit of suffering for His sake, and God therefore frequently and, as it were, continually permits it to rejoice, visiting it sweetly in spirit, for the boundless love of Christ, the Word, cannot look on the sufferings of the souls that love without hastening to their relief. He has promised to do so by the mouth of the Prophet, saying, 'I have remembered thee, pitying thy youth . . . when thou followedst me in the desert,'* which in its spiritual sense is that abandonment which the soul is conscious of with regard to all created things, when it cannot rest upon them or be 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.

On the fifth step of the ladder the soul longs after God, and desires Him with impatience. Such is now the eagerness of the soul to embrace, and be united to, the Beloved, that every moment of 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 the intenseness of its longing, as it is written: 'My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord.'† And now the soul must either obtain its desires or die, like Rachel, who said to Jacob, 'Give me children, otherwise I shall die.'‡ It 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 I am about to describe.

Fifth step,—
The soul
panteth after
God.

* Jerem. ii. 2. † Ps. lxxxiii. 2. ‡ Gen. xxx. 1.

CHAPTER XX.

Of the other five degrees.

BOOK
II.Sixth step,—
Running in
the way of
God's com-
mandments.

WHEN the soul has ascended to the sixth step, it runs lightly to God; and hope too runs without fainting, for love has made it strong so that it flies lightly onwards. It is of this step that the Prophet speaks, saying: 'They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint,* and the Psalmist also: 'As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God.' † The hart when thirsty runs quickly to the water. The cause of this quickness which the soul experiences on this step of the ladder is, that charity is enlarged, and the soul is now almost wholly purified, as it is written: 'without iniquity have I run,' ‡ and again, 'I have run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst enlarge my heart,' § and thus the soul ascends immediately from the sixth to the seventh degree of love.

Caused by
enlargement
of heart.

Seventh step,
—Holy bold-
ness in
prayer.

On the seventh step the soul becomes so bold in its intense and loving exaltation, that 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 in this state that Moses was when he said unto God: 'Either forgive 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, and so the Psalmist says; 'Delight in the Lord, and He will give

* Is. xl. 31.

† Ps. xli. 1.

‡ Ib. lviii. 5.

§ Ps. cxviii. 32.

|| 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

¶ Ex. xxxii. 31, 32.

thee the requests of thy heart.* Standing on this step, the Bride said boldly: 'Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth.' † But remember 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 of the seventh step, which God grants 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.

CHAP.
XX.Humility
essential to
every step of
the ladder.

On the eighth step the soul embraces the Beloved and holds Him fast. 'I found Him whom my soul loveth; I held Him; and I will not let Him go.' § Here the desires of the soul are satisfied, but not without interruption. Some souls are thus satisfied; but they quickly fall back, for if they did not, and if that state of satisfaction continued, they would have attained to a state of glory even in this life. For this reason 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.' || The next step is the ninth, the degree of the perfect.

Eighth step,
—The posses-
sion of God.

On the ninth step the soul is on fire sweetly. This is the degree of the perfect, who burn sweetly in God, for this sweet and delicious ardour is the work of the Holy Ghost in the union of the soul with God. S. 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 whole 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

Ninth step,
—The sweet
fire of Divine
love.' Dum Deum
in ignis vi-
sione susci-
piunt, per
amorem sua-
viter arse-
runt.'

* Ps. xxxvi. 4.

† Cant. i. 1.

‡ Esth. v. 2; viii. 4.

§ Cant. iii. 4.

|| Dan. x. 11.

¶ Hom. 30. in Evang.

BOOK
II.Tenth and
last step,—
The Beatific
Vision of
God.Purity of
heart the
faculty of
seeing God.Love reveals
all secrets.

more of this step, except that it is immediately followed by the tenth and the last, which does not belong to this life.

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 to the ninth, it goeth forth out of the body. Love works in such souls—they are few, and perfectly purified in this life—what Purgatory works in others in the next. For, 'Blessed are the clean in heart, for they shall see God.*' As I have said, this vision is the cause of the soul's perfect likeness unto God. 'We know,' saith S. 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 may be, it will be like unto God, and so is called, and is, by participation, God.

This is the secret ladder of which the soul speaks, though in the higher steps no longer secret to it, for love reveals itself to it in the great effects it produces. But on the highest step, the Beatific Vision, the last of the ladder, where God leans, 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.

* S. Matt. v. 8.

† 1 S. John iii. 2.

‡ S. John xvi. 23.

CHAPTER XXI.

The meaning of 'disguised.' The colours in which the soul disguises itself.

HAVING now explained why contemplation is 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.

For the clear understanding of this 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 hiding oneself from the observation of rivals, and thereby the better effect our object. Such a person assumes the disguise which shall most represent the affection of his heart, and which shall the best conceal him from his rivals.

The soul, then, touched with the love of 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 a garment of three principal colours, White, Green, and Purple, emblems of the three theological virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity; which not only enable the soul to enter into the good graces of the Beloved, but also protect it against its enemies.

Faith is a garment of such surpassing whiteness as to dazzle every intellectual vision; 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.

S. Peter knew of no better defence against the devil than

CHAP.
XXI.Third point;
The soul dis-
guised,—
why.Investments
of white,
green, and
purple, i. e.
Faith, Hope,
and Charity.1. Faith the
breast-plate
of defence
against the
devil.

BOOK
II.Inner garment of
Faith:—

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, without which 'it is impossible to please God.'† But with a living faith the soul is pleasing and acceptable unto God, Who says so Himself by the mouth of the Prophet: 'I will espouse 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 clad interiorly in faith.

When and
how assumed.

The soul assumes the white robe of faith when it goeth forth in the obscure night, walking in darkness and interior trials, receiving no light of consolation from the intellect; not from above, because heaven seems shut and God hidden; not from below, because its spiritual directors can give it no satisfaction. And when it endures patiently and perseveres, amidst its trials, without fainting or falling away from the Beloved, who by these trials and temptations is proving its faith, so that it may be able hereafter to say with the Psalmist, 'For the sake of the words of Thy lips, I have kept hard ways.'§

2. Hope the
helmet of
protection
against the
world.

Over the white robe of faith the soul puts on the second colour, green, the emblem of the virtue of Hope, which delivers it and protects from the assaults of its second enemy, the world. The freshness of a living hope in God inspires 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 what it hopes for, dry, withered, dead, and worthless. Here the soul 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

* 1 S. Pet. v. 9.
† Os. ii. 20.† Heb. xi. 6.
§ Ps. xvi. 4.CHAP.
XXI.

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; and the soul, disguised in the vesture of hope, is secure from its second foe, the world. This is the reason why S. Paul calls the hope of salvation a helmet.* 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 an 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; this is the work of hope, to direct the eyes of the soul to God; as it is written, 'My eyes are ever towards the Lord,'† looking for succour nowhere else; as the same Psalmist writes, 'As the eyes of the handmaid are on the hands of her mistress, so are our eyes unto the Lord our God until He have mercy upon us,'‡ hoping in Him.

The green vesture of hope—for the soul is then ever looking upwards unto God, disregarding all besides, 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 with one of thy eyes.'§ It would not have been expedient for the soul, if it had not put on the green robe of hope, 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 disguised goes forth securely in the secret and obscure night; seeing that it goes forth so detached from all possession, without any consolations, that it regards nothing, and that its sole anxiety

The soul by
hope obtains
its desires.* 1 Thess. v. 8.
† Ps. cxxii. 2.† Ps. xxiv. 15.
§ Cant. iv. 9.

BOOK
II.

is about God, putting its 'mouth in the dust if so be there may be hope.'*

3. The royal robe of Charity shields the soul from the flesh.

Over the white and green robes, as the crown and perfection thereof, 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 — charity is love — not only defends 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, beautifying the soul 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 in this robe of purple that the soul goeth forth in the obscure night 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.

Love of God excludes love of self.

The Intellect vested in Faith,

This, then, is that disguise which the soul assumes in the night of faith on the secret ladder; and these are the colours of it, namely, a certain most fitting disposition for its union with God in the three powers, Memory, Intellect, and Will. Faith blinds the intellect, and empties it of all natural intelligence, and thereby disposes it for the union of the Divine Wisdom. Hope empties the memory and withdraws it from all created things which can possess it; for as the Apostle writes, 'Hope that is seen is not hope.'§ Thus the

Memory in Hope,

* Lam. iii. 29.

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

‡ Cant. iii. 10.

§ Rom. viii. 24.

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.

CHAP.
XXI.

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, therefore, 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 what it aimed at, the loving 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 until it obtained the desired end, the union of love.

and the Will in Charity, leave all things for God alone.

CHAPTER XXII.

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 those who are in the state of perfection, as I shall proceed to explain.

Happiness of the soul in having overcome its enemies.

* Philipp. iii. 20.

BOOK
II.

I shall, however, be brief, because the most important point—that which chiefly determined me to explain the obscure night to many souls who enter on it without knowing it—has been already in some degree explained, and I have also described, though in inadequate terms, what great blessings descend upon the soul in that 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 which they will receive in this night. Beside this, it was a blessed lot for the soul on account of what it describes in the following line.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The wonderful hiding place of the soul, which the devil, though he penetrates into other higher places, cannot enter.

In darkness and concealment.

Fourth line
of the second
stanza ex-
plained.

IN concealment, that is, secretly and hidden. So when the soul says that it went forth in darkness and concealment, it explains the more clearly the great security it found in obscure contemplation on the road of the union of the love of God.

The words 'darkness and concealment' mean here that the soul, having gone forth into the obscurity, travelled therefore in secret, unknown to 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 obscurity of 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 sensitive part. And that, too, is the reason why it

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escapes from not only the embarrassments which the faculties naturally and through their weakness present before it, but also from the evil one who, were it not for the sensitive 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.

This being the case, it becomes a matter of great moment, greatly conducive to the soul's security, that the senses of our lower nature should have no knowledge whatever of the interior conversation of the soul with God, and that for two reasons; first, that the spiritual communication may be the more abundant, which it will be when the weakness of our lower nature does not impede 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 inferior 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 thy spirit and God.

Sense should
be ignorant
of what is
done in the
spirit,—
why.

It is true, when these interior and most hidden communications occur, that the devil, though he knows neither their nature nor their form, ascertains their existence, and that the soul is then receiving some great blessings, merely from observing the silence and repose of the senses, and the powers of our sensitive 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 sensitive part, which is accessible to him, by fears and horrible dread, intending thereby to trouble the higher and spiritual part

The devil
ascertains
the state of
the spirit by
evidences of
the sensitive
nature.

* S. Matt. vi. 3.

BOOK
II.
The spiritual
assaults of
Satan.

of the soul, and to frustrate the blessings it then receives and enjoys. But very often when this contemplation pours its light purely into the mind and offers it violence, the devil, with all his efforts, is not able to disquiet it, for then the soul becomes the recipient of renewed benefits, love, and a more secure peace; in its consciousness of the disturbing presence of the foe, it runs inwardly 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 multiplied, 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 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 what the Bride says in the Canticle, 'Behold, threescore valiant ones . . . surround the bed of Solomon . . . because of fears in the night.*' Strength and peace abound within the soul, though the flesh and the bones are frequently tormented without.

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 immense, 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 what happened to her when she tried to be interiorly recollected, so as to have the fruition of these goods: 'I went down,' she says, 'into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valleys, and to look if the vineyard had flourished . . . I knew not; my soul troubled

* Cant. iii. 7, 8.

me for the chariots' and the confused cries 'of Aminadab,' that is, the devil.*

This contradiction 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 a human 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.

This is the reason 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 signs and wonders resembling those 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.†

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 it is written, 'He beholdeth every high thing,'‡ that is, he apes them, and

CHAP.
XXIII.

The soul the
prize of a
contest.

Moses and
the magi-
cians of
Egypt.

* Cant. vi. 10, 11. † Ex. vii. 11, 22; viii. 6, 7. ‡ Job xli. 25.

BOOK
II.
Satan cannot
imitate
spiritual
visions.

insinuates himself among them as well as he can. Spiritual visions have neither form nor figure—such 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 disturb 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 quickly disembarasses itself, so that the terror of the evil spirit may have no time to make any impression upon it, and recollects itself, favoured herein by that spiritual grace which the good angel then communicates.

God suffers
the devil to
afflict the
soul,—why.

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 in regard to 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—Who never mortifies but to give life, Who never humbles but to exalt. This speedily ensues; for the soul, according to the measure of the dark purgation past, 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 Divine visitations which are the work of an angel, and wherein the soul is not wholly secure, nor hidden in so great obscurity but that the devil succeeds in discovering its state.

But when God visits the soul Himself, the words of the stanza are then true, for, in perfect obscurity, 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, certain substantial touches of the Divine union between Himself and the soul; in one of these, because the highest possible degree of prayer, the soul receives greater good than in all the rest. These are those touches for which the Bride prayed, saying, 'Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth.*' This being a thing that so intimately relates to God, the soul, anxious to approach Him, values and desires one touch of the Divinity more than all the other graces which He bestows upon it. Hence the Bride in the Canticle, after the many graces there described, is not satisfied, but prays for these Divine touches: 'Who shall give Thee to me for my brother, sucking the breast of my mother, that I may find Thee without, and kiss Thee' with the mouth of my soul, 'and now no man may despise me'† or presume against me. She means that communication which God makes alone, without, and secret from all creatures; and so she says, 'that I may find Thee without, and 'sucking the breast of my mother.' This occurs when the soul in liberty of spirit enjoys these blessings in sweetness and interior peace, and when the sensitive part thereof cannot hinder it, nor the devil by means of that sensitive part interfere with it. Then, indeed, the evil spirit will not venture to assail the soul, because he will not be able to approach it, neither can he know of those Divine touches in the substance of the soul wrought in loving knowledge by the substance of God. No man can arrive at this blessed condition but-by

CHAP.
XXIII.

Neither
angel nor
devil can
penetrate
the soul
directly.

* Cant. i. 1.

† Cant. viii. 1.

BOOK
II.

interior purgation and detachment, by being spiritually hidden from all created things. It is a work wrought in obscurity, 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.'

The soul
conscious of
two forces.

When these favours are shown to the soul in secret, that is, in the spirit only, the higher and lower portions of the soul seem to it—it knows not how—to be so far apart that it recognises two divisions in itself, each so distinct from the other, that neither seems to have anything in common with the other, being in appearance so separated and distinct. And, in reality, this is in a certain manner true, for in its present condition, which is wholly spiritual, it has no commerce with the sensitive part.

Thus the soul becomes wholly spiritual, and the spiritual passions and desires are in a great degree extinguished 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.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

My house being now at rest.

Explanation
of last line
of second
stanza.

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.

The two-fold
rest,—the
flesh at peace
with the
spirit; the
spirit at
peace with
God.

As the soul is doubly assailed and purified in the warfare of the obscure night; that is, in all the senses, passions, and powers of the sensitive and spiritual parts of it; so, also, in all these senses, passions, and powers of the sensitive and spiritual parts does it attain doubly to peace and rest. The words, 'My house being now at rest,' are repeated at the

end of the second stanza, on account of the division of the soul into spiritual and sensitive, which parts, if they are ever to go forth into the Divine union of love, must first of all be changed, corrected, and 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 our lower nature. These words, therefore, which in the first stanza relate to the tranquillity of our lower and sensitive nature, now, in the second stanza, refer particularly to the higher and spiritual part of the soul; and this is the reason of the repetition.

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, which, in secret, hidden from the turmoil of Satan, sense, and passion, it receives from the Divinity, whereby the soul is tranquillised, purified, strengthened, and confirmed, so as to become an effectual partaker of that union which is the Divine espousal of the soul to the Son of God. The instant the two houses of the soul are tranquil and confirmed, with the whole household of powers and desires sunk in sleep and silence, as to all things of heaven and earth, the Divine Wisdom, in the bond of loving possession, unites itself to the soul, and that is fulfilled which is written, 'While all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, Thy Almighty Word leapt down from heaven from Thy royal throne.*' The same truth is set before us in the Canticle where the Bride, after passing away from 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.†'

This union is unattainable without great purity, and purity

CHAP.
XXIV.

The soul
returned to
the likeness
of original
justice.

Divine
espousals of
the soul with
the Word of
God.

* Wisd. xviii. 14.

† Cant. iii. 4.

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 obscure 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, but only when it went forth into the obscurity anxious with love.

CHAPTER XXV.

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

The third
stanza
explained.

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.

Blessings of
the spiritual
night.

1. In this blessed night of contemplation God guides 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 to disturb it or detain it on the road to the union of love.

2. The second blessing of the spiritual obscurity of this night is, that all the faculties of the higher nature of the soul are in darkness. Consequently the soul, seeing nothing,

* Cant. iii. 1.

and unable to see, is not detained by anything which is not God from drawing near unto Him, and, therefore, advances freely, unencumbered by the obstacles of forms and figures and natural apprehensions: for these are the things which usually embarrass the soul, and prevent it from being always in union with God.

3. The third blessing is, that while the soul is supported by no particular interior light of the intellect, nor by any exterior guide comforting it on this high road—the obscure darkness has deprived it of all this—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.

CHAP.
XXV.

O Domine,
non mori,
sed pati.

END OF THE OBSCURE NIGHT.

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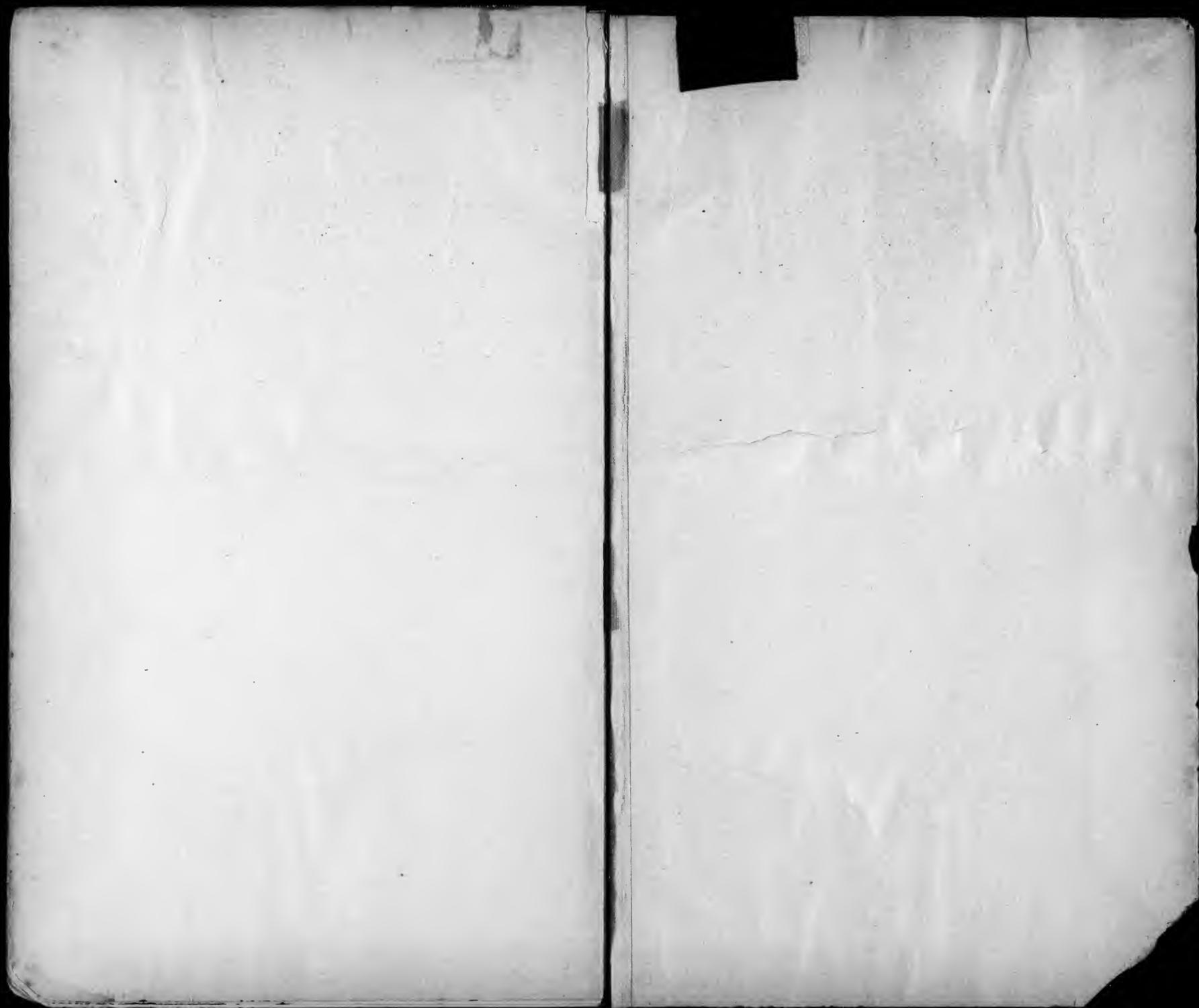
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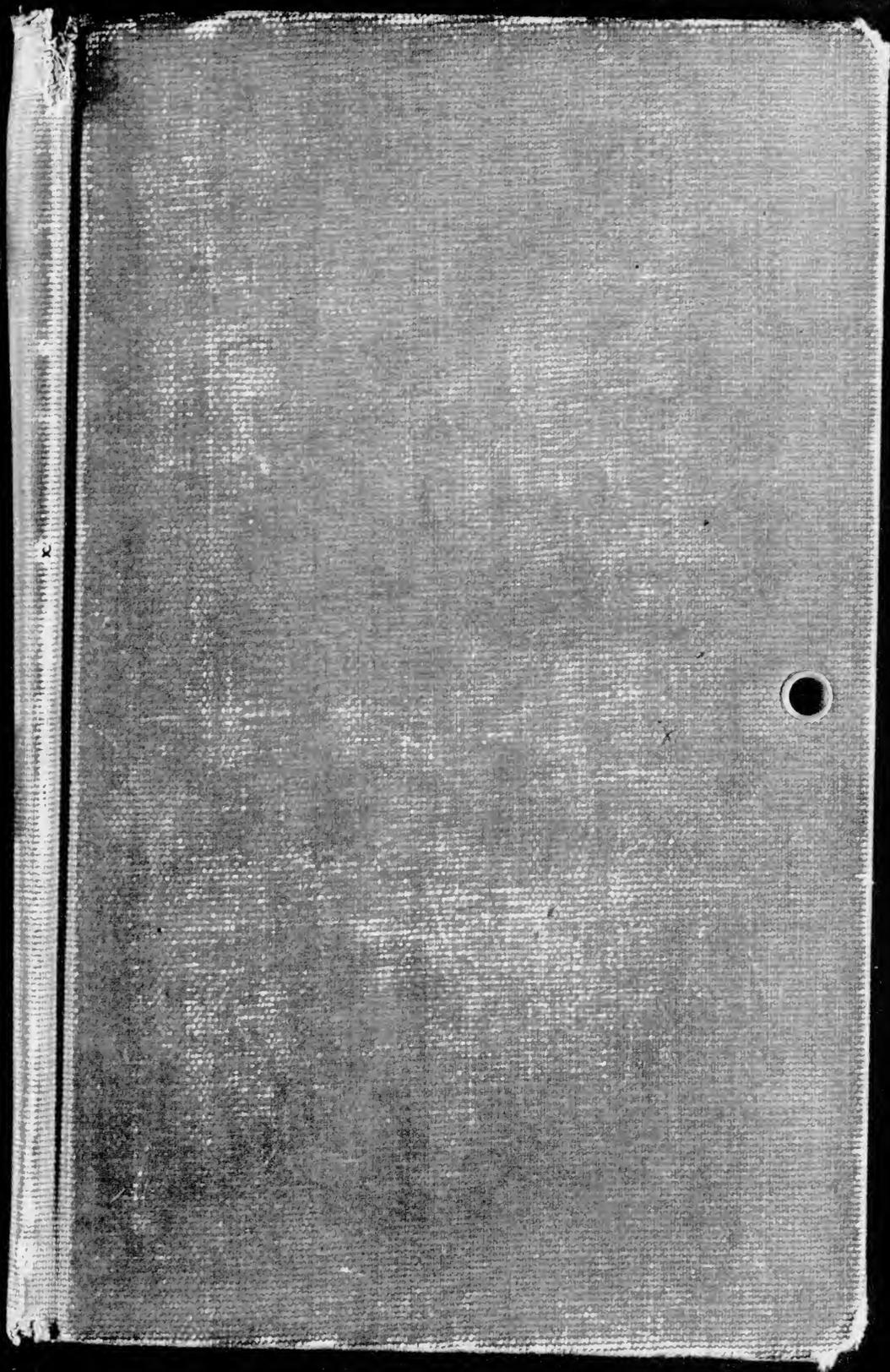
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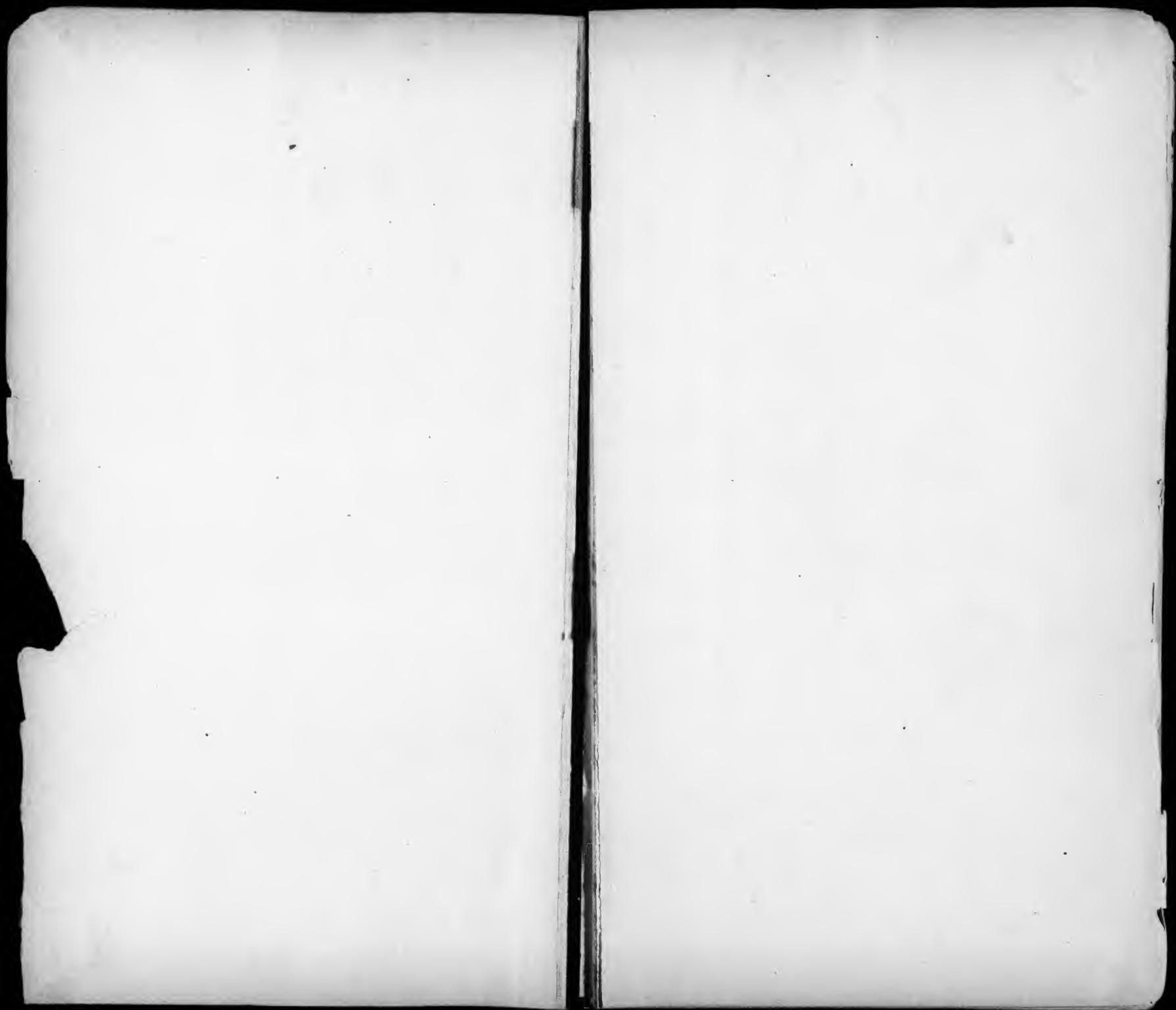
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THE
COMPLETE WORKS
OF
SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS,
OF THE
ORDER OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL SPANISH

BY

DAVID LEWIS, Esq. M.A.

EDITED BY THE OBLATE FATHERS OF SAINT CHARLES.

WITH A PREFACE

BY

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL WISEMAN.

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A
SPIRITUAL CANTICLE
BETWEEN
THE SOUL AND CHRIST.

A

SPIRITUAL CANTICLE

BETWEEN

THE SOUL AND CHRIST.

PROLOGUE.

As this Canticle seems to have been written in a fervour of love for God, Whose love and wisdom are so infinite as, in the words of Scripture, to reach 'from end to end;'^{*} and as the soul, under its influence, manifests a somewhat similar force and amplitude in speaking of it, I do not intend to explain the grandeur and richness which a mind fruitful in love may find herein. It would be gross ignorance to think that the outpourings of love and of the mystical intelligence—the subject of these stanzas—could be described by any words of man; for, as saith the Apostle,† the Spirit of God, Who 'helpeth our infirmities,' dwelling in us, 'asketh for us with unspeakable groanings' what we can neither understand nor comprehend. Who then can describe that which He reveals to those loving souls in whom He dwells? Who can express in words their feelings and their desires? Assuredly no one, not even they themselves, who have such experiences. This is the reason why men hide their feelings beneath figures,

The love and wisdom of God surpass expression.

Subject of the Spiritual Canticle.

Fitness of figurative language.

^{*} Wisd. viii. 1.

† Rom. viii. 26.

PROLOGUE. comparisons, and similitudes, and in the abundance of the spirit utter mysteries and secrets rather than explain themselves in intelligible words. 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 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 of the incapacity of ordinary language to convey His meaning, uttered His mysteries in strange terms and similitudes. It follows from this, that after all that the holy Doctors have said on the subject, and indeed after all they may say hereafter, no words can explain it; words can do little here; and so, in general, all that men may write falls far short of the matter of which they treat.

Dispositions of the student,—Simplicity and Love.

Example of the Canticle of Solomon.

The Author's purpose.

The reader's liberty.

Finis operis,—Caritas.

The stanzas that follow having been written under the influence of that love which proceeds from the overflowing mystical intelligence, cannot for this reason 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, which enables us to love God without a clear comprehension of Him.

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 certain points and effects of prayer: many of which being referred to

in these stanzas, I must not omit all of them. I shall, however, pass over the more ordinary ones, and treat briefly of the more extraordinary ones 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 carried inwards to the bosom of His Divine love. I therefore trust, though I may discuss some points of the 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 relished also.

And in order that what I am going to say may be the better received, submitting myself to higher judgments, and unreservedly to that of our holy mother the Church, I intend to say nothing in reliance on my own personal experience, nor 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 the most difficult of comprehension. The method I propose to follow in the matter is, first of all, to cite the express words of Scripture, 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.

PROLOGUE.

Two reasons for treating of the more unusual states of prayer.

Relation between scholastic and mystical Theology.

The Judge, sources and test of the Author's doctrines.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE SOUL AND CHRIST.

I

THE BRIDE.

DIALOGUE.

Prayer and
Mortifica-
tion.

Where hast Thou hidden Thyself?
Why hast Thou forsaken me in my groaning, O my
Beloved?
Thou didst fly like the hart, away,
When Thou hadst wounded me.
I ran after Thee, crying; but Thou wert gone.

II

Earnest
Longing.

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

III

Courage and
Resolution.

In search of my Love
I will traverse mountains and strands;
I will gather no flowers,
I will fear no wild beasts;
And I will overpass the mighty and the frontiers.

IV

Meditation.

Ye groves and thickets
Planted by the hand of the Beloved;
Ye 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 beholding them only
As He passed,
He clothed them with His beauty.

VI

THE BRIDE.

DIALOGUE.

Contempla-
tion.

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

VII

All they who serve
Relate a thousand graces of Thee;
And all wound me more and more,
And they leave me dying,
While they babble I know not what.

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 what Thou hast stolen?

X

Quench Thou my troubles,
For none else can do so;
And let mine eyes behold Thee
Who art their light,
And it is for Thee alone I would use them.

DIALOGUE.The Spiritual
Betrothal.

XI

Reveal Thy presence,
And let the vision of Thy beauty kill me.
Behold, the disease
Of love is incurable
Except in Thy presence and in the light of Thy
countenance.

XII

O Fount of crystal !
O that on Thy silvered surface
Thou wouldest mirror forth at once
Those eyes desirable
Which I have in my heart delineated !

XIII

Turn them away, O my Beloved !
I fly away.

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.

DIALOGUE.

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

Cease, O thou killing north wind !
Come, O south wind, thou that awakenest love !
Blow through my garden,
And let its odours flow,
And my 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 my threshold.

XIX ✓

Hide Thyself, O my Beloved !
Let Thy face shine on the mountains.
Do not tell it,
But regard the companions
Of her who traverses strange islands.

XX ✓

THE BRIDEGROOM.

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

DIALOGUE.

The Spiritual
Nuptials.

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 peace.

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 her Beloved.

XXIII

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

XXIV

THE BRIDE.

Our bed is of flowers
By the 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 inmost cellar *du 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
I am no longer seen or found,
Say that I am lost ;
That, being enamoured,
I lost myself ; and yet I gained.

XXX

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

DIALOGUE.

DIALOGUE.

XXXI

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

XXXII

When Thou didst regard me,
Thine eyes imprinted Thy grace in me :
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
Her 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 her 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.

DIALOGUE.The eternal
Marriage
Feast.

XXXVII

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

XXXVIII

There Thou wilt show me
What my soul desired ;
And there Thou wilt give at once,
O Thou, my life !
What 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 fire that consumes, but without pain.

XL

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

ARGUMENT.

The three ways :
1. Purgative.
2. Illuminative.
3. Unitive.

These stanzas describe the career of the soul from its first entrance on the service of God till it comes to the final state of perfection—the spiritual marriage. They refer to the three conditions of the spiritual life—the Purgative, Illuminative, and Unitive ways; some properties or effects of which they explain.

The first part relates to beginners—to the purgative way. The second to the advanced—to the state of spiritual espousal, that is, the illuminative way. The next part relates to the unitive way—that of the perfect, where the spiritual marriage is brought to pass. The unitive way, or 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.

INTRODUCTION.

The soul awakened,
1. By motives of duty and fear;

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

^{*} Job xiv. 5.

† 1 S. Pet. iv. 18.

‡ S. Matth. vii. 14.

§ 2 Kings xiv. 14.

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 repayment 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 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, invokes the Beloved and says:

STANZA I.

THE BRIDE.

*Where hast Thou hidden Thyself?
Why hast Thou forsaken me in my groaning, O my Beloved?
Thou didst fly like the hart, away,
When Thou hadst wounded me.
I ran after Thee, crying; but Thou wert gone.*

EXPLANATION.

Here 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 His absence, unreleased from the burden of the flesh, unable to enjoy Him in the glory of eternity. Hence it cries out, 'Where hast Thou hidden Thyself?'

^{*} S. Matth. v. 26.

† Sophon. i. 12.

STANZA
I.

2. By motives of gratitude and sorrow.

The soul begins to seek Christ.

STANZA
I.

In this life
any clear
conception of
the Divine
Essence
impossible.

It is as if the soul said, Show me, O thou 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 S. John, 'the bosom of the Father,'* the Divine Essence, transcending all mortal vision, and concealed from all human understanding, as the Prophet saith, 'Verily Thou art a hidden God.'† Remember, then, that the communications and sense of His presence, however great they may be, and the most sublime and profound conceptions 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?'

State of the
soul not to be
judged by
sensible
emotions.

Neither sublime communications nor sensible devotion 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, when it is itself dried up, obscured, and abandoned, it must not on that account suppose that God is far from it; for in truth the presence of these things is no sign of its being in a state of grace, nor is the absence thereof a sign that it is not; for 'man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred.'§

* S. John i. 18.

† Job. ix. 11.

‡ Is. xlv. 15.

§ Eccles. ix. 1.

STANZA
I.

Mystery of
the Father
and the Son
in the Blessed
Trinity.

The chief object of the soul here is not only to ask 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, 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.'* To ask to be shown the place where He fed was to ask to be shown the Essence of the Divine Word, the Son; for 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 lay in the midday, she asked the same thing, for 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 reposes wholly, communicating to Him His whole Essence. The 'midday' is eternity, where the Father is ever begetting and the Son ever begotten.

This pasture, then, is the Bridegroom Word, where the Father feedeth in infinite glory. He is also the bed of flowers whereon He profoundly reposes with infinite delight of love, and 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?'

That the thirst soul may find the Bridegroom, and be united to Him 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 loiter uselessly in

Where is the
hiding-place
of Christ?

* Cant. i. 6.

STANZA
I.God hidden
in the soul.

'Multum
laboravi
quaerens Te
extra me . . .
et non inveni,
quia malè
quaerebam
foris, quod
erat intus.'

Joy of being
close to God.

the footsteps of its companions. Remember, therefore, 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, S. Augustine 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?'

O thou soul, most beautiful of creatures, who so earnestly longest to know the place where thy Beloved is, that thou mayest seek Him, and be united to Him! 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; yea, rather rejoice that thou canst not be without it, 'for lo, the kingdom of God is within you.'† So saith the Bridegroom Himself, and His servant, S. 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?§ 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 with interior recollection, seeing that thou hast Him so near. Then love Him, then desire Him, then adore Him, and go not 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 near,

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

† S. Luke xvii. 21. ‡ 2 Cor. vi. 16. § Mt. Carmel, Bk. 2, c. 5.

STANZA
I.

than that which is within. 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 then be searched after the more certainly. The knowledge of this is what thou askest for, O soul, when with loving affection thou criest: 'Where hast Thou hidden Thyself?'

You will still urge and say, How comes it, then, that I find Him not, if He is within my soul? How comes it that I do not feel His presence? It is because He is hidden, and because thou also hidest not thyself that thou mayest find Him and feel Him; for he that will seek that which is hidden must 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 wilt be conscious of His presence, and love Him; then wilt thou enjoy Him in secret, and delight in Him in secret, in a way that no tongue or language can express. Courage, then, O soul most beautiful, thou knowest now that thy Beloved, whom thou desirest, dwelleth hidden within thy breast; strive, therefore, to be hidden with Him, and then thou shalt embrace Him, and be conscious of His presence with loving affection. Consider also that He invites thee Himself 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: 'hide thyself a little for a moment,'‡ that is, for the

The soul
must hide
itself to find
the hidden
God.

* S. Matth. xiii. 44.

† Ib. vi. 6.

‡ Is. xxvi. 20.

STANZA
I.

time of this mortal life; for, if now during this brief interval, thou wilt 'with all watchfulness keep thy heart,'* God will most assuredly give thee, as He hath promised by His prophet, 'the hidden treasures and the concealed riches of secret places.'† The substance of these concealed riches is God Himself, for He is the substance of faith, and faith is the secret and the mystery. And when that which faith conceals shall be revealed, or, as the Apostle saith, 'When that which is perfect is come,'‡ then shall be revealed to the soul the substance and mysteries of these secrets.

How and where God is seen in this life.

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 with, and transformed in, the Son of God, the Bridegroom, by love. 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?'

Faith and love lead to the secret chamber of God.

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; 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

* Prov. iv. 23.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

‡ Is. xlv. 3.

§ Exod. xxxiii. 22, 23.

STANZA
I.

of which I am speaking, is the foot that journeys onwards to God, and love is the guide pointing out the way. And while the soul meditates on the mysterious secrets of faith, it will merit the revelation, on the part of love, of that which faith involves, namely, the Bridegroom whom it longs for, in this life by spiritual grace and the Divine union, and in the next in essential glory, face to face, when He can be no longer hidden.

In the meanwhile, however, though the soul attains to union, the highest estate possible in this life, yet inasmuch as He is still hidden from the soul in the bosom of the Father, the soul longing for Him in the life to come, ever cries: 'Where hast Thou hidden Thyself?'

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 all thou canst reach. Rest not, therefore, neither wholly nor in part, on what thy faculties can embrace; never seek to satisfy thyself with what thou comprehendest in God, but rather with what thou comprehendest not; and do not rest on the love of that which thou canst understand and feel, but rather on that which is beyond thy understanding and feeling: this is to seek Him by faith. God is 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 the unwise, who, with low views of God, 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 it is written, 'He made darkness his covert.'* Thus, when thou art near unto Him, the very

Faith and love surpass understanding and feeling.

* Ps. xvii. 12.

STANZA
I.

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* Ps. xvii. 12.

STANZA
I.

infirmity of thy vision makes the obscurity 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?'

God must be appreciated and loved above all things.

'Why hast thou forsaken me in my groaning, O my Beloved?' The soul calls Him 'my Beloved,' the more to move Him to listen to its cry, for God most readily listens to the voice of him who loves Him. Thus He speaks Himself: 'If you abide in Me . . . you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done to you.'* The soul may then 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 Dalila observed in Samson when she said, '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 effectual before God, and they shall not obtain their petitions until, persevering in prayer, they fix their minds upon God and their hearts wholly in loving affection upon Him, for nothing can be obtained from God but by love.

Love obtains all things.

'Why hast Thou forsaken me in my groaning?' implies 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 lovers of God. Are they satisfied with anything less than God? Do I say content? Yea, if a man possess all things he cannot be content,—the greater his possessions the less will be his contentment, for the heart cannot be satisfied with

Test to discern the true lovers of God,—what.

* S. John xv. 7.

† Judg. xvi. 15.

STANZA
I.

possessions, but rather in detachment from all things and in poverty of spirit. And as the perfection of love wherewith we have the fruition of God consists in this poverty, the soul lives therein with a special grace in this life, when it has attained to it with a certain contentment, but not satiety; for David, notwithstanding all his perfection, hoped for that in Heaven, saying, 'I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear.'*

Thus, then, the peace and tranquillity, and the satisfaction of the heart, to which the soul may attain in this life, are not sufficient to relieve it from its interior groaning—peaceful and painless though it be, while it hopes for that which is still wanting. Groaning belongs to hope, as the Apostle teaches us, saying, '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 whose heart is enamoured, for where love wounds there is heard the 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 alone, in sudden aridity.

This life cannot satisfy the soul.

In this state it cries out, 'Thou hast fled like the hart, away,' comparing Him to a roe or a young hart: 'My Beloved is like a roe or a young hart.'‡ This comparison extends not only to His being like a stranger, solitary and shunning company, as the hart, but also to His rapid hiding and revealing of Himself in His visits to devout souls for the purpose of comfort and encouragement, and in His retiring from them for their trial, humiliation, and instruction. In consequence of this, His absence is most keenly felt, as it appears from the words which follow:

God tries his servants by dryness of spirit.

'When Thou hadst wounded me.' It is as if it said, It

* Ps. xvi. 15.

† Rom. viii. 23.

‡ Cant. ii. 9.

STANZA
I.

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 sufferings, run away from me with the swiftness of the hart, and not permit me to embrace Thee, even for a moment.

Transformation of the desires and affections in Divine Love.

For the clearer understanding of this expression 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 certain secret touches of love, which, like a fiery arrow, pierce and penetrate the soul, and kindle 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 inflame the will, and the soul becomes so enveloped with fire as to appear consumed thereby. They make it go forth out of itself, and be renewed, transformed into another mode of existence, like the phoenix from the fire. 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. And now the changing of the reins is a great pain, and longing for the Vision of God, and it seems to the soul that God treats it with intolerable severity, not because He has wounded it—for that it considers to be its salvation—but because He leaves it in the pangs of love, because He has not wounded it to the quick 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, 'When Thou hadst wounded me.'

The soul says in effect, Thou hast abandoned me after

* Ps. lxxii. 21, 22.

STANZA
I.

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 soul; for by the wound of love the affections of the will lead most rapidly to the possession of the Beloved, whose touch it felt, and in the same degree also, His absence. And now the soul cannot have the fruition of Him as it desired. Thereupon succeed the sighs because of His absence; for these visitations of God are not like those which recreate and satisfy the soul, but 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 desire, and consequently pain, and 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.' There is no remedy for the wounds of love but from Him who inflicted them. And so the soul, urged by the vehemence of that burning which the wounds of love occasion, ran after the Beloved, crying unto Him for relief. This spiritual running after God has a twofold meaning. The first is a going forth out of all created things, hating and despising them; the second, a going forth out of oneself, self-forgetting, for the love of God. For when the love of God touches the soul with that vividness of which we are speaking, it so elevates it, that it goes forth not only out of itself in self-forgetfulness, but is also drawn away from its own judgment, natural ways, and inclinations, crying after God. O my Spouse, it seems to say, 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—

In the search for God the soul wounded by love forsakes,

1. Creatures,

2. Self.

STANZA
I.Painful sense
of the absence
of God.

and raised me up to Thyself, crying after Thee in detachment from all things that I might be attached to Thee.

'Thou wert gone.' That is, when I sought to embrace Thee, 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 broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth. I sought Him and I found Him not.'* The rising of the Bride-soul—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.

This painfulness, this 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 pain 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.

* Cant. iii. 2.

† Ib. v. 6, 7.

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, agonize, and die.*

EXPLANATION.

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.'

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 from 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.' 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 up by Angels, as the Angel said to Tobias: 'When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead . . . I offered thy prayer to the Lord.'*

* Tob. xii. 12.

STANZA
II.

Pure love on
earth feeds
the soul,
and in
Heaven
pleads for it.

STANZA
II.Pastoral
office of the
Angels.

The shepherds are also 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 them both to be its messengers to the Beloved, and thus addresses them all: 'If you shall see Him.'

Prayer
answered in
due time.

'If you shall see Him:' if, to my great happiness, you shall come into His presence, so that He shall see you and hear your words. God, indeed, knoweth all things, even the very thoughts of the heart, as He said unto Moses,* but then it is that 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 come; then we say that He hears and sees them, as in the case of the children of Israel, who after four hundred years of misery were heard: 'I have seen,' saith He, '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 the Angel Gabriel bade Zacharias not to fear, because God had heard his prayer, and granted him a son, for which he had prayed many years; ‡ yet God had always heard him. Remember, therefore, that God, though He does not at once grant our petitions, will still succour us in His own time, for He is 'a helper in due time in tribulation,' § if we do not become fainthearted and cease to pray. This is what the soul means by saying, 'If you shall see Him,' if the time is come when it shall be His good pleasure to grant my petitions.

* Deut. xxxi. 21.
† S. Luke i. 13.

† Exod. iii. 7, 8.
§ Ps. ix. 10.

Two
examples.STANZA
II.

'Whom I love:' that is, whom I love more than all creatures. This is true of the soul when nothing is able to frighten it away from His service. And when the soul can truly say what follows; that is a sign that it loves Him above all things:

'Tell Him I languish, agonize, and die.' These are three necessities of the soul: namely, languor, agony, and death, for the soul that truly loves God with a love in some degree perfect, suffers threefold in His absence in the three powers—the intellect, the will, and the memory. In the intellect 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 agonizes, because it possesses not God, Who is its comfort and delight, as it is written: 'Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure.†' In the memory it dies, because it remembers its privation of all the goods of the intellect, 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 it is written, 'He is thy life.' ‡

Threefold
pain of the
soul:
1. In the
intellect,—
languor,
2. In the
will,—agony.
3. In the
memory,—
death.

Jeremias also speaks of these three necessities, praying unto God, and saying: 'Remember my poverty . . . the wormwood and the gall.§' Poverty relates to the intellect, to which appertain the riches of the knowledge of the Son of God, in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.¶ 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 spiri-

Illustrated by
the poverty,
wormwood,
and gall of
Jeremias.

* Ps. xxxiv. 3.
§ Lam. iii. 19.

† Ib. xxxv. 9.

‡ Deut. xxx. 20.
|| Coloss. ii. 3.

STANZA
II.

tually to the will, for the Angel said to S. 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.

These three necessities of 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—intellect, will, and memory. Observe here that the soul does no more than represent its necessities to the Beloved: for he who loves wisely is not anxious to ask for that which he wants and desires, being satisfied with hinting at his necessities, so that the Beloved 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.'§ 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 simply represent our necessity, 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 is my sole salvation, to help me; that as I am agonizing, and as He is my sole joy, to give me joy; that as I am dying, and as He is my sole life, to give me life.

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

We pray best when we simply state our case.

Two examples.

Three reasons.

Christ the sole Salvation, Joy, and Life.

STANZA III.

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

EXPLANATION.

THE soul, observing that its sighs and prayers are not enough for finding the Beloved, and that it has not been assisted either 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 actively seeking the Beloved, and the present stanza describes the nature of its search. It has to practise all virtue and 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 impede its present course.

'In search of my Love.' Here we are distinctly taught, that if we would 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 work ourselves, according to our power. God values our own efforts more than those of others in our behalf; and the soul here recollects the saying of the Beloved, 'Seek and you shall find.*' It is resolved on going forth to seek Him, because it cannot rest without finding Him, as many do who will not that God should cost

* S. Luke xi. 9.

STANZA
III.

Prayer to be accompanied by works of love and self-denial.

Personal effort necessary.

STANZA
III.

them anything but words, and even those carelessly uttered. Some, too, will not leave for His sake a place which is to their taste, expecting to receive all the sweetness of God fully in their heart without moving a step, without mortifying themselves by the abandonment of a single pleasure or useless delight. But until they go forth out of themselves to seek Him, however loudly they may cry, they will not find Him; for the Bride once sought Him in this way, but she found Him not—'In my bed by night I sought Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him and found Him not. I will rise and will go about the city: in the streets and broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth.'* She afterwards adds, that when she had endured certain trials she 'found Him.'†

God not
found in
self-will.

Night and
day in the
search for
God,—what.

He that 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 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 glorious and never fadeth away, and is easily seen by them that love her, and is found by them that seek her. She preventeth them that covet her, so that she first sheweth herself unto them. He that awaketh early to seek her shall not labour; for he shall find her sitting at his door.'‡ 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, sitting at the door without.

The soul says in search of its Beloved, 'I will traverse mountains and strands.' Mountains are lofty, and they signify virtues, partly on account of their height, and partly on account of the toil and labour of ascending them, which is

* Cant. iii. 1.

† Ib. iii. 4.

‡ Wisd. vi. 13.

STANZA
III.

the practice of the contemplative life. The strands are low, and signify mortifications, penances, and the spiritual exercises of the active life, together with those of the contemplative; for both are necessary in seeking after God and in acquiring virtue. The soul then says, in effect, In searching after my Beloved I will practise heroic 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.

'I will gather no flowers.' He that will seek after God must have his heart detached, resolute, and free from all evils, and from all 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 the soul 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 ruin its spiritual journey.

These flowers are of three kinds—temporal, sensual, and spiritual. All of them occupy the heart, and stand in the way of 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 mind, which will 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

Way to God
in good
works and
self-mortifi-
cation.

Necessity of
detachment
from created
goods;

1. Temporal.
2. Sensual.
3. Spiritual.

* Ps. lxi. 11.

STANZA
III.

satisfactions as well as to temporal goods and spiritual comforts. Remember, it is not only temporal goods and bodily pleasures that 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 obstacles in the way of the Cross of Christ, the Bridegroom. He, therefore, that will go onwards must not only not stop to gather flowers, but he must also have the courage and resolution to say as follows:—‘I will fear no wild beasts; and I will overpass 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.

The three enemies;

1. The world.

Three lions in the way;
1. Loss of favour.
2. Loss of pleasure.
3. Contempt from others.

The world is the wild beasts, because in the beginning of the heavenly journey the imagination pictures to us the world like 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. But there are generous souls who have to encounter wild beasts of a more interior and spiritual nature—difficulties, 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 it is written: ‘Many are the afflictions of the just; but out of them all will the Lord deliver them.’* But the truly enamoured soul, preferring

* Ps. xxxiii. 20.

STANZA
III.

the Beloved to all things, relying on His love and favour, finds no difficulty in saying: ‘I will fear no wild beasts.’

‘And I will overpass the mighty and the frontiers.’ 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 their mighty warfare 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 earth that can be compared with him who was made to fear no one.’† 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 perceive his illusions without humility and mortification. Hence the exhortation of the Apostle: ‘Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to 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.

2. The devil,—why called ‘the mighty.’

To be overcome by Prayer and the Cross, i.e. humility and mortification.

The soul says also that it will cross the frontiers: these are the natural resistance and rebellion of the flesh against the spirit, for the ‘flesh lusteth against the spirit,’ § and sets itself as a frontier, resisting its spiritual progress. 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

3. The flesh.

* Ps. liii. 5. † Job xli. 24. ‡ Eph. vi. 11. § Galat. v. 17.

STANZA
III.

The way to
seek the
Beloved,—
what.

they influence the soul, the mind will be impeded by them from advancing to the true life and spiritual delight. This is set clearly before us by S. Paul, saying: 'If by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.'* This, then, is the way to seek the Beloved: a firm resolution to gather no flowers by the way; courage so as not to fear the wild beasts, and strength to overpass the mighty and the frontiers; having set before us only the road over the mountains and the strands, in the way just explained.

STANZA IV.

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

EXPLANATION.

THE disposition requisite for entering on the spiritual journey, abstinence from joys and pleasure, being now described; and the courage also with which we have to overcome temptations and trials, wherein consists the practice of self-knowledge, which is the first step to the knowledge of God, the soul now begins to advance through the 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 foreshadow, as it is written: 'For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.'† The invisible things of God are made known by created things, visible and invisible.

* Rom. viii. 13.

† Rom. i. 20.

Self-know-
ledge should
precede the
knowledge of
creatures.

God seen in
His works.

STANZA
IV.

¹Interrogatio
creaturarum,
profunda
consideratio
ipsarum.—
loc. cit.

Here the soul addresses itself to created things, demanding of them its Beloved. And here we observe with S. Augustine that the inquiry addressed to created things is the thought of the Creator which they suggest. Now the soul considers the elements and other creatures below them, the heavens and other material objects which God has created in them, and finally the heavenly host, saying:

'Ye groves and thickets.' 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. The elements 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 element, planted there, as a tree in a grove, where it is born and nourished.

The variety,
beauty, and
order,
1. Of the
terrestrial
creation.

And, in truth, God so ordered it at the creation of 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, considering that this is the effect of His commandment, cries out, 'Planted by the hand of the Beloved.'

These words imply that the hand of 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.

Creation the
work of God
directly.

'Ye verdant meads.' These are the heavens; for the things which He hath created in the heavens are of incorruptible

2. Of the
celestial.

STANZA
IV.

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 celestial creations.

*Constitutat
te Christus ..
Intra Paradisi
sui semper
amena
virentia.*

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.'*

*Angels and
Saints the
flowers of
Paradise.*

The soul adds that this verdant mead is 'enamelled with flowers.' The flowers are the Angels and the holy souls adorning and beautifying that place as curious enamel on a vase of pure gold.

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

STANZA V.

ANSWER OF THE CREATURES.

*A thousand graces diffusing
He passed through the groves in haste,
And beholding them only
As He passed,
He clothed them with His beauty.*

EXPLANATION.

*Responsio
creaturarum,
attestatio
ipsarum de
Deo.—loc.cit.*

THIS is the answer of the creatures, which, according to S. Augustine, is the testimony which they furnish to the grandeur and perfections of God. This is the result of the soul's 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 upon them traces of His presence, not only by creating them out of nothing, but

* Ordo commendationis animae.

STANZA
V.

also by endowing them with innumerable graces and qualities, making them beautiful in admirable order and unceasing mutual dependence. All this He wrought in wisdom, by which He created them, which is the Word, His only begotten Son.

*God created
all things by
His Son.*

'A thousand graces diffusing.' These graces are the multitude of His creatures. The term 'thousand' 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.' To pass through the groves is to create the elements; 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 greatness, power, and wisdom, and His other Divine attributes. He passed 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.

*Res creatæ
Vestigia Dei.*

*God's
greatest
work,—the
Incarnation
and the
mysteries of
Faith.*

'And beholding them only as He passed, He clothed them with His beauty.' The Son of God is the 'brightness of His glory and the figure of His substance.'* God saw all things in the face of His Son. This was to give them their natural being, bestowing upon them many graces and natural qualities, and making them perfect, as it is

*Son of God
the model of
the creation.*

* Heb. i. 3.

STANZA
V.

The Incarnation gives supernatural beauty to the universe.

written, '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 was 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 with beauty and dignity.

INTRODUCTION.

The beauty of nature a reflection of the uncreated Beauty of God.

MOREOVER, speaking according to the sense and feeling of contemplation, the soul beholds, in the vivid contemplation and knowledge of created things, such a multiplicity of graces, powers, and beauty in them, that they seem to it to be clothed with admirable beauty, and supernatural virtue derived from the infinite supernatural 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 forth as in the following stanza:—

* Genes. i. 31.

† S. John xii. 32.

‡ Ps. cxliv. 16.

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 seek.*

EXPLANATION.

While 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 while there is no remedy for this pain except in the presence and vision of the Beloved, the soul, distrustful of every other remedy, prays for the fruition of His presence. It says, in effect: Entertain me no more with any knowledge of Thee, or with Thy communications, or impressions of Thy grandeur, for these do but increase my longing, and the pain of Thy absence, for Thy presence alone can satisfy my will and desire. The will cannot be satisfied with anything less than the Vision of God, and therefore the soul prays that He may be pleased to give Himself to it perfectly in truth, in the consummation of love.

'O who can heal me?' That is, there is nothing in all the delights of the world, nothing in the satisfaction of the senses, nothing in the sweetness of the spirit that can heal or content me, and therefore it adds:—

'Give me perfectly Thyself.' No soul that really loves can be satisfied or content short of the fruition of God. For everything else 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,

STANZA
VI.
The soul only satisfied by the intuitive Vision of God.

Knowledge enflames love.

STANZA
VI.

or communication from Him—these are the messengers suggestive of Him—increase and quicken the soul's desire after Him, as crumbs of food 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.'

Our know-
ledge of God
in this life
partial and
incomplete.

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 it is which the soul prays for here, not satisfied with any other kind. Hence it says:—

'Send me no more a messenger.' That is, grant that I may no longer know Thee in this limited 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 Spouse, 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 my love: now that my love has become great, I cannot satisfy myself with them; do Thou, therefore, give me perfectly Thyself. It is as if it said: O Lord, my Spouse, 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 gavest 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 Thy messengers no more.

'Who cannot tell me what I seek.' I seek 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 what I seek. Instead of these messengers, therefore, be Thou the messenger and the message Thyself.

STANZA
VI.

In the
Beatific
Vision God is
both object
and medium.

STANZA VII.

*All they who serve
Relate a thousand graces of Thee;
And all wound me more and more,
And they leave me dying,
While they babble I know not what.*

EXPLANATION.

THE soul is described 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 higher knowledge which it derives from the rational creation, nobler than the other, that is, from Angels and from men. This is not all, for the soul now says 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.

God more
clearly seen
in His
rational
creatures.

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 it has of Him. The first is called a wound; not deep, quickly passing away like a wound which heals.

Three
wounds of
love inflicted
on the soul;

STANZA
VII.1. By the
works of
Nature.

This is the act of that knowledge of God which the creatures supply, which are His inferior work. This wounding of the soul, called also sickness, is thus spoken of by the Bride: '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.

2. By the
Incarnation
and the
Church.

The second is called a sore which enters deeper than a wound into the soul, and, therefore, of longer continuance, because it is a wound festering, on account of which the soul feels that it is dying of love. This sore is the act of the knowledge of the operations of 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 spouse, thou hast wounded my heart with one of thy eyes, and with one hair of thy neck.'† The eye signifies faith in the Incarnation, and the one hair is the love of the same.

3. By an
infused
supernatural
knowledge
of God.

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. This is the 'I know not what,' of which the creatures can but babble. This touch is not continuous nor protracted, but quick in its course, for otherwise soul and body would part. Hence the soul is dying of love, and dying the more when it sees that it cannot die of love. This is called impatient love, of which we have an illustration in Rachel, who, because of her love of children, said to Jacob, 'Give me children, otherwise I

* Cant. v. 8.

† Cant. iv. 9.

STANZA
VII.

shall die;* and in Job, saying: 'Who will grant . . . that He that hath begun may destroy me?'†

These two kinds of pain, the festering sore and dying, are here said to proceed from the rational creation; the sore, because the soul says that the rational creation relates innumerable graces of the Beloved in the mysteries of the Faith and the knowledge of God which they teach; the pain of dying, because it says of the rational creation that it babbles, that is, gives forth an impression and notion of the Divinity which is sometimes revealed to the soul in what it hears said of God.

'All they who serve.' 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 by contemplation and fruition in Heaven, as the Angels; others by loving and longing for Him on earth, as 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: They 'relate a thousand graces.' That is, they speak of the wonderful things of Thy grace and mercy in the Incarnation, and in the truths of Faith which they declare and ever relate of Thee; for the more they say, the more do they reveal Thy graces.

How Angels
and men
serve and
reveal God.

'And all wound me more and more.' The more the Angels inspire me, the more men teach me, the more do I love Thee; and thus all wound me more and more with love.

Greater
light, deeper
love.

'And they leave me dying, while they babble I know not what.' That is, the rational creation wounds me by relating Thy thousand graces; but that is not all, there is something

* Genes. xxx. 1.

† Job vi. 8, 9.

STANZA
VII.

Unspoken
mysteries of
the know-
ledge of God.

still more, I know not what, that remains unspoken, something still to be uttered, a certain profound impression of God still to be traced, a certain deep knowledge of God ineffable, the 'I know not what.' If what I can comprehend inflicts the wound and festering sore of love, what I cannot comprehend but feel profoundly, kills me. This happens occasionally to souls already advanced, whom God favours in what they hear, or see, or understand—and sometimes without these means—with a certain profound knowledge, in which they feel or apprehend the greatness and grandeur of God. In this state they judge so highly of God as to see clearly that they know Him not, and in their perception of His Immensity 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 Blessed in Heaven; there they who know Him most perfectly perceive most clearly that He is infinitely incomprehensible. To know God best is to know He is 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 creature 'babbles,' because it cannot perfectly utter what it attempts in babbling; as infants babble, who cannot explain distinctly or speak intelligibly that which they would convey to others.

To know
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know He is
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hensible.

INTRODUCTION.

THE soul derives light also from the other portions of creation, though not always so clear, when God is pleased to reveal to it the knowledge and significance of the meaning that is in them. They seem to set forth the greatness of God, but not perfectly; it is as if they revealed something which still they have not, and so they babble I know not what. The soul proceeds with its complaint, and, addressing its own life, speaks as in the stanza before us:—

STANZA
VIII.

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.*

EXPLANATION.

The soul perceiving itself to be dying of love, and yet not dying so as to have the free enjoyment 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 my life, how canst thou persevere in this life of the flesh; seeing that it is thy death and the privation of the true spiritual life of 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 thy God, how canst thou still persevere in a body so frail; when, in addition, those wounds, which the love of the grandeurs communicated by the Beloved inflicted upon thee, are sufficient to destroy life? And thus all thy perceptions of Him, all the impressions He

To the
loving soul
life in the
flesh is a kind
of death,—
why.

STANZA
VII.

Unspoken
mysteries of
the know-
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To the
loving soul
life in the
flesh is a kind
of death,—
why.

STANZA
VIII.

He lives the longest who loves God the most.

God is to the soul its twofold life ;
1. Of being,
2. Of love.

The enjoyment of this twofold life impeded by its natural life in the body.

makes upon thee, are so many touches and wounds of love that kill.

‘ But how thou perseverest, O life ! not living where thou livest.’ 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 the life of love which it lives in God Whom it loves, the soul has its radical and essential life in God, like all created things, according to the saying of S. Paul : ‘ In Him we live and move and are ;’* that is, our life, motion, and being is in God. S. John also says that all that was made was life in God : ‘ that which was made, in Him was life.’† When the soul sees that its essential 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 such power as to hinder it from the fruition of the true, real, and beatific life, which it lives in God by being 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 impedes the beatific, 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 essence, and all its operations and feelings by love. The soul, therefore, to depict more vividly the cruel nature of this fragile life, adds :—

* Acts xvii. 28.

† The Saint adopts a 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.

STANZA
VIII.

‘ The arrows bring death which thou receivest.’ That is, it seems to say, 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 knowledge and love of God, that they may well be called conceptions of God.

‘ From thy conceptions of the Beloved.’ That is, of His greatness, beauty, wisdom, grace, and power.

INTRODUCTION.

As the hart wounded with an arrow cannot rest, but seeks relief on all sides, plunging into the waters here and again there, whilst the arrow, notwithstanding all its attempts at relief, sinks deeper in, 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 to resign itself into the hands of Him Who wounded it, that He may relieve its sufferings, and effectually slay it through the violence of its love, it turns towards the Bridegroom Who is the cause of all, and says :—

Only He who wounds the soul can heal it.

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 what Thou hast stolen ?*

EXPLANATION.

Here the soul returns to the Beloved, still complaining of its pain ; for that impatient love which the soul now exhibits

STANZA
IX.

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 having no other physician or cure but the Beloved Who has wounded it, asks why He, having wounded its heart with the knowledge of His love, does not kill it in the vision of His presence; and why He abandons the heart which He has stolen through the love with which it is inflamed, after having deprived the soul of all power over it. The soul has now no power over the 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.

Deeper the wound
greater the joy, and desire
to depart to
the Vision of
the Beloved.

‘Why, after wounding this heart, hast Thou not healed it?’ The enamoured soul complains not of the wound itself, for the deeper the wound the greater is its joy, but that the heart, being wounded, 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 having wounded 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.

‘And why, after stealing it, hast Thou thus abandoned it?’ 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 own power and possession, and then abandoned it, without taking it into His own power and possession as the thief does with the

STANZA
IX.

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.

This consideration will enable us to determine whether we love God simply or not. If we love Him, our heart will not consider itself, nor look to its own pleasure or profit, but to the honour, glory, and pleasure of God; for the more the heart is occupied with self, the less is it occupied with God. Whether God has really stolen our heart may be ascertained 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 proportional 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 hast not carried away what Thou hast stolen?’ 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?

Two signs of
true love for
God.

Creatures
cannot give
rest to the
soul.

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

STANZA
IX.

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 lie down to 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.'*

The soul asks not for rest from labour but for the final end of its work; i.e. the perfection of love.

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 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 only of its work; because its work is to love, and it is the end of this that it longs for, namely, the perfection of the 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.

INTRODUCTION.

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; to whom all things are an annoyance, and who, amidst all things around him that present themselves to his thoughts, or feelings, or sight, longs

* Job vii. 2-4.

STANZA
X.
Three marks
of the loving
soul.

for nothing but health; and to whom everything that does not contribute thereto is wearisome and oppressive. The soul in pain because of its love of God has three peculiarities:—
1. 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 can resist no longer, still He is ever present in its heart. 2. The second peculiarity, namely, a loss of pleasure in everything, arises from the first. 3. The third also is a consequence of the second, all things become wearisome, and all affairs full of vexation and annoyance.

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 Magdalen, when in her burning love she looked for 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 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.

How the world becomes tasteless.

The Bride in the Canticle shows us that she had these three peculiarities when she was 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 veil from me.† The keepers

* S. John xx. 15.

† Cant. v. 6, 7.

STANZA
X.

that go about the city are the conversation of this world, which, when it 'finds' a soul seeking after God, inflicts upon it many wounds of pain, and grief, and loathing; for the soul not only does not find in it what it seeks, but rather an impediment to its seeking. They who keep the wall of contemplation, so that the soul may not enter—that is, evil spirits and worldly affairs—take away the veil of peace and the quiet of loving contemplation. All this inflicts infinite vexation on the soul enamoured of God; and while it 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 none else can do so;
And let my eyes behold Thee
Who art their light,
And it is for Thee alone I would use them.*

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 which they regard, and there is none other but He whom they desire to behold.

'Quench Thou my troubles.' The desire of love has this peculiarity, that everything said or done which does not harmonise with its object, wearies and annoys the will; which is rendered peevish when it sees itself disappointed in its desires. This state of things is here called 'troubles;' that is, the soul's longing after the Vision of God. These troubles nothing can remove except the fruition 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.

STANZA
X.

'For none else can do so.' 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 other satisfaction or comfort out of Him. The soul that finds no pleasure out of God cannot be long unvisited by the Beloved.

God visits
those who are
detached
from
creatures.

'And let my eyes behold Thee.' Let me see Thee face to face with the eyes of the soul.

'Who art their light.' 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, after the manner of earthly lovers when they would exhibit the affection they bear to the object of their love. The soul says in effect: 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 my eyes itself 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 it is written: 'And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof.'[‡]

God is the
light of the
soul.

'And it is for Thee alone I would use them.' The soul seeks to constrain the Bridegroom to permit it to see the light of its eyes, not only on the ground that it would be in darkness without it, but also on the ground that it will not look upon anything else but on Him. For as the soul is justly deprived of this Divine light if it fixes the eyes of the

* Ps. xxxvii. 11.

† Tob. v. 12.

‡ Apoc. xxi. 23.

STANZA
X.

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, and opens them only for the Vision of God.

INTRODUCTION.

Presence of
God as an
answer to
prayer.

BUT the loving Spouse of souls cannot bear to see them suffer long in their isolation, for 'he that toucheth you,' saith He, 'toucheth the apple of My eye;'^{*} especially when their sufferings proceed from their love for Him. 'It shall come to pass that 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. In that presence of Himself, 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 intervals of their love, shows them some of His own grandeur to quicken their fervour, and to prepare them for those graces which He intends for them afterwards. Thus the soul, in that obscure presence of God, beholding and feeling the supreme good and beauty hidden there, dies of its desire for the Vision, saying:—

^{*} Zach. ii. 8.

[†] Is. lxxv. 24.

[‡] Prov. ii. 4, 5.

STANZA XI.

*Reveal Thy presence,
And let the vision of Thy beauty kill me.
Behold, the disease
Of love is incurable
Except in Thy presence and in the light of Thy countenance.*

The soul, anxious to be possessed by the great God, Whose love has wounded and stolen its heart, and unable to suffer more, beseeches Him directly to reveal Himself, and to show His Beauty—that is, the Divine Essence—and to slay it in that vision, separating it from the body, which hinders the desired vision and fruition of Him. And further, setting forth the pain and sorrow of its heart, which continues to afflict it because of its love, and unable to discover any other remedy than the glorious vision of the Divine Essence, cries out: 'Reveal Thy presence.'

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 this presence that gives life and being, and if it were once withdrawn all things would return to nothing. This presence never fails in the soul. The second is His presence by grace, when He dwells in the soul, pleased and satisfied with it. This presence is not in all souls; for those that fall into mortal sin lose it, and no soul can know in a natural way whether it has this presence or not. The third is His presence of spiritual affection. God is wont to show His presence in many devout souls in divers ways of refreshment, joy, and gladness; yet this, like the others, is 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 these ways of His presence.

STANZA
XI.

God present
to the soul
in three
ways;
1. By his
Essence to
all.

2. By Grace
to those out
of mortal
sin.

3. By spiri-
tual affection
to devout
souls.

STANZA
XI.

'Reveal Thy presence.' 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 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, is chiefly the affective presence of the Beloved. Such is the nature of this presence that the soul felt in it a hidden infinite *something*, whereby 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 beneath that presence. This is in harmony with the experience of David, when he said: 'My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord.*' The soul now faints away with desire of being absorbed in the Supreme Good which it feels to be present and hidden; for though it be hidden, the soul is profoundly conscious of the good and delight which are there. The soul is attracted to this good with more violence than matter to its centre, and is unable to contain itself, by reason of the force of this attraction, from saying: Reveal Thy presence.

Moses on Mount Sinai in the presence of God saw such glimpses of the grandeur 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 favour in my sight. If, therefore, I have found favour in Thy sight, shew me Thy face, that I may know Thee and find grace before Thy eyes;† that is

The soul
prays for
the third
Presence.

* Ps. lxxxiii. 1.

† Exod. xxxiii. 12, 13.

STANZA
XI.

the grace which he longed for,—to attain to the perfect love of the glory of God. The answer of the 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 is so great, and the joy of the vision of it so intense, that if I grant it, thy soul cannot endure it in thy life which is so frail. The soul, conscious of this truth, whether through the words addressed to Moses, or through what it feels hidden in this presence, namely, that in this life it cannot gaze upon His beauty—since the mere glimpse of Him makes it faint away—anticipates the answer that may be given to it, as it was to Moses, and says: 'Let the vision of Thy beauty kill me.' That is, since the vision of Thee and Thy beauty is so full of delight that I must die in the act of beholding, let the vision of Thy beauty kill me.

Two visions are 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 bliss and glory. 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 grandeur and beauty of God, it would not only desire to die once in order to behold Him, but would endure joyfully a thousand most bitter deaths to behold Him even for a moment, and having seen Him would suffer as many deaths again to see Him for another moment.

It is necessary to observe, that the soul is speaking conditionally, when it prays that the vision of God's 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

Two fatal
visions.

* Exod. xxxiii. 20.

STANZA
XI.

Directly to
desire death
a natural
imper-
fection.

for death, because the desire of death is a natural imperfection. The soul, therefore, takes it for granted, that this corruptible life cannot coexist with the incorruptible life of God, and says: 'Let the vision of Thy beauty kill me.'

S. Paul teaches the same doctrine when he says: 'We would not be unclothed, but clothed upon, that that which is mortal may be swallowed up by life.'^{*} That is, we desire not to be divested of the flesh, but to be invested with glory. But reflecting that he could not live in glory and in a mortal body at the same time, he says in another place: 'having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.'[†]

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

To see God
dreaded
under the
Old Law,—
why?

1. Christ had
not died.

1. 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 blessing to live long upon earth.

2. Love was
not perfect.

2. The second answer is founded on considerations drawn from the love of God. They, in those days, were not so confirmed in love, neither did they draw so near to God in love as to be without fear of the vision of God; but now, under the law of grace, when, on the death of the body, the soul may behold God, 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

^{*} 2 Cor. v. 4.

[†] Phil. i. 23.

[‡] Judg. xiii. 22.

STANZA
XI.

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 the Apostle saith, 'perfect charity casteth out fear.'^{*}

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; the thought of it is not 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. It was of this kind of death that the wise man said: 'O death, thy sentence is welcome to the man in need.'[†] If the sentence of death is welcome to the man in need, though it does not supply his wants, but rather deprives him even of what he hath, how much more welcome will that sentence be to the soul in need of love and 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 the supply of all its necessities.

Death loved
by the good.

It is not without cause, then, that the soul is bold to say: 'Let the vision of Thy beauty kill me;' for it 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. 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints,'[‡] saith the Psalmist; but that could not be so if they did not become partakers of His greatness, for there is nothing precious

^{*} 1 S. John iv. 18.

[†] Eccclus. xli. 3.

[‡] Ps. cxv. 15.

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Death feared
by the
wicked.

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 '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 the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions!† 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 of Thy beauty kill me.'

'Behold, the disease of love is incurable, except in Thy presence and in the light of Thy countenance.' The reason why the sickness of love admits of no other remedy than the presence and countenance of the Beloved is, that the sickness 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 by what 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.

* Ps. xxxiii. 22.

† Eccus. xii. 1.

Love for
God the
health of the
soul.

No love,
no life;
perfect love,
perfect life.

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And because the soul is now conscious of a certain adumbration of love, the sickness of which it speaks, and yearns to be made like to Him of whom it is a shadow, that is the Bridegroom, the Word of God, the 'splendour of His glory, and the figure of His substance;'* and because it is into this figure it desires to be transformed, it cries out: 'Behold, the disease of love is incurable except in Thy presence, and in the light of Thy countenance.' The love that is imperfect is rightly called a disease, 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.

Another explanation of these words is this: he who feels this disease 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 possesses. But he who is not conscious of this disease has evidence therein that he has no love at all, or that he has already attained to perfect love.

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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 grandeurs of God, knows not what 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:—

* Heb. i. 3.

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*O Fount of crystal !
O that on thy silvered surface
Thou wouldest mirror forth at once
Those eyes desirable
Which I have in my heart delineated.*

STANZA XII.

Faith,—the only medium of true union with God in this life ;

The soul vehemently desiring to be united to the Bridegroom, and seeing that there is no help or succour in created things, turns towards 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 espousals of God, according to the words of the prophet: 'I will espouse 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 Spouse! O that thou wouldest manifest clearly those truths of 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 separate thyself formally from these truths—for faith is a veil over the truths of God—and reveal them perfectly in glory.

Resembles a clear fountain of pure water.

'O Fount of crystal!' Faith is called crystal for two reasons: 1. Because it is of Christ the Bridegroom. 2. Because it has the property of crystal, pure in truth, a limpid fountain clear of error and of natural forms. It is a fountain 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 fountain, saying: 'the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting.'† This water is the Spirit, which they who

* Os. ii. 20.

† S. John iv. 14.

believe in Him shall receive by faith. 'Now this He said of the Spirit which they should receive who believed in Him.'*

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'O that on thy silvered surface.' The articles and definitions of the Faith are called silvered surfaces. Faith is compared to silver as to the propositions which it teaches, as to the truth and substance it involves, to gold. This very substance which we now believe, concealed by the silver veil of faith, we shall behold and enjoy hereafter when it shall be revealed, and the gold of faith made manifest. Thus the Psalmist, speaking of it, saith: 'When ye sleep in the midst of your borders, ye shall be as a dove, whose wings are covered with silver, and her pinions with flaming gold.'† That is, if we shut the eyes of the intellect against all things above us and beneath us—this is to sleep in the midst of our borders—we shall rest in faith, which is the dove, whose wings—that is, the truth of it—are covered with silver: for in this life faith sets its truths before us obscurely beneath a veil. This is the reason why the soul calls them silvered surfaces. The golden pinions of faith means the time when faith shall have been consummated in the clear Vision of God; then the substance of faith, the silver veil having been removed, will shine as gold. Faith reveals to us God Himself, but concealed beneath the silver of faith, but it reveals God none the less. So if a man gives us a vessel covered with silver, which is made of gold, 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 promised Himself to her under the veil of faith. Hence the soul addresses Faith, saying: 'O that on thy silvered surface'—the definitions of faith which hide the gold of the Divine splendours,

God, the object of Faith on earth, of vision in Heaven.

* S. John vii. 39.

† Ps. lxxvii. 14

‡ Cant. i. 10.

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which are the desirable eyes—'thou wouldest mirror forth at once those eyes desirable!'

The eyes are the splendours 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 wouldst 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 looking through them.

Divine Truth
in the in-
tellect and
will.

'Which I have in my heart delineated.' The soul here says that these truths are delineated in the heart, that is, in the intellect and the will. It is through the intellect that these truths are infused into the soul by faith. They are said to be delineated because the knowledge of them is not perfect. As a sketch is not a perfect picture, so the knowledge of faith is not a perfect understanding. The truths, therefore, infused into the soul by faith, are as it were sketches, 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 which is perfect shall come, that which is in part shall be done away.'* 'That which is perfect' is the clear vision, and 'that which is in part' is the knowledge of faith.

Beside the delineation of faith, there is another delineation of 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 mutually love that one may be

What we
love that we
become.

* 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

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XII.

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.

This is the meaning of S. 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 accordingly, he saith: 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.

Union with
Christ
described by
S. Paul.

Now this may take place in this life, as in the case of S. Paul, but not perfectly and completely, though the soul should attain to such a transformation of love as shall be spiritual marriage, which is the highest estate it can reach in this life; because all this is but the shadowing forth of love, if compared with the perfect image of transformation in glory. Yet, when this shadow of transformation is attained in this life, it is a great blessing, because the Beloved is so greatly pleased therewith. He desires that the Bride should have Him thus delineated in her heart; for He 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

The shadow
of the trans-
formation
in glory.

* Galat. ii. 20.

† Cant. viii. 6.

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XII.

of the seal of faith, and the arm is the resolute will, where He is as the impressed signet of love.

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

Thirst for
the water of
Bethlehem,—
i.e. Christ.

The very substance of soul and body seems to be dried up by thirst after this living fountain of God, for the thirst resembles that of David when he cried out, 'As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after 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 draw 'water out of the cistern 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. To this we may apply those words in the Canticle: '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 overflowing waters so is my roaring' § for my 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.

Love thinks
nothing of
obstacles.

INTRODUCTION.

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, so that,

* Ps. xli. 1, 2. † 1 Paral. xi. 18. ‡ Cant. viii. 6. § Job iii. 24.

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XIII.

its purification ended, it may be united with God. For until God sends forth a special ray of Divine 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: 'Clouds and darkness are round about Him . . . a fire shall go before Him.'* And again: 'He made darkness His covert; His pavilion round about Him, dark waters in the clouds of the air. At the brightness that was before Him 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 cause it to enter within the 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, 'The darkness thereof, and the light thereof, are alike to Thee.' ‡ 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 reply:

Cause of
spiritual
suffering,—
what.

As dark the
night of
faith, so
bright the
Day of
Vision.

STANZA XIII.

*Turn them away, O my Beloved!
I fly away.*

THE BRIDEGROOM.

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

Amid those fervent affections of love, such as the soul has shown in the preceding stanzas, the Beloved is wont to visit

* Ps. xcvi. 2. † Ps. xvii. 12, 13. ‡ Ps. cxxxviii. 12.

STANZA
XII.

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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 fervours and longings of love which have gone before. And, as the soul has so anxiously prayed for the Divine eyes—as in the foregoing stanza—the Beloved reveals to it some glimpses of His grandeur 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 physical suffering and natural fear. Hence the soul, unable to endure its ecstasies in a body so frail, cries out, Turn away thine eyes from me.

Flight of the soul, or Ecstasy,—its cause, and effects.

‘Turn them away, O my Beloved!’ that is, Thy Divine eyes, for they make me fly away out of myself to the heights of contemplation, and my natural force cannot endure them. 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 endure or enjoy them as it would, but to reveal them to it in its flight from the body. The Bridegroom denies the request and impedes the flight, saying : ‘Return, My Dove!’ for the communications I make to thee now are not those of the state of glory ; 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 in the heights of contemplation, and am refreshed and delighted by My love for thy regard.

‘Turn them away, O my Beloved!’ 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!’ Such is the wretchedness of our mortal nature, that we cannot endure—even when it is offered to us—but at the cost of our life, that which is the very life of

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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.’

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 it is to the soul, the object of these visitations, for it seems 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 it is therefore of necessity, in some measure, a stranger to the body. Hence it is that the flesh suffers, 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, forces it to cry out, ‘Turn them away, O my Beloved!’

Physical pain of ecstasies enough to cause death.

But it is not to be supposed, however, that the soul really wishes Him to turn away His eyes ; for this is nothing else but the expression of mere natural awe. Yea, rather, cost they what they may, the soul would not willingly miss these visitations and favours of the Beloved ; for though the natural man may suffer, the spiritual man flies to this supernatural recollection, in order to enjoy the spirit of the Beloved, the object of its prayers and desires. Still, the soul will not admit of these visitations in the body—when it cannot have the perfect fruition of them, except in a slight degree and in pain—but in the flight of the disembodied spirit when it can enjoy them freely. Hence it says, Turn away from me ; that is, do not visit me in the flesh.

What is pain to the flesh is joy to the spirit.

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The soul
absorbed in
God, bodily
functions
cease.

Highest per-
fection free
from
ecstasies.

This subject
treated by
SAINT
TERESA.

'I fly away;' that is, out of the flesh, that Thou mayest show them to me out of the body—for they force me to fly away out of the body. We must remember, in order to have a clearer conception of this flight of the soul, that the spirit of man, in this visitation of the Spirit of God, is rapt upwards in Divine communion; the body is abandoned, all its acts and feelings are suspended, because the soul is absorbed in God. Thus the Apostle, 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 really abandons the body, and that the natural life is destroyed, but only that its actions have then ceased. This is the reason why the body remains insensible in raptures and ecstasies, and unconscious of the most painful inflictions. These are not like the swoons and faintings of the natural life, which cease on the application of pain. They who have not yet 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 Divine visitations in peace and in the sweetness of love: their ecstasies cease, for they were only graces to prepare them for this more perfect condition.

This is an appropriate opportunity for discussing the difference between raptures, ecstasies, other elevations and subtle flights of the spirit, to which spiritual persons are liable; but, as my object is to do nothing more than explain 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 to see soon published. The flight of the soul in this place, then, is to be understood of ecstasy, and of its being rapt up to God.

* 2 Cor. xii. 3.

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Three marks
of a dove-like
spirit.

Christ
compared to
the hart for
three
reasons.

Contempla-
tion like the
sight of an
object loom-
ing in the
mist.

The Beloved replies, 'Return, My Dove.' 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.'

It is as if He said, O My Dove, return from thy lofty and rapid flight of contemplation, in the love wherewith thou art inflamed, in the simplicity wherein thou goest—these are three characteristics of the dove—from that eminence where 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 thy raptures.

'The wounded hart.' The hart is the Bridegroom, to which He compares himself here. The hart climbs up naturally to high places, and hastens, when wounded, to 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 caresses the Bride; for, seeing her wounded with His love, He too, hearing her moaning, is wounded Himself with her love; for among 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.

'Looms on the hill;' that is, on the heights of contemplation, to which the soul attains in its flight. Contemplation is that 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

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characteristic of the hart, which is referred to in the following line:—

Charity in the soul, as the Holy Ghost in the B. Trinity, completes its being and knowledge.

‘In the air of thy flight, and is refreshed.’ The flight of the soul is ecstatic contemplation, and the air is that spirit of love which it produces, and which is here appropriately called ‘air;’ for the Holy Ghost, who is Love, in Holy Scripture, is compared to air, because He is the Breath of the Father and the Son. As then the Holy Ghost is the Air of flight, that is as He proceeds and is breathed forth by the way of love from the Contemplation and Wisdom of the Father and the Son; so here the Bridegroom calls the love of the soul ‘air,’ because it proceeds from the contemplation and knowledge of God which it has at this time.

Observe, that the Bridegroom does not say He comes at the flight, but at the air of the flight of the soul; because, properly speaking, God does not communicate Himself because of that flight, that is, 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.

Imago recreationis.

Union with God by knowing and by loving Him.

Notwithstanding the highest 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 perfection.’† This charity and love of the soul makes the Bridegroom run to the fountain of the Bride’s love, as the cooling waters attract the thirsty and the wounded hart, to refresh himself therein.

‘And is refreshed.’ 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

* 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

† Coloss. iii. 14.

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love hath this peculiarity, that 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 love, for love kindles love.

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 will love God must strive to love Him more and more, that his love fail not; for so, if we may thus speak, will he move God to show him more love, and to take greater comfort 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 kind: charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.’*

Grace and love to men of good will.

Marks of true charity.

INTRODUCTION.

‘WHEN the dove—that is, the soul—was flying on the gales of love over the waters of the deluge—that is the weariness and longing of its love—and ‘not finding where her foot might rest,’† the compassionate Noe, in this last flight, put forth the hand of his mercy, and caught her, and brought her into the ark of his love. Thus God does when He says to the soul, ‘Return, My dove.’ When He thus takes it into His

* 1 Cor. xiii. 4—7.

† Genes. viii. 9.

STANZAS
XIV., XV.Joy at the
possession of
the Beloved.

hands, the soul finds all it desired, and more than it can ever express, and so it 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.*

The day of
the soul's
espousals.

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 Espousals of the Word, the Son of God. In the very beginning of this, the first time that God so elevates the soul, He reveals to it great things of Himself, makes it 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 espousals. . 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 praise of the magnificence of the Beloved, which the soul recognises in Him, and enjoys in the union of the espousals.

In the stanzas that follow, the soul speaks no more of its anxieties and sufferings, as before, but of the sweet and

STANZAS
XIV., XV.

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 the spiritual espousals. All that is given is here described, so that these stanzas may comprehend the whole.

As in the ark of Noe there were many chambers for the different kinds of animals, and 'all food that may be eaten,'* so the soul, in its flight to the Divine ark of the bosom of God, beholds there not only the many mansions of its Father's house, but also all the food, that is, all the grandeurs in which the soul may rejoice, and which are here referred to by the common terms of these stanzas. These are substantially as follows:

The Divine
ark of the
Bosom of
God contains
all grandeur
and beauty.

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 the Divine light 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 in the inestimable banquet of love which confirms it in love. This is the substance of these two stanzas.

Treasures of
life, light
and love.

The Bride here says that her Beloved in Himself and to

* Genes. vi. 21.

STANZAS
XIV., XV.'Il mio Dio,
ed in Esso ho
tutte le cose.'God is all, as
1. Cause and
support—
causaliter.2. Measure
or per-
fection—
eminenter.3. End—
finaliter.The loving
soul sees and
enjoys God in
every thing.God is to the
soul a high
mountain,
and a sweet
valley.

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 S. Francis: 'My God and my all.' And because God is all, and the soul, and the good of all, the communication involved in this ecstasy is made known by the similitude of the goodness of all things, as I shall show when I explain the words of these stanzas. 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 united to God, it feels all things to be God according to the words of S. John, 'What was made, in Him was life.'* 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 them; neither are we to imagine that the soul sees God essentially and clearly because it perceives Him so profoundly; 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.' Mountains are high, fertile, extensive, beautiful, lovely, flowery, and odorous. These mountains my Beloved is to me.

'The solitary wooded valleys.' 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.' Strange islands are girt by the sea; they are also distant and unknown to the commerce of men. They produce things very different from those with which we

* S. John i. 3, 4. See Stanza viii. p. 46.

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XIV., XV.

are conversant, in strange ways, and with qualities hitherto unknown, so as to surprise those who behold them, and to fill them with wonder. Thus, then, by reason of the great and marvellous wonders, and the strange 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. 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.

It is nothing wonderful that God should be strange to men who have never seen Him, seeing that He is also strange to the Angels and the holy souls who behold Him; for they neither can nor shall ever behold 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 works 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.' Torrents have three characteristics. 1. They overflow all that is in their course. 2. They fill all hollows. 3. They overpower all sounds by their own. And hence the soul, feeling most sweetly that these three characteristics belong to God, says: 'My Beloved is the roaring torrents.'

As to the first characteristic, the soul 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 previous actions and passions. Though this be violent, yet there is nothing painful in it, for these rivers are rivers of peace, as it is written: 'I will bring upon her, as it were, a river of

Two reasons
why God is
strange to
the soul.God never
compre-
hended by
Angels or
men.God is to
the soul as a
torrent;1. He over-
flows all
obstacles
in it.

STANZAS
XIV., XV.

peace, and as an overflowing torrent the glory of the Gentiles.* 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 of the soul fills it, like the roaring torrents, with peace and glory. As to the second characteristic, the soul feels 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 characteristic which the soul is now conscious of is a spiritual sound and voice above all other sounds and voices in the world. The explanation of this will take a little time.

2. He fills its capacity.

3. His voice penetrates it.

Examples from Holy Scripture;
1. The Apostles.

This voice, or this murmuring sound of the waters, is an overflowing so abundant that it fills 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. This voice is a spiritual voice, unattended by material sounds or the pain and torment of them, but rather coming with grandeur, 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.' ‡ In order to mark 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.

2. Our Lord Jesus.

So also our Lord Jesus, when He prayed to the Father because of His distress and the rage of His enemies, 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,

* Is. lxvi. 12.

† S. Luke i. 52.

‡ Acts ii. 2.

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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 intellect. This is the meaning of David when he said, 'He will give to His voice the voice of power; † this power is the interior voice. He will give to His voice, that is, the outward voice, audibly heard, the voice of power which is felt within. God is an infinite voice, and communicating Himself thus to the soul produces the effect of an infinite voice.

3. David.

This voice was heard by S. John, saying: '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 painful and harsh, he adds immediately, 'The voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers harping on their harps.' ‡ Ezechiel says that the sound of many waters was 'as it were the voice of the Most 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, He adapts Himself to each soul, giving them the voice of power according to their capacity, and filling them with grandeur and delight. And so the Bride sings in the Canticle: 'Let Thy voice sound in my ears, for Thy voice is sweet.' ||

4. S. John.

5. Ezechiel.

'The whisper of the amorous gales.' Two things are to be considered here—gales and the 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

* S. John xii. 28, 29.

† Ps. lxvii. 34.

‡ Apoc. xiv. 2.

§ Ezech. i. 24.

|| Cant. ii. 14.

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most lovingly sent forth, touch it in its inmost substance. The whisper of the gales is a most sublime, and sweet understanding of God and of His attributes, which overflows into the intellect from the contact of the attributes of God with the substance of the soul. This is the most supreme delight of which the soul is capable in this life.

Spiritual
touch and
hearing of
the soul
beatified by
the whisper
of God.

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 impression 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 virtues of the Beloved is felt and enjoyed in the touch of the soul, that is, in the substance thereof, through the instrumentality of the will, and the understanding of the attributes of God felt in the hearing of the soul, that is, in the intellect. 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 whisper of the gale more than that of the touch, because the sense of hearing is more spiritual, or, to speak with greater correctness, is more nearly connected with the spiritual than 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 desire, that is, admitting it to union; this union, or touch, is called amorous gales, because, as I said before, the virtues of the Beloved are by it communicated to the soul lovingly and sweetly, and through it the whisper of intelligence to the intellect. It is called whisper, because, as the whisper of the air penetrates subtly into the organ of hearing, so this most

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subtile and delicate intelligence enters with marvellous sweetness and delight into the inmost substance of the soul, which is the highest of all delights.

The reason of this is that substantial truth is now communicated intelligibly and denuded of all accidents and images, and is communicated to that intellect which philosophers call passive or passible, because it is inactive and without any natural efforts of its own during this communication. This is the highest delight of the soul, because it is in the intellect, 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 at the mouth of the cave. The Holy Scripture calls it ‘the whistling of a gentle air,’* because knowledge is begotten in the intellect 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 intellect from the loving communication of the virtues of the Beloved. This is why it is called the whisper of the amorous gales.

Communica-
tion of pure
truth to the
passive intel-
lect.Intellect the
seat of frui-
tion, i. e., the
Beatific
Vision.Example of
Elias.

This Divine whisper which enters in by the ear of the soul is not only substantial intelligence, but a manifestation also of the truths of the Divinity, and a revelation of 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 intellect, 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 S. Paul would express the greatness of the revelations

Intellect the
ear which
hears the Di-
vine whisper.

* 3 Kings xix. 12.

STANZAS
XIV., XV.Example of S.
Paul and
Job.

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 from these words that S. Paul saw God, as our father Elias, in the whisper of a 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 faith involves, the intelligible truth, cometh by spiritual hearing. The prophet Job, speaking to God, when He revealed Himself unto him, teaches this truth distinctly, saying: 'With the hearing of the ear I have heard Thee, but now my eye seeth Thee.'† It is then clear that to hear with the ear of the soul, is to see with the eye of the passive intellect. It is not said with the hearing of the ears, but with the hearing of the ear; nor, with the seeing of the eyes, but with the eye of the intellect; the hearing of the ear is, therefore, the vision of the intellect.

Perfect
vision of God
only in
Heaven.

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, it is not clear, but rather obscure, because it is contemplation, and that, as S. Dionysius saith, 'is a ray of darkness,' and thus we may say that it is a ray and an image of fruition, because it occurs in the intellect, the seat of fruition. This substantial truth, called here a whisper, is the desirable eyes which the Beloved showed to the Bride, who unable to bear the vision therefore cried, 'Turn away Thine eyes from me.'‡

There is a passage in the book of Job very much to the purpose, and strongly corroborative of what I have said of rapture and espousals. I shall cite the whole passage first, then briefly explain those parts of it which refer to the subject before me, and that done, I shall then explain the other stanza. 'Now there was a word spoken to me in

* 2 Cor. xii. 4.

† Job xlii. 5.

‡ Cant. vi. 4.

STANZAS
XIV., XV.Example of
Eliphaz the
Themanite.

private,' saith Eliphaz the Themanite, 'and my ears by stealth as it were, received the veins of its whisper. In the horror of a vision by night, when deep sleep is wont to hold men, fear seized upon me and trembling, and all my bones were affrighted: and when a spirit passed before me the hair of my flesh stood up. There stood one whose countenance I knew not, an image before my eyes, and I heard a voice as it were of a gentle wind.'* This passage contains almost all I said about raptures in the thirteenth stanza, which begins: 'Turn them away, O my Beloved.' The 'word spoken in private' to Eliphaz is that secret communication which the soul was not able to endure, and, therefore, cried out: 'Turn them away, O my Beloved.' Eliphaz says that his 'ear by stealth as it were, received the veins of its whisper.' By that is meant the pure substance of truth which the intellect receives, for the 'veins' here denote the interior essence. The whisper is that communication and touch of the virtues whereby the said substance of truth is communicated to the intellect. It is called a whisper because of its great gentleness. And the soul calls it the amorous gales because it is so lovingly communicated. It is said to be received as it were by stealth, for that which is 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 beyond the power of nature to receive it; neither was it granted to S. Paul to repeat what he heard. For this reason the Prophet saith twice: 'My secret to myself, my secret to myself.' †

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 encompass the soul when it falls into an ecstasy, which in its natural strength it is unable to

* Job iv. 12—16.

† Is. xxiv. 16.

STANZAS
XIV., XV.Terror in-
spired by
supernatural
visitations.

endure. 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 from the sleep of natural ignorance to the waking of the supernatural understanding, which is the beginning of an ecstasy, the spiritual vision then revealed, makes the soul fear and tremble. '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 a spirit passed before me,' that is, when I was forced to transcend the ways and limitations of nature in ecstasies and raptures. 'The hair of my flesh stood up,' that is, my body was elevated from the ground, and the flesh contracted like that of a dead man.

The soul nei-
ther knows
nor beholds
the Essence
of God.

'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 Essence 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 vision of His essence. '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.

But it is not to be supposed that these visits of God are always attended by such terrors and shocks of nature, as in the case of those who are entering in to the state of illumination and perfection, and as in this kind of communications, namely of ecstasies and raptures; for in others they take place with great sweetness.

* Dan. x. 16.

STANZA XV.

'THE tranquil night.' In this spiritual sleep in the bosom of the Beloved the soul enters into the possession and fruition of all the calmness, repose, and quiet of a peaceful night, and receives at the same time in God a certain unfathomable obscure Divine intelligence. This is the reason why the soul calls the Beloved the tranquil night.

'At the approaches of the dawn.' This tranquil night is not like a night of obscurity, 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 Obscure Night, but rather tranquillity and repose in the Divine light and in the new knowledge of God, whereby the mind, most sweetly tranquil, is elevated upwards to Divine light. 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 obscurity 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 obscure, like the night at the approaches of the dawn. For as it is then neither wholly night nor wholly day, but twilight, so this solitude and Divine repose is neither perfectly illuminated by the Divine light, not yet perfectly alien from it.

In this tranquillity the intellect is elevated 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 a sparrow, all alone on the housetop: '* that is, I opened the eyes of

STANZAS
XIV., XV.Aurora of ob-
scure intelli-
gence before
the day of
perfect know-
ledge.

* Ps. ci. 8.

STANZAS
XIV., XV.

Soul in con-
templation
like a
sparrow,—
Five reasons.

my intellect, and was raised up above all natural comprehension, and I am become solitary, deprived thereof, on the housetop, lifted up above all earthly considerations. He says that he was 'become as a sparrow,' all alone, because in this kind of contemplation the spirit of man is invested with certain characteristics of the sparrow. These are five in number :—

1. It frequents high places, and the spirit of man in this state rises to the highest contemplation.

2. It is ever turning its face in the direction of the wind, and the spirit of man turns its affections towards the breath of love, which is God.

3. It is in general solitary, abstaining from the companionship of others, and flying away when they 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, in themselves most pleasing 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.

Every crea-
ture a witness
for God.

'The silent music.' 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

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God in His
creatures like
harmony in
a concert of
music.

concert of the sublimest melody, transcending all the harmonies of the world. This is the silent music, because it is intelligence tranquil and in repose, 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 the silent music, because this harmony of spiritual music is in Him understood and felt.

'The murmuring solitude.' This is almost the same as the silent music. For though the music is inaudible to the senses and the natural faculties, 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 S. John, who heard in spirit as it were 'the voice of harpers harping on their harps.*' S. 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—which 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 harmonize in one concert of love, as in music.

Harp and
songs of the
Blessed.

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 of God's greatness, wisdom, and marvellous knowledge. This is

Benedicite
omnia opera
Domini
Domino.

* Apoc. xiv. 2.

STANZAS
XIV., XV.The Universe
melodious
with the
voice of God.'Supper' sig-
nifies the Di-
vine Vision ;
in which
God gives
Himself to
the soul.

the meaning of those words of the Holy Ghost : 'The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world, and that which containeth all things hath 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.' 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.

For a clearer perception 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 gate and knock. If any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup 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

* Wisd. i. 7.

† Apoc. iii. 20.

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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.

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 reaching only to the higher part of it ; because the sensitive part, except in the state of the spiritual matrimony, 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 matrimony 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.

Difference
between
spiritual
Betrothal
and Mar-
riage.

INTRODUCTION.

Now that the Bride has the virtues of her soul in their perfection, wherein she rejoices in the peaceful visits of her Beloved, she enjoys at times, in a most sublime way, the sweetness and fragrance of those virtues, because the Beloved touches them ; just as we perceive the fragrance and beauty of flowers when we touch them in their full bloom. In many of these visits of the Beloved, the soul is in spirit conscious of those virtues with which God has endowed it, by His giving it light for that end. And then the soul with marvellous joy and sweet love unites them all together, and offers them to the Beloved as a nosegay of beautiful flowers. The Beloved, in

Sweet odour
of virtues
from the
touch of God.

STANZA
XVI.

accepting the offering—for He accepts it then—accepts a great service of the soul. All this occurs within the soul, who then feels the Beloved within as on His own couch, for the soul offers itself, together with all its virtues, which is the greatest oblation it can make, and this is the highest delight it receives in the interior converse with God from this gift of the Beloved.

Malice of the
devil.

The devil, beholding this prosperity of the soul, and in his great malice envying all the good he sees in it, employs 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 the glorious riches of this delight, than to precipitate others into many mortal sins. Other souls have little or nothing to lose, while such a soul has much, having gained great treasures; for the loss of one grain of refined gold is greater than the loss of many of the baser metals.

The devil here has recourse to the sensitive appetites, though they can help him now in general but little or nothing, 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 sensitive, from which the soul is unable to deliver itself until our Lord shall send His Angel, as it is written, 'The Angel of the Lord shall encamp round 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, and to put the evil spirits to flight, speaks in the words of the following stanza:—

* Ps. xxxiii. 8.

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 vineyard, should not be interrupted, either by envious and malicious devils, or the raging desires of sensuality, or the various comings and goings of 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 delight of which the soul and the Son of God mutually communicate and enjoy their virtues and graces.

'Catch us the foxes, for our vineyard hath flourished.' The vineyard is the plantation in this holy soul of all the virtues which minister to it the wine of sweet smell. The vineyard of the soul is then flourishing when it is united in will to the Bridegroom, and delighteth in Him in all the virtues. Sometimes, as I have said, the memory and the fancy are assailed by various forms and imaginings, and divers motions and desires trouble the sensitive part. The great vanity 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.' *

Here the soul calls the whole troop of desires and sensitive emotions, foxes, because of the great resemblance between them at this time. As foxes pretend to be asleep

* Ps. lxii. 2.

STANZA
XVI.Prayer to the
Angels for
help.

STANZA
XVI.

that they may pounce upon their prey when it comes in their way, so all the desires and sensitive energies of the soul are asleep until the flowers of virtue grow, flourish, and bloom. Then the desires and sensitive energies awake to resist the Spirit and to try to rule over the soul. 'The flesh lusteth against the spirit,'* and as the inclination of it is towards the sensitive desires, it is disgusted as soon as it tastes of the Spirit, and herein the desires prove extremely troublesome to spiritual sweetness.

The flesh returns to combat with the spirit.

Two plans of attack by evil spirits;
1. To excite desire and imagination.

2. To inflict bodily or spiritual pain.

'Catch us the foxes.' The evil spirits now molest the soul in two ways. They vehemently excite the desires, and then employ them with other imaginations to assail the peaceful and flourishing kingdom of the soul. In the second place, 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 now 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.

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

* Gal. v. 17.

STANZA
XVI.

terrors of Satan seem so distant 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.

The Bride also says what the soul says here, namely: 'Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines; for our vineyard hath flourished.'† She does not say, Catch me, but, Catch us, because she is speaking of herself and the Beloved; because they are one, and enjoy the flourishing of the vineyard together.

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.

Flowers in this life: fruit in the next.

'While of roses we make a nosegay.' 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 a most flourishing and pleasing vineyard belonging to both, wherein they feed and delight. Then the soul unites all its virtues in one, 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 to the Beloved. Hence it says: 'we make a nosegay,' that is the Beloved and myself.

The soul makes a return of the gifts it has received.

This union of the virtues is called a nosegay; for as a

* Cant. vi. 11.

† Cant. ii. 15.

STANZA
XVI.

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 impede 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.'

Necessity of detachment from goods of sense and of spirit.

The devil as a huntsman. His quarry,—what.

This Divine interior exercise requires solitude and detachment from all things, whether in the lower part of the soul, which is the sensitive nature of man, 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 are in them, as quarry on a hill, and also because 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;' 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 faculties of the soul, memory, intellect, and will, be divested of all notions, particular inclinations or considerations; and let all the senses and faculties of the body, interior as well as exterior, such as 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 natural operations whatsoever.

The soul speaks in this way because it is necessary for the perfect fruition of this communication of God, that all the senses and faculties, both interior and exterior, should be

STANZA
XVI.

disencumbered and emptied of their proper objects and operations; for if they now be suffered to be active, so much the greater will be the hindrance which they will occasion. The soul, having attained to the 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 brought about, 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 in the offering up of self and of the virtues in the way described.

In perfect union the spiritual faculties are at rest.

The will only is active in love.

 INTRODUCTION.

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 espousals, 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 arises 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:—

How love causes suffering.

STANZA XVII.

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

STANZA
XVII.

What I have spoken of in the foregoing stanza is not all that can impede the interior sweetness of the soul.

Spiritual
aridity,—
two remedies.

Spiritual dryness has the same effect; and the soul afraid of this has recourse to two expedients in order to prevent dryness of spirit. First, it shuts the door against it by continual prayer and devotion. Secondly, it invokes the Holy Ghost, Who drives away aridity from the soul, Who supports it, and increases its love of the Bridegroom, and Who also guides it into the interior practice of virtue, in order that the Son of God, the Bridegroom, may rejoice and delight the more in the soul, whose efforts are all directed to please the Beloved.

In dryness
of spirit
virtues and
devotion
seem dead.

‘Cease, O thou killing north wind.’ 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 shut up. So, because dryness of spirit and the sensible absence of the Beloved produce the same effect on the soul, exhausting the sweetness and fragrance of virtue, it is here called the killing north wind; for all the virtues and affective devotions of the soul are as dead. Hence the soul addresses itself to it saying: Cease, O Thou killing north wind. These words mean that the soul applies itself to spiritual exercises, in order to escape aridity. But as the communications of God are now so interior that no exertion of the soul’s faculties can possibly attain to them if the Spirit of the Bridegroom do not cause these movements of love, the soul addresses Him, saying: ‘Come, O south wind, thou that awakenest

STANZA
XVII.

love.’ The south wind is another wind commonly called the south-west wind. It is gentle, and brings rain; it makes the grass and plants grow, flowers to blossom and scatter their perfume abroad; and, 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 in the soul, it so inflames and refreshes it, it so quickens the will, and stirs up the desires, which were before low and asleep as to the love of God, that it may be said of it that it quickens the love between Him and the soul. The prayer of the soul to the Holy Spirit is, ‘Blow through my garden.’

Fertilising
breath of the
Spirit of
God.

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, and there flourish, and grow.

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, 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 odours which are not otherwise 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.

Difference
between
breathing
'through'
and 'in' the
soul.

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

STANZA
XVII.

The soul
made con-
scious of its
beauty.

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 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.'

Virtues of
the soul
shine before
men.

So profuse are these odours at times, that the soul seems enveloped in delight and bathed in inestimable glory. 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 pleasures 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.*

Grandeur
and dignity
of the
servants of
God.

Example of
Moses.

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 its might, and therefore charges the north wind not to blow, and invokes the south wind to blow

The Holy
Spirit pre-
pares the
soul for
Christ.

* Exod. xxxiv. 30.

† S. Luke xxii. 8.

STANZA
XVII.

Virtues of
the soul the
means of its
converse
with God.

through the garden, because it gains many things here at once. 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 the instrumentality of her virtues 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 virtue, as it is written: 'While the King was at His repose,' that is, in the soul, 'my spikenard sent forth the odour thereof.*' 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. 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 glorious and profitable to the soul, the Bride desires it, and prays for it, saying: 'Arise, O north wind, and come, O south wind; blow through my garden, and let the aromatical spices thereof flow.†' The soul prays for this, not because of the delight and glory consequent upon it, but because of the delight it ministers to the Beloved, and because it prepares the way and announces the presence of the Son of God, Who cometh to rejoice in it. Hence the soul adds:—

How it
profits by
them.

Why it
desires them.

'And my Beloved shall feed among the flowers.' 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 rejoiceth, but also sustaineth.

* Cant. i. 11.

Cant. iv. 16.

STANZA
XVII.

The soul
made pleas-
ing to Christ
by its graces
and virtues.

Thus the Son of God delights Himself in the soul, in the delights thereof, and is nourished by it, 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. Observe, also, 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, too, by the power of the Holy Ghost, send 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 its flowers.

The Bride in the Canticle has observed this, for she had experience of it: '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.

INTRODUCTION.

In the state of spiritual espousals, the soul contemplating its own riches and grandeur but unable to enter into the

^{*} Prov. viii. 31.

STANZA
XVIII.

possession and fruition of them as it desires, because it is still in the flesh, suffers exceedingly, and then more particularly when its knowledge of them becomes more profound. It then sees itself in the body, like a prince thrown into 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; whose household is no longer obedient, and whose 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 sensitive part, now the slave of disorderly motions, now of other rebellious movements, rise up against it in order to rob it of its good.

The soul feels itself as if it were in the land of 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.

Exile of the
soul des-
cribed by
Baruch and
Jeremias.

^{*} Baruch iii. 10, 11.

[†] Jerem. ii. 14, 15.

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 my threshold.*

STANZA XVIII.

Old foes though defeated renew their attack.

It is the Bride that speaks, who seeing herself, as to the higher part of the soul, adorned with the rich endowments of her Beloved, and seeing Him delighting in her, desires to preserve herself in security, and in the continued fruition of the blessings which He has given her. Seeing also that hindrances will arise, as, in fact, they do, from the sensitive part of the soul, which will disturb so great a good, she commands 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 our lower nature, and their energies, if they show themselves during the enjoyment of the spirit, are so much more troublesome, the more active they are.

'O nymphs of Judea.' The lower, that is the sensitive 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 enticed men to love them, so the operations and motions of sensuality softly and earnestly strive to entice the natural will, to withdraw it from that which is interior, and to fix it on what is exterior, to which they are disposed themselves. They also strive to influence the intellect 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.

STANZA XVIII.

'While amid the flowers and the rose-trees.' The flowers, as I have said, are the virtues of the soul, and the rose-trees are its faculties, memory, intellect, 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 the faculties of the soul.

'The amber sends forth its perfume.' 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, scattering abroad the perfume of the Divine sweetness. While the Divine Spirit sends forth the spiritual sweetness in the soul, the soul cries out:—

'Tarry in the suburbs' of Judea, which is the inferior part or sensitive nature 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 the sensitive nature of man 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 exterior senses, of sight, hearing, smell, &c. We give the name of suburbs to all the powers and interior or exterior senses of the sensitive part of the soul, because they are outside the walls of the city. 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 superior to those of sense. But there is a natural intercourse between those who dwell in the suburbs of the sensitive 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 conse-

The senses, interior and exterior, the suburbs of the soul.

STANZA
XVIII.

quently 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 sensitive part.

Involuntary movements assault the reason.

‘And touch not my threshold.’ Let not your first movements touch the higher part, for the first movements of the soul are the threshold 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.

‘Lead us not into temptation.’

INTRODUCTION.

THE soul is now so hostile to the lower part, and to the operations thereof, 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 will be unable to endure it without fainting away, because of its natural weakness, and consequently the spirit cannot rejoice in peace, because it is then troubled. ‘For,’ as the wise man says, ‘the corruptible body is a load upon the soul.’* And as the soul longs for the highest and noblest converse with God, which is impossible in the presence of the sensitive part, it begs of God to deal with it without the intervention of the senses. That sublime vision of S. 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, inde-

* Wisd. ix. 15.

STANZA
XIX.

pendent of the body; for if the body had any share in it, he must then have known it, and the vision could not have been what it was, seeing that he ‘heard secret words which it is not granted to man to utter.’* The soul also, 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!
Let Thy face shine on the mountains.
Do not tell it,
But regard the companions
Of her who traverses strange islands.*

Here the Bride presents four petitions to the Bridegroom:—1. She prays that He would be pleased to converse with her most interiorly in the secret chamber of the soul. 2. That He would invest and inform her faculties with the glory and grandeur of His Divinity. 3. That He would converse with her so profoundly as to surpass all knowledge and expression, and in such a way that her lower and sensitive nature may not perceive it. 4. That He would love the many virtues and graces with which He has crowned her, adorned with which she is ascending upwards to God in the deepest knowledge of the Divinity, and in transports of love most strange and singular, surpassing those of ordinary experience.

Four petitions of the soul;

‘Hide Thyself, O my Beloved!’ O my Spouse, most beloved, hide Thyself in the secret of my soul, communicating Thyself to it in secret, and manifesting Thy hidden wonders which no mortal eyes may see.

1. For secret converse with God.

‘Let Thy face shine on the mountains.’ The face of God is His Divinity. The mountains are the powers of the soul, memory, intellect, and will. Thus the meaning of

* 2 Cor. xii. 2-4.

STANZA
XIX.

2. For transformation of its powers in God.

these words is: Enlighten my intellect with Thy Divinity, and give it the Divine intelligence, fill my will with Divine love, and my memory with the 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.

3. For purely spiritual communications.

‘Do not tell it,’ as before, when Thy converse 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 beyond the capacity of the senses; for the substance of spiritual truth 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 such. The soul therefore, longing for that substantial and essential communication of God, of which sense cannot be cognizant, prays the Bridegroom not to tell it: that is, that the depth of the secret of the spiritual union may be such as to escape the notice of the senses, like the secret which S. Paul heard, and which is not granted to man to utter.†

4. For the loving regard of God.

‘But regard the companions.’ 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 He has crowned it, as with the ornaments of espousals. Thus the meaning of the words seems to be this: Turn Thou Thy face to the interior of my soul, O my Beloved, enamoured

* Exod. xxxiii. 23.

† 2 Cor. xii. 4.

STANZA
XIX.

Virtues are God's because from Him, and the soul's because given to it.

of the treasures which Thou hast laid up there, so that, enamoured of them, Thou mayest hide Thyself among them and there dwell; for though in truth they are all Thine, yet they are mine also, because Thou hast given them.

‘Of her who traverses strange islands.’ That is, of my soul tending towards Thee through strange knowledge of Thee, by strange ways—strange to 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 therefore communicate Thyself to it so interiorly and so profoundly that the senses may not observe it.

INTRODUCTION.

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 its inferior nature, 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 vigorous 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 come near unto God, must have attained to the height of purity, strength, and adequate love. The Holy Ghost, Who is the author of this spiritual union, anxious 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;

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XX., XXI.

if she be a door, let us join it together with boards of cedar.*

Heroic
virtues of the
final state of
Perfection.

The 'bulwarks of silver' are heroic virtues comprised in faith, which is signified by silver, and these heroic virtues are those of the spiritual matrimony, 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 characteristics of this deep love which is signified by the cedar-tree, and this is the love of the spiritual matrimony. In order 'to join it together,' that is, to adorn the Bride, it is necessary she should be as 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 without defect in the presence of Christ her Bridegroom.

It is written in the Canticle that the Bride 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.

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 sensitive and spiritual nature, for this estate.

* Cant. viii. 8.

STANZAS
XX., XXI.

He charges all resistance and rebellion, both of the flesh and of the devil, not to approach the soul, saying: —

STANZAS XX., XXI.

THE BRIDEGROOM.

*Light-winged birds,
Lions, fawns, bounding deer,
Mountains, valleys, strands,
Waters, winds, fires,
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 peace.*

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, intellect, and will, to the perfection of their several objects. And then he 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.

All these passions and faculties are comprehended under the expressions employed in the first stanza, the acts of which, full of trouble, the Bridegroom subdues by that great sweetness and courage which the Bride enjoys in the spiritual surrender of Himself to her which God makes at this

Christ
restores the
soul to
Justice.

STANZAS
XX., XXI.

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.

The soul
defended;
1. From
distractions
of the
imagination.

'Light-winged birds.' 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 desultory distractions produce weariness, and quench the soul's spiritual delight. The Bridegroom adjures them by the soft lyres. That is, seeing that the sweetness of the soul is so abundant and so continuous that they cannot interfere with it, as they did before when it was not so great, He adjures them, and bids them cease from their disquieting violence. The same explanation is to be given of the rest of the stanza.

2. From
anger, desire,
timidity, and
rashness.

'Lions, fawns, bounding deer.' By the lions I mean the raging violence of the irascible faculty, which in its acts is bold and daring as a lion. The 'fawns and bounding deer' 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 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 deer, who so eagerly seek what they desire that they not only run but even leap after it; hence they are described as bounding deer.

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

STANZAS
XX., XXI.

irresolution; and in adjuring the deer, 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.

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 deer,' for it is necessary that these disorderly acts should cease in this state.

'Mountains, valleys, strands.' These are the vicious and disorderly actions of the three faculties of the soul—memory, intellect, 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 intellect, 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 shall not only avoid all extremes, but also the slightest tendency to them.

3. From ex-
cess or defect
in the use of
its faculties.

'Waters, winds, fires, and the terrors that keep watch by night.' These are the affections of the four passions,

STANZAS
XX., XXI.
4. From the
natural
passions of
grief, hope,
joy, and fear.

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: 'I opened my mouth and panted: 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. The fires are the affections of joy which, like fire, inflame the heart, as it is written: 'My heart grew hot within me; and in my meditation a fire shall flame out;'‡ that is, while I meditate I shall have joy. 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 matrimony are usually exceedingly strong. These come from God at those times when He is about to bestow some great favours upon men whose nature is not perfect and strong, and habituated to such favours. Then indeed fear and dread fall upon them, and flesh and sense are shaken. They come also from the evil spirit, who, when he sees a soul sweetly recollected in God, out of envy and malignity, labours to disturb its tranquillity by exciting horror and dread, in order to destroy so great a blessing; sometimes even he 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.

These are called terrors of the night, because they are the work of evil spirits, and because Satan labours, by the help

* Ps. lxxviii. 1.

† Ps. cxviii. 131.

‡ Ps. xxxviii. 4.

Causes of
fear in
spiritual
persons.

thereof, to involve the soul in darkness, and to obscure the Divine light wherein it rejoiceth. They are said to keep their watch by night, because they waken 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.

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 not occasion it any distaste. Such is the grandeur and stability of the soul, 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 virtues are no longer in the soul, for they are now constant, energetic, and perfect. As the Angels perfectly appreciate all sorrowful things without the sense of pain, and perform acts of compassion 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; but this is that it may become more fervent in love, and grow in merit, or for some other reasons, as He dispensed with His Virgin Mother, S. Paul, and others. This, however, is not the ordinary condition of this state.

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 worldly to hope for, and nothing spiritual

STANZAS
XX., XXI.

Spiritual
men free
from natural
fear.

The passions
at rest.

1. Sensible
sorrow no
longer felt,
except as a
motive for
action.

Analogy of
the Angels.

Exceptions
in certain
cases.

2. Hope
satisfied in
God.

STANZAS
XX., XXI.
Charity may
always grow.

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 therefore even its longing for the Beatific Vision is without pain.

3. Joy of the
soul like the
sea.

The affections of joy, also, which are wont to move the soul with more or less vehemence, are not sensibly diminished; neither does their abundance occasion anything new. 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 now contains that fountain of which our Lord said, that it is ‘springing up into life everlasting.’*

The fountain
of bliss
within.

I have said that the soul receives nothing new 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 soul possesses already, and thus what the soul has within itself is greater than anything that comes anew. Hence, then, whenever any subject of joy or rejoicing, 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 its joy 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 remind the soul that its real rejoicing is in its interior

God the
possession of
the soul.

* S. John iv. 14.

STANZAS
XX., XXI.

Accidental
joys remind
the soul of
its essential
Joy.

possessions, rather than in these accidental causes, because, as I have said, the former are greater than the latter.

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 turn to it at once and prefer it to the former. 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, fullgrown, grows no more 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 retain them. The reason is that it is always tasting them anew, because its blessings are ever renewed; and thus it seems to be continually the recipient of new accessions, while it has no need of them whatever.

God in the
soul, like the
sun shining
on the ocean,

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 illuminates its great depths, and discovers the pearls, and gold, and precious stones therein, so the Divine Sun, the Bridegroom, turning towards the Bride, discovers 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 an army set in array.’* This illumination adds nothing to the grandeur of the soul, notwithstanding its greatness, but only reveals what was already there.

reveals the
hidden
treasures laid
up therein.

* Cant. vi. 9.

STANZAS
XX., XXI.

4. Fear cast
out by per-
fect love.

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 waken 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 like a continual feast.*' As in a feast we have the 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 sense or language can express its state.

Peace of God
surpasses
knowledge
and lan-
guage.

'By the soft lyres and the siren strains I adjure you.' 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 mind with sweetness and delight, carries it rapturously out of itself, so that it forgets all its weariness and grief, 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, which it always possesses. These are called siren strains because, as it is said, the music of the sirens is so sweet, that he who hears it is rapt and carried out of himself, forgetting all around him.

* Prov. xv. 15.

† Philipp iv. 7.

In the same way the delight of this union so absorbs the soul and refreshes it, 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.' This is the troubles and anxieties which flow from unruly acts and affections. As anger is a certain violence which disturbs tranquillity, overleaping its bounds, so also all the affections and emotions that transgress the bounds of peace, and the tranquillity of the soul disturb it whenever they touch it. Hence the Bridegroom says: 'And touch not the wall.' 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 inclosed.*' The Bridegroom bids all disorderly emotions not to touch the territory and wall of His garden.

STANZAS
XX., XXI.

The soul
restored to
order and
harmony.

'That the Bride may sleep in peace.' That she may enjoy the full fruition of the peace and sweetness of her Beloved. It seems, then, that there is no perfect tranquillity for the soul unless it is able to enjoy, when and how it will, this sweet sleep of love, as the Bridegroom says Himself: 'I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and the harts of the fields, that you stir not up nor awake my beloved till she please.†'

INTRODUCTION.

SUCH was the desire of the Bridegroom to rescue His Bride from the power of the flesh and the devil, that, having done so, He now rejoices over her like the Good Shepherd, who having found the sheep that was lost, laid it upon his

* Cant. iv. 12.

† Cant. iii. 5.

STANZA
XXII.

The Good Shepherd rejoices over His recovered sheep.

A perfect soul the crown, joy and bride of Christ.

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.'* The loving Shepherd and Spouse of souls feels a marvellous joy and satisfaction when He beholds a soul gained to perfection lying on His shoulders, and clinging to Him in the longed-for embraces of Divine union. He is not alone in His joy, for He makes the Angels and the souls of the blessed partakers of His glory, saying: 'Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see King Solomon in the diadem wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, 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 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 her Beloved.*

The Bride having prayed that the foxes may be caught, that the north wind may cease, that the nymphs, obstacles to the desired union of the spiritual marriage, may forego their troublesome importunities, and having also invoked and obtained the favourable wind of the Holy Ghost, which is the right disposition and means for the perfection of this estate, it remains for me now to speak of the state of spiritual marriage. It is the Bridegroom Himself Who speaks in the stanza before us, in which He calls the soul His bride, and speaks of two things:—1. He says that the soul has gone forth victoriously, and has entered the delectable state of spiritual marriage, which they had both so earnestly desired. 2. He

* S. Luke xv. 5, 8, 9.

† Cant. iii. 11.

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.' For the better understanding of the arrangement of these stanzas, and of the way in 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 have been tried in tribulations, in sharp mortifications, and in meditation on spiritual things. This is the subject of the 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, receiving many and very great communications from the Bridegroom, visions of Him, jewels and gifts. The soul is now like a virgin betrothed, and beholds itself growing into perfect love, as it appears from the stanzas which follow that beginning with 'Turn them away, O my Beloved!' the moment of espousals, to the present one, beginning with the words:

'The Bride has entered.' 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 espousals, because it is a complete transformation into the Beloved; and because each of them surrenders 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 in it, for the faith of both is confirmed; that of God being

STANZA
XXII.

The stanzas describe four states of spiritual progress;

1. Purgation and Meditation.

2. Contemplation.

3. Spiritual Betrothal.

4. Spiritual Marriage,—two wills, Divine and human, blended into one.

Participation in the Divine Nature.

STANZA
XXII.

The soul by
spiritual
marriage
confirmed in
grace.

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 S. Paul, who made use of the same metaphor, saying: 'He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.'† So, when the light of a star, or of a burning 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.

Entrance
into the joy
of the Lord.

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, and being transformed in this deep embrace of God.

Two natures,
without any
essential
change,
united in one
love.

'The pleasant and desirable garden.' 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 nuptials, without passing first through the spiritual espousals, the mutual faithful love of the betrothed. When the soul has lived for some time as the affianced 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.

We learn this truth also from the words of the Bridegroom in the Canticle, where He invites the soul, now His bride, to

* Genes. ii. 24.

† 1 Cor. vi. 17.

STANZA
XXII.

Highest state
of perfection
possible in
this life.

enter this high estate, saying: 'I am come into my garden, O my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my aromatical spices.*' He calls the soul His sister, His spouse, 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 estate, that is Himself, for which He is to her the pleasant and desirable garden. The whole aim and desire of the soul and of God, 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 sweetness incomparably more perfect than in the spiritual espousals, seeing that it reposes between the arms of such a Bridegroom, whose spiritual embraces are so real that it now, through them, lives the life of God. Now is fulfilled what S. 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 this life of God, consider what a 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.

Strength of
soul required
for perfec-
tion.

'And there reposes to her heart's content; her neck reclining on the sweet arms of her Beloved.' The neck is the strength of the soul, 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, overcome vice, it is fitting that it rest there from its labours, 'her neck reclining on the sweet arms of the Beloved.'

* Cant. v. 1.

† Galat. ii. 20.

STANZA
XXII.

God the
soul's
strength and
sweetness.

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 estate of spiritual matrimony is therefore most fitly designated by the reclining of the 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. Hence the Bride in the Canticle, longing for this estate, saith to the Bridegroom: 'Who shall give Thee to me for my brother, sucking the breast of my mother, that I may find Thee without, and kiss Thee, and now no man may despise me.'* By addressing Him as her Brother she shows the equality between them in the espousals 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, impediments to this estate. The 'finding Him without' is to find Him when the desires are quenched, and when the Bride is in solitude, spiritually detached from all things. 'And kiss Thee,' that is, be united with the Bridegroom. 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, through the sole medium of love—of that love which is the 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.'†

Love the
medium of
union and
likeness.

The return
of spring.

* Cant. viii. 1.

† Cant. ii. 11, 12.

INTRODUCTION.

WHEN the soul has been raised up to the state of spiritual matrimony, the Bridegroom reveals to it, as His faithful consort, His own marvellous secrets most readily and most frequently, for he who truly loves conceals nothing from the object of his affections. The principal points 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 to the soul one of the sweetest. Though He communicates many other mysteries, He mentions here His Incarnation only, as being the chief; and thus addresses the soul:—

STANZA
XXIII.

Incarnation
the highest
work of God,
and sweetest
to the soul.

STANZA XXIII.

*Beneath the apple-tree
I espoused thee:
There I gave thee My hand,
And thou wert there redeemed
Where thy mother was corrupted.*

The Bridegroom tells the soul of the wondrous way of its redemption and espousal 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.

Mankind lost
by the for-
bidden tree,
saved by the
Cross.

'Beneath the apple-tree.' At the foot 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

* Ephes. ii. 15.

STANZA
XXIII.

Every soul of
man espoused
to Christ by
the Cross.

man. There, on the Cross, He gave us grace and pledges of His love.

'I espoused thee, there I gave thee My hand;' help and grace, lifting thee up out of thy base and miserable condition to be My companion and My bride.

'And thou wert there redeemed where thy mother was corrupted.' Thy mother, human nature, was corrupted in thy first parents beneath the forbidden tree, and thou wert redeemed by 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.'*

The Cross
our second
Mother.

Wisdom of
God in bring-
ing good
from evil.

First espou-
sals,—Bap-
tism.

Second es-
pousals,—
Perfection.

Difference
between
them.

It is not the espousals of the Cross that I am speaking of now—that takes place, once for all, when God gives the first grace to the soul in baptism. But I am speaking of the espousals 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 once for all. The espousals of which I am speaking are those of which God speaks Himself by the mouth of the Prophet, saying: 'Thou wast cast out upon the face of the earth in the abjection of thy soul, in the day that thou wast born. And passing by thee, I saw that thou wast trodden under foot in thy own blood; and I said to thee when thou wast in thy blood: Live: I have said to thee, Live in thy blood. I caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field:

* Cant. viii. 5.

and thou didst increase and grow great, and advancedst, and camest to woman's ornament; thy breasts were fashioned and thy hair grew; and thou wast naked and full of confusion. And I passed by thee and saw thee, and behold thy time was the time of lovers; and I spread My garment over thee, and covered thy ignominy. And I swore to thee; and I entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God; and thou becamest Mine. And I washed thee with water, and cleansed away thy blood from thee: and I anointed thee with oil. And I clothed thee with embroidery, and shod thee with violet-coloured shoes, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and clothed thee with fine garments. I decked thee also with ornaments, and put bracelets on thy hands, and a chain about thy neck. And I put a jewel upon thy forehead and ear-rings in thy ears, and a beautiful crown upon thy head. And thou wast adorned with gold and silver, and wast clothed with fine linen, and embroidered work, and many colours: thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil, and wast made exceeding beautiful, and wast advanced to be a queen. And thy renown went forth among the nations for thy beauty.* These are the words of the Lord to the prophet Ezechiel, and such is that soul of which I am now speaking.

STANZA
XXIII.

Illustration
from the
prophet
Ezechiel.

INTRODUCTION.

AFTER the mutual surrender to each other of the Bride and the Beloved, comes the bed which receives them both. 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 less than the Bridegroom Himself, the

* Ezech. xvi. 5-14.

STANZA
XXIV.

Christ the
Divine flower
of fragrance
and beauty.

Word, the Son of God, in Whom, through the union of love, the Bride reposes. This bed is said here to be of flowers, for the Bridegroom is not only that, but, as He says Himself, the very '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 odours, fragrance, grace, and beauty, as it is written: 'With Me is the beauty of the field.'† Thus, the soul, in the stanza that follows celebrates the properties and beauties of its bed.

STANZA XXIV.

THE BRIDE.

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

Bliss of the
state of per-
fect union
with God.

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 enjoy 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.' I have already said that this bed of the soul is the bosom and love of the Son of God,

* Cant. ii. 1.

† Ps. xlix. 11.

which is full of flowers to the soul, who being united now to God and reposing in Him, as His bride, shares the bosom and love of the Beloved. That is, the soul is admitted to the knowledge of the wisdom, secrets and graces, and gifts and powers of God, which render it 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.

Hence it follows that this union of love with God is 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 estate the virtues of the soul are perfect and heroic, which they could not be until the bed had flowered in perfect union with God.

'By the dens of lions encompassed.' 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 assumes the characteristics of God. Thus, then, the perfect soul is so defended, so strong in virtue, and in all

STANZA
XXIV.

1. The soul
adorned
with graces.

2. The soul
in virtue,
strong as a
lion.

* Cant. i. 15.

† Prov. viii. 31.

STANZA
XXIV.

virtues together, reposing on the bed of flowers 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 strong, courageous, and mature in 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.

Satan in
dread of the
perfect soul.

The soul's bed is encompassed by virtues: for when the soul has advanced to perfection, the virtues which adorn it are 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. The soul, now free from the molestation of natural affections, and a stranger to the worry of human anxieties, enjoys in security and peace the participation of God.

The soul like
God when
perfectly
conformed
to His Will.

This is the object of the Bride's desires when she says: 'Who shall give Thee to me for my brother, sucking the breast of my mother, that I may find Thee without, and kiss Thee, and now no man may despise me?*' The 'kiss' here is the union of which I am speaking, whereby the soul becomes in a sense like God in love. This is the object it desires when it says: 'Who shall give Thee to me for my brother?' That is, Who shall make me resemble Thee? '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 desires. 'And now no man may despise me;' that is, the world, the Devil, and the flesh will not venture

* Cant. viii. 1.

STANZA
XXIV.

to assail it, for being now 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.

But beside this habitual tranquillity, the flowers of virtues open in the soul and diffuse their odours over it, so 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 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 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. Sometimes the soul will detect 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, the fragrant roses of the unknown islands—the strange knowledge of God; and further, the perfume of the water lilies of the roaring torrents—the greatness 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. Finally, it detects all the other virtues and graces, the calm knowledge, silent music, murmuring solitude, and the sweet supper of love; and the joy of this feeling in the soul is such as to make it say in truth, 'Our bed is of flowers, by the dens of lions encompassed.' Blessed is that soul which in this life deserves at times to enjoy the perfume of these Divine flowers.

The soul
does not
always enjoy
the virtues it
possesses.They are
made fra-
grant by the
breath of the
Holy Spirit.

'Hung with purple.' Purple in Holy Scripture means charity, and is employed for royal vestments. The bed is hung with purple, because all the virtues, riches, and blessings of it are sustained, flourish, and exult in charity and in love

3. Perfected
by charity.

STANZA
XXIV.

for the King of Heaven; since without that love the soul can never delight in the bed nor in the flowers thereof.

Virtues preserved by charity.

All these virtues are, in the soul, as it were hung or displayed in love for God, as in that which preserves them, and they are, as it were, bathed in love; for all and each of them inspire the soul with love for God, and on all occasions, and in all actions, they advance in love to a greater love for God. This is what is meant by saying that the bed is hung with purple.

This is well expressed in the Canticle as follows: 'King Solomon hath made himself a litter of the wood of Libanus: the pillars thereof he made of silver, the seat of gold, the going up of purple; the midst he covered 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 supported by love, and by the love of God and of the soul are harmonized together and practised.

4. Casts out fear.

'Made in peace.' This is the fourth excellence of the bed, and depends on the third, of which I have just spoken, that 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 truth 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 that the soul is peaceful, gentle, and strong, which are three qualities unassailable by the world, Satan, and the flesh. The virtues preserve the soul so peaceful

The soul made peaceful, gentle, and strong.

* Cant. iii. 9, 10.

† 1 S. John iv. 18.

and so secure as to make it appear to be wholly built up in peace. The fifth characteristic of this bed of flowers is explained in the following words.

STANZA
XXIV.

'Crowned with a thousand shields of gold.' 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 vice, which is overcome 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 of gold, to show the great worth of the virtues. The bride in the Canticle sets forth the same truth, saying: 'Three score valiant ones of the most valiant of Israel surround the bed of Solomon, all holding swords; . . . every man's sword upon his thigh, because of fears in the night.'*

5. Crowned and defended by virtues.

Thus in this stanza the Bride speaks of a thousand shields, to express the variety of the virtues, gifts, and graces where-with God has endowed the soul in the state of union. The Bridegroom in the Canticle also has employed the same expression, in order to show forth the innumerable virtues of the soul: 'Thy neck is as the tower of David, which is built with bulwarks; a thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armour of valiant men.' †

INTRODUCTION.

THE bride of Christ, having attained to perfection, is not satisfied with magnifying and extolling the excellences of her Beloved, the Son of God, nor with recounting and giving

* Cant. iii. 7, 8.

† Cant. iv. 4.

STANZA
XXV.

The soul
gives thanks
for graces
bestowed on
others.

thanks for, the graces she has received at His hands and the joy into which she has entered, but she recounts also the graces He has 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, the soul 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.*

Three graces
given to
devout souls;

Here the Bride gives praise to her Beloved for three graces which devout souls receive from Him, by which they encourage and excite themselves to love God more 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 the 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.

1. Spiritual
sweetness.

2. Visits of
love.

3. Infused
charity.

'In Thy footsteps.' 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 diffusest, and the odours which Thou scatterest.

Footsteps of
God,—what.

'The young ones run Thy way.' Devout souls run with youthful vigour in the sweetness which Thy footsteps com-

municate. 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 detachment from all things. This sweetness and impression of Himself which God leaves in the soul, renders it light and active, so as to run 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 by many methods. The Bride in the Canticle, 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 enlarge my heart.'[†]

'At the touch of the fire, and by the spiced wine, the Divine balsam flows.' I said, while explaining the previous lines, that souls run in His footsteps in the way of exterior works and practices. 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 is so penetrating that the heart is set on fire with love. It seems to be but a spark of fire leaping up and burning. 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 esteems Him, and prays to Him in the sweetness of its love. This is the flowing of

STANZA
XXV.

Many gifts:
but one
Spirit.

Attractions
of Divine
Love.

Interior acts
of the will
correspond-
ing to grace.

^{*} Cant. i. 3.

[†] Ps. cxviii. 32.

STANZA
XXV.

the Divine balsam, which obeys the touch of the fire that issues forth from the consuming love for God which that fire kindled—the Divine balsam which comforts the soul and heals it with its odour and its substance.

The Bride in the Canticle speaks of this Divine touch, saying: 'My Beloved put His hand through the key-hole, and my bowels were moved 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 hole by which His hand penetrated 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 bowels that were moved are the will, in which the touch is effected, and the moving of them is the stirring up of the desires and affections to love and praise God, which is the flowing of the balsam that runs forth at this contact.

'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 strong herbs; so this love, the gift of God to the perfect, is in the soul prepared and seasoned with virtues which it has already acquired. This love, seasoned with the precious spices, communicates to the soul such a strong abundant inebriation when God visits it, that it sends forth with great efficacy those acts of praise, love, and worship, which I referred to before, and that with a marvellous longing to do, and to suffer for Him.

This sweet inebriation and grace, however, do not pass quickly away, like the contact of the fire, for they are of longer continuance. The fire touches and passes, but the

* Cant. v. 4.

God deals with souls according to their spiritual state.

The strong wine of love for God.

STANZA
XXV.

Touches of God vary in duration and intensity.

effects abide for a time. But the spiced wine at times remains long, 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 grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall flame out.*'

The outpourings of this inebriation last sometimes as long as the inebriation itself. At other times of this inebriation 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.

As I have mentioned fermented wine, it will be as well to touch upon the difference between it—we call it old wine—and new wine. For since the difference between old love and new love is the same, the comparison will furnish some hints of doctrine for spiritually-minded men. New wine has not settled on the lees, and therefore ferments over; we cannot ascertain its quality or value before it has settled, and the fermentation ceased, for until then there is great risk of its corruption. 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 is now safe from corruption, for all fermentation which might have proved pernicious has

Old wine better than new;

1. Fermentation over.
2. Quality ascertained.
3. Preservation secured.

4. It is mellow and wholesome.

* Ps. xxxviii.

STANZA
XXV.

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 palate of him who drinks it, and the use thereof produces health and a sound constitution.

Beginners compared to new wine;

1. In their sensible emotions.

2. In their defective humility.

3. In their want of purity of intention.

4. In their lack of constancy.

5. In their indiscreet zeal.

The Perfect compared to old wine;

New lovers are compared to new wine—these are beginners in the service of God—because the fervour of their love manifests itself exteriorly in the senses; because they have not settled on the lees of their frail and imperfect sensitive nature; and because they measure the strength of love by the sweetness of it. Sensible sweetness gives them ordinarily 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, and the sensible emotions have passed away. For as these fervours and this sensible warmth may incline men to good and to perfect love, and serve as an excellent means thereto, if men will but settle well on the lees of their imperfections; so also is it very easy at first, when sensible sweetness is fresh, for the wine of love to fail, for fervour to cool down, and sweetness to vanish. New lovers are always anxious, sensibly tormented by their love; it is requisite therefore for them to moderate this state. If they undertake much 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.

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, those 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 overflowing bursts of exterior zeal, but they

* Eccclus. ix. 15.

STANZA
XXV.

1. In interior purity.

taste the sweetness of the wine of love, now thoroughly fermented, free from the sensible sweetness of the love of beginners, but rather settled within the soul in the substance and sweetness of the spirit, and the reality of its acts. Such souls as these do not seek after sensible sweetness and fervours, neither do they accept them, lest they should suffer from loathing and weariness; for he who gives the reins to his desires in matters of the sensitive appetite, must of necessity suffer pain and loathing, both in mind and body.

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 therefore scarcely ever prove faithless to God, because they have risen above that which might prove an occasion of falling, namely, the flesh. These now drink of the wine of love, which is not only fermented and settled on 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.

For this cause an old friend is of great price in the 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 Thou producest in it.

2. In constancy of love.

3. In richness of triced virtue.

* Eccclus. ix. 14.

INTRODUCTION.

STANZA
XXVI.Happy state
of the soul
in Divine
Love.

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; 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 of the torrent of Thy pleasure, for with Thee is the fountain of life.'† This fulness will be in the very being of the soul, seeing that its drink is nothing else than the torrent of delights, which is the Holy Spirit, as it is written: 'And he showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb.'‡ The waters of this river, which is the very love of God, pour into the soul, and make it drink 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 love sings the following stanza:

STANZA XXVI.

*In the inmost 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 supreme grace of God in taking it to Himself into the house of His love, which is the union of it with Himself, or its transformation in love.

* Cant. ii. 6.

† Ps. xxxv. 9.

‡ Apoc. xxii. 1.

It describes two effects proceeding therefrom: its forgetfulness of, and detachment from, all the things of this world, and the mortification of its tastes and desires.

'In the inmost cellar.' 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 inmost. It follows from this that there are other cellars not so interior; other degrees of love by which souls ascend upwards to this, the highest. 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 in this life. 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 for his father. Thus when the Holy Scriptures would describe 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: 'He shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord.'* Holy Simeon also is described by the Evangelist as a 'just man full of fear,' † and the same applies to many others.

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 those who do so must be in perfect union with God, the union of the spiritual marriage, of which I am here 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 com-

STANZA
XXVI.Seven degrees
of perfection
correspond-
ing to the
seven gifts
of the Holy
Ghost.

* Is. xi. 3.

† S. Luke ii. 25. Justus et timoratus.

STANZA
XXVI.Illustrations
of union with
God by love.

municates Himself to the soul now in the marvellous glory of its transformation. In this high estate God and the soul are united, as the window is with the light, coal with the fire, and 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 of God in the cellar of wine, says nothing else, and I do not believe that anything else could be said but the words which follow:

The soul
enjoys God in
its intellect,
will, and
memory.

‘Of my Beloved have I drunk.’ 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 intellect it drinks wisdom and knowledge, in the will the sweetest love, in the memory refreshment and delight in the thought and sense of glory. That the soul receives and drinks delight in its very substance, appears from the words of the Bride in the Canticle: ‘My soul melted when He spoke;’* that is, when the Bridegroom communicated Himself to the soul.

That the intellect drinks wisdom is also 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 further teaches us that the will drinks of love, saying, ‘He brought me into the cellar of wine, and set in order charity in me,‡ that is, He gave me, accepted in love, to drink of love; or, to speak more clearly, he set in order charity in me, tempering His charity and suiting it to me. This is to give the soul to

* Cant. v. 6.

† Cant. viii. 2.

‡ Cant. ii. 4.

drink of the very love of its Beloved, which the Beloved infuses into it.

There is a common notion that the will cannot love that of which the intellect has no cognisance. This, however, is to be understood in the order of nature, because it is impossible, in a natural way, to love anything unless we first know what it is. But in the supernatural order the axiom is not true; for God can infuse love without infusing knowledge, and increase it without increasing distinct knowledge, as is evident from the texts already quoted. Yea, many spiritual persons have experience of this, whose love for God burns more and more, while their knowledge grows not. Men may know little and love much, and on the other hand, know much and love but little. In general, spiritual men whose understanding in the things of God is not increasing, are yet advancing in the will. Faith infused by the way of the intellect suffices for them; because by means of it God infuses and increases charity in them and the acts thereof, and they love Him more and more though their knowledge is not increased. Thus the will may drink of love without the intellect's drinking in new knowledge. In the present instance, however, all the powers of the soul together, because of the union in the inmost cellar, drink of the Beloved.

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 intellect in remembering the blessings it possesses and enjoys in union with the Beloved.

‘And when I went forth.’ This Divine draught deifies the soul, elevates and inebriates it in God, even in the time of its going forth, that is, when this grace has passed. Though the soul be always in the high estate of marriage ever since God has placed it there, yet actual union in all its powers is not continuous, though the substantial union abides. But in this substantial union the powers of the soul are most

STANZA
XXVI.In the order
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vanced in
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STANZA
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XXVI.In the order
of grace the
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more ad-
vanced in
love, than
the intellect
in know-
ledge.

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XXVI.

Not actual,
but habitual
union with
God, con-
tinuous.

First effect
of Divine
love,—Wise
ignorance.

Its formal
cause,—
what.

frequently in union, and drink of His cellar, the intellect by understanding, the will by loving, &c. We are not, therefore, to suppose that the soul, though 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; 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.’ This draught of God’s most deep wisdom makes the soul forget all the things of this world. The soul considers all its previous knowledge, and the knowledge of the whole world besides, but pure ignorance in comparison with His knowledge. Observe, here, that the formal cause of the soul’s ignoring the things of the world, when it has ascended to this high estate, is, that it is informed by supernatural knowledge, in the presence of which all natural and political science is ignorance rather than knowledge. Thus the soul, when raised up to this most sublime knowledge, understandeth thereby that all knowledge whatever other than this, is not knowledge, but ignorance, and that there is nothing else but this to be known. The very same truth is set before us by the Apostle, when he said that ‘the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.’* The soul therefore says of itself, that it knows nothing since it has drunk of the wisdom of God. This truth cannot be acknowledged—for according to the wisdom of men and of the world, it is simple ignorance, and unworthy of regard—except in the truth of God in the soul, communicating this wisdom to it, and strengthening it with the draught of love that it may see clearly. This is the meaning of Solomon when he said: ‘The vision which the man spoke, 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.’†

* 1 Cor. iii. 19.

† Prov. xxx. 1, 2.

STANZA
XXVI.

When the soul is elevated 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. The wisdom of the world, therefore, is ignorance in comparison with the wisdom of God; and the wisdom of God is ignorance with respect to that of the world.

Moreover, this deification and elevation of the soul in God whereby it is, as it were, rapt and absorbed in love, and wholly united to God, suffer it not to dwell upon any worldly matter. The soul is now detached, not only from all exterior things, but even from itself: it is as it were annihilated, assumed by, and dissolved in, love; that is, it passes out of itself into the Beloved. Thus the Bride, in the Canticle, after speaking of her 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 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.

Such a soul will scarcely intermeddle with the affairs of others, because it forgets even its own; for the Spirit of God

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

† Cant. vi. 11.

No true
science with-
out God.

The soul
forgets sin,
the world,
and self.

STANZA
XXVI.Acquired
knowledge
perfected by
infused
knowledge.State of the
Blessed in
Heaven.Simplicity of
the know-
ledge of the
perfect soul ;1. It is
absorbed in
God.2. It is con-
formed to
God.

dwelling in it inclines it to ignore all things, 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 is in a state of ignorance. We are not, however, to suppose that it loses the habits of knowledge previously acquired, for such knowledge is 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. In this union of the Divine Wisdom these habits are united with the higher wisdom of the other knowledge, as 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. This, I imagine, will be the state of things 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.

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. So is it with the soul; while the effects

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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 the Psalmist: 'My heart hath been inflamed, and my reins have been changed; and I am brought to nothing, and I knew not.*' 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. This is what the royal Prophet meant when he said that he was brought to nothing and knew not.

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 away, but the old life also with its imperfections is destroyed, and into the new man renewed; this is the second of the two effects mentioned here.

'And lost the flock I followed before.' Until the soul reaches the state of perfection, however spiritual it may be, there is always a troop of desires, likings and imperfections, sometimes natural, sometimes spiritual, after which it runs, and which it strives to feed while following and satisfying them. With regard to the intellect, there are certain imperfections of the desire of knowledge. With regard to the will, certain likings and peculiar desires, whether 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 of the like nature, still savouring of the world: or in natural things, such as in eating and drinking, the preference of one kind of food over another, and the choice of what is best: or

Second effect
of Divine
love,—Self-
denial in
sense and
spirit.

* Ps. lxxii. 21, 22.

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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.

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, as I have called it, some men are more influenced by it than others; they run after and follow it, until they enter the inmost cellar, where they lose it altogether, being then transformed in love. In that cellar the flock of imperfections is quickly lost, as rust and mould on metal is lost in fire. Then the soul feels itself free from the pettiness of self-likings and the vanities after which it ran before, and sings, I have lost the flock which I followed after.

INTRODUCTION.

Infinite love
and tender-
ness of God.

God communicates Himself to the soul in this interior union with so much reality of love that a mother's love towards her child, the love of a brother, or the affection of a friend, are not to be compared with it. Such is the tenderness and 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 the servant, and the soul His lord. He is as anxious to comfort it, as if He were a slave, and the soul God. Such is the depth of the humility and tenderness of God. In this communion of love He renders those services to the soul which He says in the Gospel, He will perform for the elect in Heaven. 'Amen, I

STANZA
XXVII.

say to you, that He will gird Himself and make them sit down to meat, and will come and serve them.'*

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 what the Prophet said, '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 supreme mercies? 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 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 get up 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 power 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:—

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 inmost cellar of

* S. Luke xii. 37.

† Is. lxvi. 12.

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XXVII.

love they both met together, God giving to the soul the breasts of His love freely, whereby He instructs it in His mysteries and knowledge, 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.' 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 as it appears also from the words that follow:—

Mystical
Theology,—
what.

'There He taught me the science full of sweetness.' 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 so sweet. Inasmuch as this science and knowledge are communicated to the soul in that love with which God communicates Himself, it is therefore sweet to the intellect, because the object of intellect is science, and sweet to the will, because it comes by love which is the object of the will.

'There I gave to Him myself without reserve.' The soul, in this sweet draught of God, surrenders itself to Him most willingly and with great sweetness; it desires to be wholly His, and to retain nothing in itself 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

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XXVII.

that neither fails the other in the faith and constancy of the betrothal.

'There I promised to be His bride.' 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 intellect, 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 intellect, the memory, the will, in its 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, could be no longer liable to any movements contrary to God.

First move-
ments of a
perfect soul
directed to
God.

It is quite clear from all this that the soul, which has attained to 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 S. 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 love. It gives up all it has, like the wise merchant in the Gospel;‡

Love the
form and
substance of
perfection.

* Ps. lxi. 2, 3.

† Coloss. iii. 14.

‡ S. Matth. xiii. 44.

STANZA
XXVII.

for this treasure of love hidden in God, and which is so precious in His sight, that the Beloved cares for nothing else but love; the soul, therefore, seeing this, and anxious to serve Him perfectly, occupies itself wholly with 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 for 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 happens to it; it makes all things subserve it towards loving God, whether they be sweet or bitter. The soul now animated and protected by love, has no sense, feeling, or knowledge, because, as I have said, it knows nothing but love, and all its occupations and pleasures are the joys of love for God. This forms the subject of the following stanza.

The soul
compared to
a bee,—why.

INTRODUCTION.

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 grows more than 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

God pleased
with nothing
but love.

Because love
accomplishes
the soul's
growth,
which He
desires.

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.'*

STANZA
XXVIII.

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 my Beloved. She therefore seeketh not 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 love, inasmuch as she has changed her former mode of conversing with Him into love.

The soul
centred on
love.

'My soul is occupied.' This refers to the soul's surrender of itself to the Beloved in this union of love, wherein it consecrates itself, with all its faculties, intellect, will, and memory, to His service. The intellect is occupied in understanding what 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.

Intellect,
will, and
memory
unite in
serving God.

'And all my substance in His service.' By substance here is meant all that relates to the sensitive part of the soul, which

* S. John xv. 15.

STANZA
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STANZA
XXVIII.

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Intellect, will, and memory unite in serving God.

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* S. John xv. 15.

STANZA
XXVIII.

Body and
soul wholly
devoted to
God.

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 rejoicing, hope, fear, and grief are conversant with God only; all its appetites, and all its anxieties also, have regard only unto Him.

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 intellect, 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 not making any conscious efforts in that direction. Such a soul as this doeth continually the work of God, is intent upon Him and His works, without thinking or reflecting on what it is doing for Him. The constant and habitual practice of this has suppressed all conscious reflection, and even those acts of fervour also which were present to it in the beginning of its conversion. The whole substance of the soul being thus occupied, what follows cannot but be true also.

'Now I guard no flock.' I do not now go after my likings and desires, for having now fixed them all upon God, I now neither feed nor 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.' Before the soul suc-

Unconscious
love of the
perfect soul.

STANZA
XXVIII.

ceeded in effecting this gift and surrender of itself, and of all its substance, to the Beloved, it was entangled in many unprofitable occupations, by which it sought to serve itself and others. It may be said of it, that its occupations of this kind corresponded with its habitual imperfections.

These habitual imperfections may have been unprofitable conversations, thoughts, and acts, and the usage of them in a manner which did not tend to perfection. There are other desires also, serving to the satisfaction of others, such as ostentation, compliments, flattering speeches, personal consideration, seeking after the appearance of good, pleasing the world at large, with many other vanities whereby we seek to satisfy the world, wasting herein many anxious thoughts and acts, and, finally, the very substance of the soul. Such employment as this the soul has now abandoned, for all its words, thoughts, and works are directed to God, and conversant with Him, freed from their previous imperfections. It is as if the soul 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.' All my occupation now is the practice of love for God, all the powers of soul and body, memory, intellect, and will, interior and exterior senses, the desires of the spiritual and of the sensitive nature, 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.'*

When the soul has arrived at this state all the acts of its spiritual and sensitive 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 com-

Habitual
imperfec-
tions,—what,
and how
remedied.

Love in
work,
prayer, and
suffering.

* Ps. lviii. 10.

STANZA
XXVIII.
Prayer made
by loving.

munion 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 soul which has attained to it! where all is the very substance of love, the joyous delights of the betrothal, in which it may address the Beloved as 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 is that the soul, in the state of spiritual espousals, is for the most part living in the union of love, that is, the will is habitually waiting lovingly on God.

All things,—
new and old,
bitter and
sweet,—kept
for the
Beloved.

INTRODUCTION.

OF a truth the soul is now lost to all things, and gained only to love, and the mind is now no longer occupied with anything else. It is, therefore, deficient in what concerns the active life, and other exterior duties, that it may apply in earnest only 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 more important or more necessary than love. Thus, in the Canticle, the Bridegroom protects the Bride, adjuring the

Mary and
Martha.

* Cant. vii. 13.

† S. Luke x. 42.

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.'*

STANZA
XXIX.

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 advanced so far, 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, though they may be most profitable in themselves; 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 Magdalen, though her preaching was most edifying, and might have been still more so afterwards, out of the great desire she had to please God and benefit the Church, hid herself 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.

Love for God
the best
means of
doing good
to others.

Example of
S. Mary
Magdalen.

When the soul has attained in any degree to 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? And after all, is it not for this love that we are all created? Let those men of zeal, who think by their preaching and exterior works, to

To love God,
the end of our
creation.

* Cant. iii. 5.

STANZA
XXIX.

Advice to
those who are
engaged in
active works.

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 of their time in quiet prayer, even though they have not attained to the state of unitive love. Certainly in that case they would effect greater good, 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 have no fruit at all; 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.

Good works
can only be
done in the
power of
God.

I have said this with a view 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.

STANZA XXIX.

*If then on the common
I am no longer seen or found,
Say that I am lost;
That being enamoured,
I lost myself; and yet I gained.*

The soul replies to a tacit objection of the world. The worldly-minded are in the habit of censuring those who give themselves up in earnest to God; they look upon them as extravagant, in their withdrawal from the world, and in their whole manner of life. They say also of them that they

STANZA
XXIX.

Objection of
the world to
the con-
templative
life.

are useless in all important affairs, and lost to all that the world esteems and values. The soul replies to this objection in the most perfect way, setting its face boldly against it and any other which the world might invent. Having attained to the reality of God's love it despises all this; it even admits the censure to be true to its fullest extent, and boasts of its extravagance, and its abandonment of the world, and even of itself, for its Beloved. What the soul here says, 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 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. And 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.

Answer
thereto.

'If then on the common I am no longer seen or found.' 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 ever rejoices in that and would have men so speak of it.

'Say that I am lost.' He who loves is not ashamed in the presence of men of what he does for God, neither does he conceal what he does through a false modesty, 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 such an one in the presence of His Father. 'He that shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father

Necessity of
confessing
Christ before
men.

STANZA
XXIX.

Who is in heaven.* The soul, therefore, in the spirit of love glories in what ministers to the honour of the Beloved, in that it has done anything for Him in being lost to the things of the world.

God has few
true lovers.

But few spiritual persons arrive at this noble courage and resolution in their conduct. For though some attempt to practise it, and some even think themselves proficient therein, still 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 I gained.' 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.

The soul loses
1. Self.

This loss occurs in two ways. The soul loses itself, making no account whatever of itself, but referring all to the Beloved, resigning itself freely into His hands without any selfish views, losing itself deliberately, and seeking nothing for itself.

2. All things
else.

Secondly, it loses itself in all things, making no account of anything save that which concerns the Beloved. This is to lose

* S. Matth. x. 33.

† Ib. vi. 24.

STANZA
XXIX.

oneself, that is, to be willing 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;*' that is, to die for Christ is my gain and profit spiritually. This is why the soul says that it 'gained;' for he who knows not how to lose, gains 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.' †

But if we wish to enter into the deeper spiritual signification of this line, and its peculiar fitness to the subject before us, 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 gained God of a truth, because it has truly lost itself as to all that is not God, and also as to its own self.

God gained
by faith,
love, and
poverty of
spirit.

INTRODUCTION.

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 delicious, so full of sweetness that no mortal tongue can describe them, nor human intellect comprehend them. As a bride on the

* Phil. i. 21.

† S. Matth. xvi. 25.

STANZA
XXX.

day of her espousals attends to nothing but to the joyous festival of her love, and brings all her jewels and ornaments for the pleasure of her spouse, and as he too in the same way exhibits his own magnificence for the pleasure of his bride, so is it also in the spiritual espousals 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 nuptial feast, each communicating to the other their goods and joys with the wine of the sweet love of the Holy Ghost. The present stanza, addressed to the Bridegroom by the soul, has this for its subject.

STANZA XXX.

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

The soul all
for Christ,
and Christ
all to the
soul.

The Bride now turns to the Bridegroom and addresses Him in the intercourse and comfort of their love. The subject of this stanza is 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 mutual practice thereof, both rejoicing in their mutual love. Thus the 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 gracious 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

* Cant. vi. 2.

STANZA
XXX.

these virtues bound up as flowers in a garland, in the common love which each bears the other.

'Of emeralds, and of flowers.' The flowers are the virtues of the soul; the emeralds are the gifts it has received from God.

'In the early morning culled.' That is, acquired in youth, which is the early morning of life. They are said to be culled, because the virtues which we acquire in youth are chosen virtues 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. We may by the fresh morning also understand those acts of

Virtues most
pleasing to
God—when
acquired;

1. In youth.

2. By love.

love by which we acquire virtue, and which are more pleasing unto God than the fresh morning is to the sons of men. Also good works, 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 thus acquire with toil and labour is better, more perfect and durable 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 culled in the freshness of the morning; because it is these flowers alone, with the emeralds

3. In dryness
of spirit.

* 2 Cor. xii. 9.

STANZA
XXX.

The soul adorned with graces as with a garland of flowers.

of virtue, the choice and perfect graces, and not the imperfect, which are pleasing to the Beloved.

'We will make the garlands.' 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.

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 exaltation by its beauty. Thus David saith, addressing himself to Christ: 'The queen stood on Thy right hand in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety.*' That is, at His right hand, clothed in perfect love, surrounded with the variety of graces and perfect virtues. 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 practise virtues alone, nor acquire them alone, without the help of God; neither does God alone, on the other hand, 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, coming down from the Father of light,' † still they enter into no soul without that soul's concurrence and consent. Thus the Bride saith to the Spouse: 'Draw me; we

Two elements of virtue;
1. Grace of God.
2. Act of man.

* Ps. xlv. 10.

† S. James i. 17.

STANZA
XXX.

Divine grace goes before, and with, the human will.

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 or the soul alone.

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. We may also understand by these beautiful garlands the crowns formed by Christ and the Church, of which there are three kinds. The first is formed of the beauty and white flowers of the Virgins, each one with her Virginal crown, and all together forming one for their Bridegroom Christ. The second, of the brilliant flowers of the holy Doctors, each with his crown of doctor, and all together forming one 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 for the final coronet 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 espousals, and in the day of the joy of his heart.†' These are the garlands of which the soul says:

Christ adorned by the triple crown of His Saints;

1. White of Virgins.

2. Luminous of Doctors.

3. Purple of Martyrs.

'Flowering in Thy love.' The flowering 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

* Cant. i. 3.

† Cant. iii. 11.

STANZA
XXX.

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.

No virtue
without
charity.

‘And bound together with one hair of my head.’ The hair here 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 is, love, saith the Apostle, ‘is the bond of perfection.’* Love binds the virtues and supernatural gifts together, so that if 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.

God must be
loved with
singleness of
heart.

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 the garlands of virtues; for when love is single, firmly fixed on God, such as it is 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.

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

Leviathan a
type of
Satan.

* Coloss. iii. 14.

† Job xli. 6, 7.

evil spirit be so strong, because covered with 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 nor imperfection can penetrate between them; each virtue severally adding strength to strength, beauty to beauty, wealth to wealth, and to majesty dominion and grandeur? 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 receives; 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 an army 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.

STANZA
XXX.Virtue
stronger
than Vice.

* Cant. vii. 1.

† Ib. vi. 3.

‡ Ib. ii. 5.

INTRODUCTION.

STANZA
XXXI.

Love the
cause of
Perfection,
i. e. Union
with God.

I BELIEVE I have now shown how the intertwining of the garlands, and their lasting presence in the soul, explains 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,' and perfection is union with God. The soul is, as it were, a sheaf of garlands, seeing that it is the subject of glory, no longer what it was before, but the very perfect flower of flowers in perfection, and the beauty of them 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 the soul seems God and God the soul. Such is this marvellous union, which baffles all description.

God and the
soul one, not
in essence,
but by love.

David and
Jonathan.

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 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.

† 1 Kings xviii. 1.

STANZA XXXI.

*By that one hair
Thou hast observed fluttering on my neck,
And hast regarded on my neck,
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.' 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 impediment whatever, flutters strongly and lightly in the strength of the soul. As the air causes the hair to wave and flutter on the neck, so the breath of the Holy Ghost stirs the strong love that it may fly upwards unto 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.

STANZA
XXXI.

Love for God
must be
strong.

Mutual
dependences
of virtues.

STANZA
XXXI.

‘And hast regarded on my neck.’ 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—that is, the strength of the soul—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.

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. I have already described, in the treatise of the Obscure Night, what these temptations and trials are, how deeply they affect the soul, and strengthen it so that it shall attain to this strength of love in which God unites Himself with it. I shall also say something on the same subject when I explain the four stanzas which begin with the words, ‘O living flame of love!’ The soul having passed through these trials, acquires such a degree of love that it merits the Divine union.

‘Thou wert captivated.’ 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

God a
prisoner of
love.

us,* as S. John saith, and humbled Himself to our vileness, He never would 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.’ The eye is faith. The soul speaks of but one, 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 that love which the Bride inspires in the Bridegroom by her simple trust, 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.

The Bridegroom himself speaks of the hair and the eyes; saying to the Bride, ‘Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast wounded my heart with one of thy eyes, and with one hair of thy neck.’† He says twice that His heart is wounded 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 intellect and the will; for the intellect is subdued by faith, signified by the eye, and the will by love. Here the soul exults in this union, and

STANZA
XXXI.We love God
because He
first loved us.Confidence in
God,—its
effects.

* 1 S. John iv. 10.

† Cant. iv. 9.

STANZA
XXXI.

gives thanks to the Bridegroom for it, as it is 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, it having been for a long time enamoured of Him.

INTRODUCTION.

Power,
bliss, and
cause of love
for God.

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 under its influence do what is required of them, and, on the other hand, if love be wanting, no influence can be exercised even after many caresses. One hair will bind those that love. The soul, knowing this well, 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 Thy grace in me:
For this didst Thou love me again,
And thereby mine eyes did merit
To adore what in Thee they saw.*

Unselfish
nature of
true love.

It is the nature of perfect love to seek or accept nothing for itself, nor to attribute anything to itself, but to refer all to the beloved. If this be true of earthly love, how much more so of love for God, the reason of which is so constraining. In the previous stanzas it appeared as if the Bride attributed something to herself; she said that she would make garlands with her Beloved, and bind them with a hair of her

STANZA
XXXII.The soul
refers
nothing to
self, but all
to God.

head; that is a great work, and of no slight importance and value; 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 error which might have occurred, with great care and fear, lest any merit should be attributed to herself, and less to God than His due, and less also than she intended. 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.' That is, with loving affection, for I have already said, that where God regards there He loves.

'Thine eyes imprinted Thy grace in me.' 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 elevates it to be 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.' To love again is to love much; it is more than simple love, it is a twofold love, and on two grounds. Here the soul explains the two motives of the Bridegroom's love; He not only loved it because captivated by the hair, but He loved it again, because He was wounded with one of its eyes. He loved it so profoundly, because He would, when He looked upon it, give it grace to please Him, endowing it with the hair of love, and animating with charity the faith of the eye. And

The soul by
grace made
an object of
God's love.

STANZA
XXXII.

therefore saith the soul: 'For this didst Thou love me again. To say that God shews 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 shewn 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 S. John, 'grace for grace;'* grace for the grace He has given, that is, more grace, for without grace we cannot merit His grace.

God the
Supreme
Good loves,
1. Himself.
2. All things
as related to
Himself.

If we would 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.' 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.' That is: The powers of my soul, O my Spouse, 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 also the powers of the soul merit in adoring because they adore in the grace of God, in which every act is meritorious.

* S. John i. 16.

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.

STANZA
XXXII.
Attributes of
God seen by
love.

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 also rendered 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.

Misery of a
soul in sin.

INTRODUCTION.

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, 'I will not remember all his iniquities that he

Four benefits
of the regard
of God.

STANZA
XXXIII.

Guilt of
pardoned
sins returns
no more.

We should
not forget
them;

1. To avoid presumption.
2. To renew thanksgiving.
3. To increase trust in God.

hath done.* 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 that it may give us confidence in God 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 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 continuance of the Divine spiritual union, wherein its mercies are visibly multiplied. This is the subject of the following stanza.

* Ezech. xviii. 22.

† Eclus. v. 5.

‡ Nahum i. 9.

§ Ps. xv. 4.

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 sets value upon 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 for it, 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.' 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.' If, before Thou didst 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.' 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

STANZA
XXXIII.

Nothing
good unless
from God.

STANZA
XXXIII.

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 when Thou hadst looked upon me in love Thou didst make me beautiful and lovely.

The more richly a soul is endowed by God, the more dearly is it loved by Him.

‘Grace and beauty hast Thou given me.’ The two preceding lines are a commentary on the words of S. 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, 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 sight, shew me Thy face, that I may know Thee, and may find grace before Thy eyes.’ † 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.

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

* S. John i. 16.

† Exod. xxxiii. 12, 13.

‡ Is. xliii. 4.

STANZA
XXXIII.

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 bring me within the sphere of His interior love, for, 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 inviting me into the inner chamber of His love.

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 that also which he hath.’ † Thus the talent of that servant who was not 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 chiefest 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 the lesser lights in itself. This is the spiritual sense of those words the prophet Isaias addressed

God will not be outdone in generosity.

* Cant. i. 4.

† Matth. xiii. 12.

‡ Ib. xxv. 28.

STANZA
XXXIII.

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.'*

Well mayest Thou then, O God, gaze upon and esteem that soul which Thou regardest, for Thou hast made it precious by looking upon it, and given it graces which Thou valuest, and by which Thou art captivated. That soul, therefore, deserves that Thou shouldst regard it not once only but often, seeing that Thou hast once looked upon it; for so is it written by the Holy Ghost: 'This honour is he worthy of, whom the king hath a mind to honour.'†

INTRODUCTION.

Mutual love
of God and
the soul.

THE gifts of the Bridegroom to 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 too 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. In the previous stanza the soul despised itself, and said it was swarthy and unclean, praising Him for His beauty and grace, and Who, by looking upon the soul, rendered it gracious and beautiful. He, whose way it is 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 ad-

God exalts
the humble.

* Is. xliii. 3, 4.

† Esth. vi. 11.

‡ Cant. iv. 1, vi. 3.

STANZA
XXXIV.

dresses it as His white dove, praising it for its good dispositions, those of a dove, and a turtle-dove.

STANZA XXXIV.

THE BRIDEGROOM.

*The little white dove
Has returned to the ark with the bough;
And now the turtle-dove
Her 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, for 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 finds in Him now that all the trials of life and time are over.

'The little white dove' is the soul, so called on account of its whiteness and purity—effects of the grace it has received at the hands of God. He calls it a 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 doves' eyes.'*

The perfect
soul has the
simplicity,
the gentle-
ness, and the
eyes of a
dove.

'Has returned to the ark with the bough.' 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 she found no rest for her feet on account of the waters of the deluge, until the time when she returned with the olive branch in her mouth—a sign of the mercy of God in

* Cant. iv. 1.

STANZA
XXXIV.

After the
deluge the
soul returns
to the Ark.

drying up 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 up the overwhelming 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 He created it, but with the olive branch of reward and peace obtained by the conquest of itself.

Reconquest
of innocence.

'And now the turtle-dove her desired mate on the green banks has found.' The Bridegroom calls the soul the turtle-dove, because when it is seeking after the Beloved it is like the turtle-dove when she cannot find her desired mate. It is said of the turtle-dove, when she cannot find her mate, that she sitteth not on the green boughs, nor drinketh of the cool refreshing waters, nor retireth to the shade, nor minglith with companions; but when she finds him, then she doeth all this. Such, too, is the condition of the soul, and that 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 beneath 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.

The soul
compared to
a turtle-dove,
in five ways.

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 her 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 highest contemplation and of the wisdom of God; is refreshed by the consolations it finds in God, 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 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.'*

STANZA
XXXIV.

Joys of perfect
union
with God.

INTRODUCTION.

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 sole 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 the Prophet, saying: 'I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart.'† The meaning of this is, that 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.

No heart
satisfied with
less than
God.

* Cant. ii. 3.

† Os. ii. 14.

STANZA XXXV.

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

STANZA
XXXV.

Two things are to be noticed here. In the first place, the Bridegroom commends the solitude in which the soul desired to live, for it was the means whereby the soul found the Beloved, and rejoiced in Him, away from all its former anxieties and troubles. For, as the soul was willing to abide 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.

Liberty of
spirit under
the guidance
of God.

In the second place. The Bridegroom saith 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, embraced it with His arms, fed it with all good things, and guided it to the high 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.

Solitude of
the soul in
search of
God.

'In solitude she lived.' 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, all such does but increase its solitude.

'And in solitude hath she built her nest.' The previous solitude of the soul was its voluntary self-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 yet perfect—there, in that solitude, hath she now fixed her nest, 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.' In that solitude of the soul, its 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 intellect in the perception of Divine things, because it is now detached from all contrary knowledge, and 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 knowledge, because it 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. S. 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.' That is, the Beloved not only guides the soul in its solitude, but it is He alone Who works in it directly without medium. It is of the nature

STANZA
XXXV.

The soul by
self-denial
gains God.

Alone with
God, in in-
tellect, will,
and memory.

* Ps. lxxxiii. 4.

STANZA
XXXV.

God, the
companion
of the soul's
solitude.

of the soul's union with God in spiritual matrimony, 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 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 alone effects them. 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. There is also 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 means of bringing it to Himself. The soul in solitude, detached from all things, having now ascended above all things, nothing now can profit or serve it except the Bridegroom Word Himself, Who, because enamoured of the Bride, will Himself alone bestow these graces on the soul.

'In solitude also wounded with her love.' That is, the love of the Bride for Him; for the Bridegroom not only loves greatly the solitude of the soul, but is also wounded with love, because the soul would abide in solitude and detachment, on account of its being itself wounded with His love. 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, attracts it, and absorbs it in Himself. But He would not have done so, if He had not found it in this spiritual solitude.

INTRODUCTION.

It is a strange characteristic of persons in love, that they take a much greater pleasure in their loneliness than in associating with 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.

The prophet Isaias says of the soul which, having been tried in the works of perfection, has arrived at the goal desired: 'Then shall thy light rise up in darkness, and thy darkness shall be as the noonday. And the Lord will give thee rest continually, and will fill thy soul with brightness, and deliver thy bones, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a fountain of water whose waters shall not fail. And the places that have been desolate for ages shall be built in thee: thou shalt raise up the foundation of generation and generation; and thou shalt be called the repairer of the fences, turning the paths into rest. If thou turn away thy foot from

STANZA
XXXVI.

The soul
fully
employed in
loving God.

* Tob. xiv. 4.

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the Sabbath, from doing thy own will in My holy day, and call the Sabbath delightful, and the Holy of the Lord glorious, and glorify Him while thou dost not thy own ways, and thy own will is not found, to speak a word: then shalt thou be delighted in the Lord, and I will lift thee up above the high places 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 following stanzas, it implores the Beloved to admit it into this beatific pasture in the clear vision of God.

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.*

Three petitions of the
Bride-soul;

The perfect union of love between itself and God being now effected, the soul longs to occupy itself with the properties of that love. It is the soul which now speaks, 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.'

1. For joy in
love and
good works.

'Let us rejoice, O my Beloved.' That is, in the sweetness of our love; not only in that sweetness of ordinary union, but also in that which flows from the active and effective love, whether in the will by an act of affection, or outwardly, in good works which tend to the service of the Beloved. For

* Is. lviii. 10-14.

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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.' 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.

2. For participation in
the beauty
of God.

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 participate 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.

Christ, the
Son of God
by nature:
Christians,
sons by
adoption.Union between Christ
and His
Church.

'To the mountain and the hill.' That is, to the morning and essential knowledge of God, which is the knowledge of Him in the Divine Word, Who, because He is so high, is here

* S. John xvii. 10.

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XXXVI.
God seen in
His works
and ways,
but best in
His Son.

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 the Lord;'^{*} and before: 'In the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared.'[†]

'And to the hill.' 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 lower kind of knowledge than the other. The soul prays for both when it says: 'to the mountain and the hill.'

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 be enlightened.

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 frankincense the knowledge of Him in His works, for the myrrh on the mountain is more precious than the incense on the hill.

'Where the pure water flows.' This is the wisdom and knowledge of God, which cleanse the intellect, 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

^{*} Is. ii. 3.

[†] Ib. 2.

[‡] Cant. iv. 6.

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;' 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, though ever knowing more of it, may 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!'[†] But the soul longs to enter this thicket and incomprehensibility of His judgments, for it faints away with the desire of entering into a deeper knowledge of them. The knowledge of them is an inestimable delight, transcending all 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 longs to be profoundly absorbed in His judgments, and to have a deeper knowledge of them, and for that end would esteem it a joy and consolation to endure all sufferings and afflictions of the world, and whatever else might conduce to that end, however hard and painful it might be; it would gladly pass through the agonies of death to enter deeper into God.

Hence, also, the thicket, which the soul desires to enter,

^{*} Ps. lxxvii. 16.

[†] Rom. xi. 33.

[‡] Ps. xviii. 10-12.

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XXXVI.
^{3.} For a
deeper
knowledge
of God.

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XXXVI.

Joy from
wisdom; and
wisdom from
suffering.

may be appropriately understood as signifying the great variety of 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.

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.* 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 suffering — which, like the wisdom of God, has various manifestations — grounding thereon all the comfort and consolation of their souls; 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. For this cause it was that S. 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 fulness of God.† The gate by which we enter into the riches of the knowledge of God, is the Cross; and that gate is

Gate to the
knowledge
of God—
the Cross.

* Job vi. 8-10.

† Ephes. iii. 17-19.

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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XXXVI.

INTRODUCTION.

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 important part of its blessedness; for Christ Himself hath 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 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 for the beauty of God, sings as in the following stanza:—

Bliss of
Heaven to
see JESUS.

STANZA XXXVII.

*We shall go at once
To the lofty 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 intellect with God in the knowledge of the mysteries of the Incarnation, as being the highest and the most delicious knowledge

* S. John xvii. 3.

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of all His works. And here the Bride says, that after she has entered in within the Divine Wisdom—that is, into the Spiritual Matrimony, 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, namely, the attributes and power of God which are revealed in those mysteries, such as His justice, His mercy, wisdom, power, and love.

Mysteries
of the
Incarnation.

‘We shall go at once to the lofty caverns of the rock.’ ‘This rock is Christ,’ as we learn from S. Paul.* The lofty caverns of the rock are the sublime 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 congruity 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 ‘lofty caverns;’ lofty because of the sublimity 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.’ 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 treasure,

* 1 Cor. x. 4.

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XXXVII.

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 to these hidden treasures unless it first passes through the thicket of interior and exterior suffering: for even such a 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; but all these gifts are far inferior to this knowledge of the mysteries of Christ, being only a preparation for it. 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 world; and so He set Moses ‘in a hole of the rock,’ which is Christ, where he might see His ‘back parts;’† that is, He gave him the understanding of the mysteries of the Sacred Humanity.

Conditions
necessary for
knowing
Christ.The Incarna-
tion taught
to Moses.

The soul longs to enter into these caverns of Christ, that it may be thus absorbed, transformed, and inebriated with love in the knowledge of His mysteries, hiding itself in the bosom of the Beloved. It is into these caverns that He invites the Bride 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 there we shall enter in,’ into this knowledge and these Divine mysteries. The soul 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. It seems to say that this is not the work of the soul, but of the Bridegroom with it.

* Coloss. ii. 3.

† Exod. xxxiii. 20-23.

‡ Cant. ii. 13, 14.

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XXXVII.

The perfect
soul does
nothing of
itself.

Moreover, inasmuch as God and the soul are now united in spiritual matrimony, the soul doeth nothing of itself without God. And thus, to say 'we will enter,' is as much as saying, 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 foreknew the just in benedictions of 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.

Joy in the
attributes
and judgments
of God.

'And taste of the new wine of the pomegranates.' The pomegranates are the mysteries of Christ and the judgments of the wisdom of God; His powers and attributes which, through the knowledge of these mysteries, are known in God to be infinite. For as pomegranates have many grains in their circular orb, so each one of the attributes and judgments and powers of God involve a multitude of admirable arrangements and marvellous issues contained within the spherical orbit of power and mystery, appertaining to those issues. Consider the round spherical 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, for such has neither beginning nor end. It was in the contemplation of the infinite judgments and mysteries of the wisdom of God that the bride said, 'His belly is of ivory set with sapphires.'* The sapphires are the

* Cant. v. 14.

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XXXVII.

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.

The wine of the pomegranates 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. This Divine drink the bride promised to the Bridegroom if He would lead her into this deep knowledge: 'There Thou shalt lead me,' saith the bride, 'and I will give Thee a cup of spiced wine, and new wine of my pomegranates.*' The soul, indeed, 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. Now the pomegranates are Divine Knowledge.

Beatific
knowledge of
God infused
by the Holy
Ghost.

INTRODUCTION.

In the two previous stanzas the bride sung of those blessings 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

* Cant. viii. 2.

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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.

STANZA XXXVIII.

*There Thou wilt show me
What my soul desired;
And there Thou wilt give me at once,
O Thou, my Life!
What 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 wherewith 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 what He will bestow upon her there is that essential glory for which He has predestined her from the day of His eternity.

The soul
desires to
love God as it
is loved by
Him.

'There Thou wilt show me what my soul desired.' This desire or aim of the soul is equality in love with God, the object of natural and supernatural desire. He who loves cannot be satisfied if he does not feel that he loves as much as he is beloved. 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

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shall equal His love. For though in this high estate, which the soul reaches on earth, there exists a real union of the will, yet it cannot reach that perfection and strength of love which it is to reach in the union of glory; seeing that then, according to the Apostle, the soul will know God as it is known of Him: 'Now I know in part; but 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, that it loves Him as strongly and as perfectly as it is loved of Him; both wills being united in one sole will and in one sole love of God. 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 estate 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.

In Heaven
the will not
destroyed
but
strengthened
by God
Himself.

The Holy
Ghost, the
Love of the
Father and
the Son, per-
fects the love
of the soul
for God.

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 He will give her His love, and 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,

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

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XXXVIII.

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 the soul His own power, so that it may love Him. It is as if He put an instrument in its hand, taught it the use of it, 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. The soul is not satisfied until it reaches this point, neither would it be satisfied even in Heaven, unless it felt, as S. Thomas teaches,* that it loved God as much as it is loved of Him. And as I have said of the state of spiritual matrimony 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, what Thou gavest me the other day.’ 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 the essential glory consists in the vision of God, and not in loving Him, that 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? There are two reasons for this. The first is this: As the end of all is love, which inheres in the will, the characteristic of which is to give and not to receive, and the characteristic of the intellect, the subject of the essential glory, being to receive and not to give, to the soul inebriated with love, the first object that presents itself is not the essential glory which God will bestow upon it, but the

* Per eandem
[dilectionem]
anima glori-
ficata diligit
Deum et dili-
gitur a Deo;
alloquin . . .
nunquam
vere et per-
fecte quies-
ceret, nisi
Creatori suo
in amore
vicem
reperderet.
Hoc non fit
nisi per
Spiritus
Sanctum.

The soul
speaks of
love before
vision.
Two reasons.

* Opusc. de Beatitudine, cap. 2.

STANZA
XXXVIII.

entire surrender of itself to Him in true love, without any regard to its own advantage.

The second reason is that the second object is included in the first, and has been taken for granted in 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, while it rather receives from Him through the intellect.

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 for afterwards in glory? By this ‘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 glory which He would give it, which He freely gave it 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 must enjoy for ever that for which God had predestined it from all eternity. 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? What ‘eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man.’* ‘The eye hath not seen,’ saith the Prophet, ‘O God besides Thee, what things Thou hast prepared for them that wait for Thee.’† The soul has no words 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 ‘what Thou gavest me.’

But that I may not leave the subject without saying something further concerning it, I will repeat what Christ hath

Glory of the
soul predesti-
nated by
God.

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

† Is. lxiv. 4.

STANZA
XXXVIII.Christ speaks
of Heaven as;1. The tree
of life.2. The crown
of life.3. The hidden
manna, and
the white
counter.4. The rod of
power, and
the morning
star of joy.5. The white
robe, and the
book of life.6. The temple
of God, and
the New
Jerusalem.

said of it 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.'†

This also is insufficient, and so He adds somewhat obscurely, but still explaining it: '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, He proceeds to speak 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.'§ Christ is not yet satisfied with what He hath said; and He adds: 'He that shall overcome shall thus be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father.'||

Still, all this falls short of the reality, and so Christ proceeds with words of unutterable majesty and grandeur to describe that which He gave the soul the other day: '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 upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem which cometh down out of Heaven from My God, and My new name.'¶ The seventh

* Apoc. ii. 7.
§ Ib. 26-8.† Ib. 10.
|| Ib. iii. 5.‡ Ib. 17.
¶ Ib. 12.STANZA
XXXVIII.7. The throne
of God.

time He says: 'To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit in My throne: so I also have overcome, and am set down with My Father in His throne. He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.'*

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.

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 describes it as 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 'what' 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: 'What Thou gavest me,' that is, that weight of glory to which Thou didst predestinate me, O my Bridegroom, in the day of Thy 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 lofty caverns of Thy bridal chamber and gloriously transformed in Thee we drink the wine of the sweet pomegranates.

How David
describes the
bliss of
Heaven.It is beyond
adequate
expression.

* Ib. iii. 21, 22. † Ps. xxx. 20. ‡ Ib. xxxv. 9. § Ib. xx. 4.

INTRODUCTION.

STANZA
XXXIX.

BUT inasmuch as the soul, in the state of Spiritual Matrimony, of which I am now speaking, cannot but know something of this 'What,' seeing that because of its transformation in God something of that 'What' 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 fire that consumes but without pain.*

Five descriptions of
Eternal
Beatitude;

The soul refers here, under five different expressions, to that which the Bridegroom is to bestow upon it in the beatific transformation. 1. The aspiration of the Holy Spirit of God after it, and its own aspiration after God. 2. Exultation in 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.

1. Love of
the Holy
Ghost in the
soul uniting
it with the
Blessed
Trinity.

'The breathing of the air.' This is a certain faculty which God will there bestow upon the soul in the communication of the Holy Ghost, Who, like one breathing, elevates the soul by His Divine aspiration, informs it, strengthens it, so that it too may breathe in God with the same aspiration of love

* Job iv. 2.

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XXXIX.

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 sublime, 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 it is transformed in Him.

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 S. 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. Nor is it to be thought impossible that the soul should be capable of so great a thing, 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 intellect, perform its acts of knowledge

The perfect
in this life
taste the joys
of the Blessed
in Heaven.

* Gal. iv. 6.

STANZA
XXXIX.

The soul, in power, knowledge, and love, made a perfect image of the Blessed Trinity.

and of love, or to speak more accurately, should have it 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 in His own image and likeness.

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 an estate, 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.'† 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. Nor are we to suppose from this that our Lord prayed that the saints might become one in essential and natural unity, 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 their love.

* S. John i. 12.

† Ib. xvii. 24.

‡ Ib. xvii. 20-3.

Prayer of Christ for the unity of His Church in love.

STANZA
XXXIX.

God and the soul one, not by fusion of natures, but by identity of will, i.e. Love.

Thus souls have this great blessing by participation which the Son has by nature, and are therefore really gods by participation like unto God and of His nature. S. Peter speaks of this as follows: 'Grace to you and peace be accomplished in the knowledge of God, and of Christ Jesus our Lord; as all things of His divine power, which appertain to life and godliness, are given us, through 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 may be made partakers of the Divine nature.*' Thus far S. Peter, who clearly teaches that the soul will be a partaker of God Himself, Who will effect within it, together with it, 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 to which the soul is supposed now to have reached, some anticipation of its sweetness is given it, in the way I am speaking of, though in a manner wholly ineffable.

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 what He gave it.

'The song of the sweet nightingale.' Out of this 'breathing of the air' comes the sweet voice of the Beloved addressing Himself to the soul, in which the soul also sends forth its own sweet exultation in Him. Both the one and the other are

How men fall from their high destiny.

2. Song of God to the soul, and of the soul to God.

* 2 S. Pet. i. 2-4.

STANZA
XXXIX.Winter past :
Spring come.

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 storms of winter are passed, 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 protected and delivered from all earthly trials and temptations; purified and detached from the imperfections, troubles and darkness, both of mind and body, becomes conscious of a new spring in liberty, largeness, and joy of spirit, when she hears the sweet voice of the Bridegroom, Who is her sweet nightingale, renewing and refreshing the very substance of her soul, which is now prepared for the journey of everlasting life. 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, the bride herself, like the nightingale, sends forth her voice in new songs of rejoicing unto God, in unison with Him Who now moves her to do so.

It is for this that the Beloved gives His voice to the Bride; that she in unison with Him may give it unto God; this is the aim and desire of the Bridegroom, that the soul should sing spiritually 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.'† The ears of God signify the desire He hath that

* Cant. ii. 10-12.

† Ib. ii. 13, 14.

the soul should send forth its voice of perfect jubilation. And that this voice may be perfect, the Bridegroom bids the soul to send it forth, and to let it sound in the clefts of the rock, in that transformation which I spoke of in connection with the mysteries of Christ. And because in this union of the soul with God, the soul sings praises unto Him together with Him, in the way I spoke of when I was speaking of love, the praises it sends forth are most perfect and pleasing unto God; for the acts of the soul, in the state of perfection, are most perfect; and thus the voice of its rejoicing is sweet unto God as well as to itself. '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.' This is the third thing which the Bridegroom is to give to 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, and which show Him to be God, and make Him known as the Creator. The beauty of the grove, which the soul 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 in itself, and the higher also in itself, and of the mutual relations

STANZA
XXXIX.The perfect
soul begins
to sing the
Canticle of
eternal joy.3. Know-
ledge of
creatures in
their mutual
order, and in
their relation
to God.

* Cant. ii. 14.

STANZA
XXXIX.4. Unclouded
vision of the
face of God.

of both. The contemplation of this is to the soul a subject of great joy and satisfaction. The fourth request is:—

‘In the serene night.’ That is, contemplation, in which the soul desires to behold the grove. It is called night, because contemplation is obscure; and that is the reason why it is also called mystical theology, that is, the secret or hidden wisdom of God, wherein God, 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, teaches the soul—and the soul knows not how—in a most secret and hidden way. Some spiritual writers call this ‘understanding without understanding,’ because it does not take place in what philosophers call the active intellect, which is conversant with the forms, fancies, and apprehensions of the physical faculties, but in the intellect as it is passive, which, without receiving such forms, receives passively only the substantial intelligence of them free from all imagery. This occurs in the intellect 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 has, in a supreme degree, this Divine grove, together with its beauty.

Still, however profound may be its knowledge of this, it is obscure 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 obscure 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

STANZA
XXXIX.

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 intellect.

‘With the fire that consumes but without pain.’ The fire, here, is the love of the Holy Ghost; and ‘consuming’ signifies to make perfect. It is said that the soul is to have all things mentioned here given it by the Beloved, and that it shall possess them all in perfect and consummate love—all of them, and itself together with them, absorbed therein—and that is love without pain. Now, this is to show the entire perfection of that love, for these two qualities are necessary to constitute its perfection; that is, it must consume the soul, and transform it in God: this burning and transformation also must be painless. Now this can never happen except in the state of bliss, and where this fire is sweet love. In that transformation of the soul both parts of it are in a state of beatific conformity and satisfaction. There is, therefore, no suffering from any changes, such as increase or decrease of love, as was the case before, when the soul had not reached to this perfect love. Now, when it has attained thereto, it exists in such conformable and sweet love for God, that it knows Him only, though He is a consuming fire,† as the Author of its consummate perfection. This is not like the transformation which took place upon earth, which, though most perfect and complete in love, was still, in some degree, consuming the soul and wearing it away. It was like fire in burning coals, for though the coals may be transformed into fire, and conformed to it, and have ceased from seething, and smoke no longer arises from them, as was the case before they were wholly transformed into fire, still, though they have become perfect fire, the fire consumes them and reduces them into ashes.

5. Perfect
transformation in the
infinite love
of God.

* Ps. cxxxviii. 11. † Deuteron. iv. 24.

STANZA
XXXIX.

The perfect
soul in this
life still
suffers pain
and loss.

Such is the state of the soul which in this life is transformed in 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 it power in the former and strength in the latter, perfecting the intellect in His Wisdom and the will in His Love.

As, in the foregoing stanzas, and in the one which 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.

STANZA XL.

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

The Bride perceiving that the desire of her will is now detached from all things, resting upon God with most fervent love; that the sensitive 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;

^{*} Wisd. ix. 15.

STANZA
XL.

The soul ripe
for Heaven.

that her soul is united and transformed in the rich abundance of the heavenly gifts; and that she herself is now prepared, confirmed in strength, apparelled, 'leaning upon her Beloved,' to go up 'by the desert'^{*} of death; full of joy in the glorious throne of her espousals, and of eager desire for the conclusion of her nuptials, puts before the eyes of her Bridegroom, in order to influence Him the more, all that is mentioned in the present stanza, namely:—

1. The soul detached from all things and a stranger to them. Five signs :

2. The devil overcome and put to flight.

3. The passions subdued, and the natural desires mortified.

4, 5. The sensitive and lower nature of the soul changed and purified, and so conformed to the spiritual, as not only not to hinder the spiritual blessings, but rather to be prepared for them, for it is even a partaker already, according to its capacity, of those which have been bestowed upon the soul.

'None saw it.' That is, my soul is so detached, so denuded, so lonely, so estranged from all created things, in heaven and earth; it has penetrated so far within into interior recollection with 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 the whole of my blessedness, for:

'Neither did Aminadab appear.' 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

1. Detach-
ment from
all things.

2. Satan
overcome.

^{*} Cant. viii. 5; iii. 6.

STANZA
XL.

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 disturb the soul.

3. Desires mortified, and passions subject to Reason.

'The siege was intermitted.' By the siege is meant the array of 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,' the passions are brought into the subjection of 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 so intermitted as to be no impediment. 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.

4, 5. The flesh conformed to the spirit.

'The cavalry dismounted at the vision of the waters.' The waters are the spiritual joys and blessings which the soul now enjoys interiorly with God. By the cavalry is meant the bodily senses of the sensitive part, interior as well as exterior, for they carry with them the phantasms and figures of their objects. They dismount now at the vision of the waters, because the sensitive and lower part of the soul in the state of spiritual matrimony is purified, and in a certain way spiritualised, so that the soul with its sensitive powers and natural forces becomes so recollected as to participate and rejoice, in their way, in the spiritual grandeurs which God communicates to the soul in the interior spirit. To this did the Psalmist refer when he said: 'My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.'*

* Ps. lxxxiii. 2.

STANZA
XL.

It is to be observed that the cavalry did not dismount to taste of the waters, but only at the vision of them, because the sensitive 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 these spiritual benedictions. This condition of the senses is rather a dismounting at the vision 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 sensitive with the spiritual part of the soul, when the spiritual waters become its drink, the natural operations subside and merge into spiritual recollection.

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 to 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.

THE
LIVING FLAME OF LOVE.

PROLOGUE.

It is not without some unwillingness that, to satisfy the requests of others, I enter upon the explanation of the four stanzas which are the subject of this treatise. My unwillingness arises from the fact that 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 affections of the spirit who has not an affectionate spirit 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, warning all, at the same time, that all I say falls far short of that which passes in this intimate union of the soul with God.

There is nothing strange in the fact that God bestows

The Author's
diffidence in
himself, and
submission
to the
Church.

PROLOGUE. favours so great and so wonderful upon those souls whom He is pleased to comfort. For if we consider it attentively, it is God Himself as God, and with infinite love and goodness,

No favour too great for God's love to bestow.

Subject of the following stanzas,— what.

Method to be followed.

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 make their abode with 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. Though the former stanzas 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 estate 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. 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, and ponders over 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.

* S. John xiv. 23.

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 in 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,
In destroying death Thou hast changed it into life.

III

O Lamps of fire,
In whose splendours
The deep caverns of sense,
Obscure and dark,
With unwonted brightness
Give light and heat together to the Beloved.

IV

How gently and how lovingly
Thou liest awake 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.

The Bride of Christ, feeling herself all on fire in the Divine union, feeling also that 'the rivers of living water' are flowing from her as our Lord hath promised of faithful souls,* imagines that as she is so vehemently transformed in God, so

* S. John vii. 38.

STANZA
I.

profoundly 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 the sweet flame of love burning within her, each time it envelopes her, makes her as it were glorious with its foretaste of glory, so much so that whenever it absorbs and surrounds her, it seems to be admitting her to everlasting life, and to rend the veil of her mortality, she addresses herself, in her great desire, to this flame, which is the Holy Ghost, and prays Him to destroy her mortal life in this sweet encounter, and bestow upon her in reality what He seems about to give, namely, perfect glory, crying: 'O living Flame of love.'

The soul's love and desire, under the influence of the Holy Ghost.

i. 'O living Flame of love.'—In order to express the intensity of her feelings, the Bride begins each of these four stanzas with *Oh!* or *How!* terms indicative of deep emotion, and which, whenever uttered, are signs of interior feelings beyond the power of language to express. *Oh!* is an exclamation of strong desire, and of earnest supplication, in the way of persuasion. The soul employs it in both senses here, for the Bride magnifies and intimates her great desire, persuading her Love, that she might put off her mortal life entirely. 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 operation 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 in 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

Great value of acts of perfect love.

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.

LINE
I.

Hence then we may say of a 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 the special suggestions of the Holy Ghost, all these acts must be Divine, in so far as the soul is under the 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 life everlasting, which elevates it upwards to the Divine operation, is about to be bestowed on it.

Loving acts of the soul ascend to God in the love of the Holy Ghost.

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 'are not My words as a fire? saith the 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.

How God speaks to pure souls.

Thus, when He announced the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, a doctrine full of sweetness and of love, 'many of His disciples went back.'|| If such persons as these have no

* Judg. xiii. 20. † Ps. cxviii. 140. Ignitum eloquium tuum vehementer.
‡ Jerem. xxiii. 29. § S. John vi. 64. || Ib. vi. 67.

STANZA
I.

Why the words of God are sweet to some, and tasteless to others.

taste for the words of God which He speaks inwardly to them, it is not to be supposed that all others are like them. S. 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.

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 in 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; and that is 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!'

ii. 'That woundest tenderly.'—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 with so much endearing tenderness, and so softens it 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 of the words of God in the soul.

But how can we say that He wounds the soul, when there is nothing to wound, seeing that it is all consumed in the fire

* S. John vi. 69. † Ib. iv. 28. ‡ Ps. lxxxiii. 3. § Cant. v. 6.

The Flame called *living*—why.

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 nuptials. So Assuerus exhibited his riches, and the glory of his power at 'the marriage and wedding of Esther; '* and so might be fulfilled what Christ hath said of Himself: 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 the 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.

iii. 'My soul in its inmost depth.'—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. 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. 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

LINE
II.

Love in the soul like a flame of fire.

Two illustrations.

Festival of the Holy Ghost in the soul.

* Esth. ii. 18.

† Prov. viii. 30, 31.

STANZA
I.

God in the soul does not violate its freedom.

God communicates, Who only, 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, with itself willing them and assenting to them.

How depth is to be understood.

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.

The soul tends to God as a stone to the centre of the earth.

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.

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 ulti-

LINE
III.

mate 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.

Love unites the soul with God, and the greater its love the deeper does it enter into God, and the more is it centred 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 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. 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 powers, 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 illuminated, and to the utmost extent, that it seems to be one with the light itself.

Degrees of love for God, the centres of the soul.

One degree of love enough for the state of grace.

The perfect soul compared to a pure crystal in the sunlight.

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 glory, which is the greater and the more tender, the

* S. John xiv. 2.

STANZA
I.

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. 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 — the 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 motions 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.'

All blessings
contained
in supreme
love for God.

iv. 'As thou art no longer grievous.' Thou dost not

* Is. xxxi. 9.

† Wisd. vii. 24.

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 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 glory of love, is the very same which before enveloped 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.

The soul suffers much 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 Obscure 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 the transformation of love, is He who previously enveloped the soul, purifying it with the light and heat of His Divine Flame, which was before grievous but is now sweet. The meaning of the whole is as follows: Thou art now not only not obscure as before, but the Divine light of my intellect 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 changed into Divine love. Thou art no longer grief and affliction, but rather my glory, my delight, and my liberty, seeing that I

LINE
IV.

Work of the
Holy Ghost
in the soul
begins
painfully,
but ends joy-
fully.

STANZA
I.

may apply to myself the words in the Canticle, '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 love
for God
harmonises
desire with
resignation.

v. 'Perfect Thy work, if it be Thy will;' 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 is—seeing that 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;'‡ and this is especially the case because it has already tasted, by anticipation, of its sweetness; and 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 enduring so great and so sharp a fire. This desire of the soul is therefore no longer a painful one, for its condition is now such that all pain is over, and its prayers are offered for the object it desires with 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

* Cant. viii. 5.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

‡ Ps. xvi. 15.

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 this perfect consummation of love.

LINE
V.

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 the eyes of the soul, saying, '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 fig-tree hath put forth her green figs, the vines in flower yield their sweet smell. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come; my dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall, show me thy face, let thy voice sound in my ears, for thy voice is sweet, and thy face comely.* The soul hears all this spoken interiorly to it, by the Holy Ghost in this sweet and tender flame, and therefore it is that it replies to Him, saying, 'Perfect Thy work, if it be Thy will.' This is in effect the two petitions which our Lord commands us to make, 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done;† that is, give Thy kingdom according to Thy will. And thus the soul continues, 'Break the web in this sweet encounter.'

The soul
invited to
Heaven.

vi. 'Break the web in this sweet encounter;' that is, the obstacle 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

* Cant. ii. 10-14.

† S. Matth. vi. 10.

STANZA
I.

To enjoy
God, three
webs must
be broken :
1. Temporal.
2. Natural.
3. Sensitive.

mere natural actions and inclinations. 3. The sensitive web, which is merely the union of soul and body; that is, the sensitive and animal life, of which S. 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.'*

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 sensitive life, 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. 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.

First and
second
broken in
spiritual
purgation;
third only
by death.

Peaceful
death of the
servants of
God.

It was the thought of this that made the Psalmist say, 'Precious in the sight of the 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 in themselves; the beginning and the end unite together to accompany the just departing for His kingdom. 'From the ends of the earth' 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,

* 2 Cor. v. 1.

† Ps. cxv. 15.

‡ Is. xxiv. 16.

so far as it is possible for it to be, consistently with faith and the conditions of this life. God now permits such a soul to behold its own beauty, and intrusts it with the gifts and the graces He has endowed it with, for all this turns into love and praise without the least stain of presumption or of vanity, because no leaven of imperfection remains now to corrupt it.

When the soul sees that nothing more is wanting than 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 into its earth, and the spirit return to God who gave it,'* for the mortal body, as S. John records, 'profiteth nothing,'† but is rather an impediment to the good of the spirit. The soul, therefore, prays for the dissolution of the body, for it is sad that an existence so mean should be an obstacle in the way of a life so noble.

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; so 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 begins to be felt in the soul, the weakness of this life becomes evident. Its present life seems to be but a slender web, even a spider's web, 'our years shall be considered as a spider,'‡ and even less than that, when the soul is thus exalted to so high a state. The soul being thus exalted to the perceptions of God, perceives things as God does, in Whose sight

LINE
VI.

Desire to be
dissolved,
and to be
with Christ.

This life
called
'a web,' for
three
reasons.

* Eccles. xii. 7.

† S. John vi. 64.

‡ Ps. lxxxix. 9.

STANZA
I.

'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.

The soul prays for the breaking of the web.—
Four reasons.

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 is more familiar with force, with violent and impetuous contacts, and these result in breaking rather than in cutting or taking away. 3. Because the soul's love is so strong, it desires that the act of breaking the web may be so rapid as to accomplish the work quickly; and because the value and energy of love are proportional to its rapidity and spirituality. For the virtue 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 no act of perfect transformation had occurred, but only the disposition towards it in desires and affections successively repeated, which in very few men attain to the perfect act of transformation. Hence a soul that is well disposed may therefore elicit many more, and more intense acts in a brief period than another soul not so disposed in a long time. Such a soul spends all its energies in the preparation of itself, and even afterwards the fire does not always penetrate the fuel it has to burn. But when the soul is already prepared, love enters in continuously, and the spark seizes at the first contact on the fuel that is dry. And thus the enamoured soul prefers the abrupt breaking of the web to its tedious cutting or delayed removal. 4. The fourth reason why the soul prays for the breaking of the web of life is that it desires it may be

* Ps. lxxxix. 4.

† Is. xl. 17.

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. 'He pleased God and was beloved, and living among sinners he was translated. He was taken away lest wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul. Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time, for his soul pleased God, therefore He hastened to bring him out of the midst of iniquity.'* 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.

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 penetrates it in a lively manner by the Holy Ghost, whose communications are vehement when they are of fire as at present. This encounter

* Wisd. iv. 10-14.

LINE
VI.

The good die first.

Death hastened by love.

The interior assault of the Holy Ghost called an encounter,—why.

STANZA
I.

is called sweet, because the soul 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 with a view to the perfect dissolution of the soul and its final glory. Hence the soul relying on His protection becomes bold, and says, 'Break the web in this sweet encounter.'

Paraphrase
of the first
stanza.

The whole stanza may be paraphrased as follows:—O fire of the Holy Ghost, penetrating so profoundly and so tenderly the very substance of my soul, and burning it with Thy flames, since Thou art now so gentle as to manifest Thy desire of giving Thyself to me in everlasting life; if formerly my petitions did not reach Thine ears, when weary and worn with love, overcome through the weakness of sense and spirit, because of my infirmities, impurity, and little love, I prayed to be dissolved—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 it—

* Ps. lxxxiii. 2.

† Ps. xvi. 2.

Break Thou the slender web of this life that I may be enabled to love Thee hereafter with that fulness and abundance which my soul desires, without end for evermore.

LINE
VI.

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. The 'hand,' the 'touch,' and the 'burn' are in substance one and the same; and the three terms are employed because they express the effects which are peculiar to each. The 'burn' is the Holy Ghost; the 'hand' is the Father; and the 'touch' is the Son. Here 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 into Themselves.

Work of the
Blessed
Trinity in
the soul.

The first of these gifts is the delicious wound, which is attributed to the Holy Ghost, and for this the soul calls Him the 'burn.' The second is the 'taste of everlasting life,' attributed to the Son, on account of which He is called the 'gentle touch.' The third is that 'gift' which is the perfect recompense of the soul, attributed to the Father, Who is therefore called the 'tender hand.' Though the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity are referred to severally, because of the peculiar operations of 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.

Three
Divine gifts
received by
the soul.

STANZA
II.

First gift,—
the burn or
wound, i.e.
the Holy
Ghost.

i. 'O sweet burn.' 'The Lord thy God,' saith Moses, '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 all according to the measure of their preparation, some more, others less; and also according to His own good pleasure, as, and when, and how, He will. And as the fire of love is infinite, so when God touches the soul somewhat sharply, the burning heat within it becomes so extreme as to surpass in its intensity 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. When the Divine fire shall have transformed the soul into itself, the soul feels not only the burn, but also that itself has 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 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 S. 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 cheers 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.

Thus then the blessed soul, which by the mercy of God

* Per amorem
suaviter
arserunt.'

'Advenit
ignis Divi-
nus, non
comburens,
sed illumi-
nans.'

* Deut. iv. 24. † Hom. 30, in Evangel. ‡ Brev. Rom. 2 die Pent.

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 to such a soul that the Apostle referred when he 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.

O great glory of 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, anxious to express its joy, cannot do it, so it rests satisfied with words of endearment and esteem, saying: 'O delicious wound.'

ii. 'O delicious wound,' which He Who causes 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 cautery 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 the soul most wounded is the most healthy, and he who is all wound is all health.

And yet even if the whole soul be one wound, and conse-

LINE
I.

Dignity and
glory of
the perfect
soul.

The Holy
Ghost heals
the soul by
wounding it
again.

* Ps. i. 3. † 1 Cor. ii. 15. ‡ Ib. 10.

STANZA
II.

quently 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 thus the soul cries out, 'O delicious wound,' and so much the more delicious the more penetrating the fire of love. The Holy Ghost Himself 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! 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 cauterity 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.

The soul
inflamed in
another
manner,—
how.

But the soul is burned in another and a most excellent way, which is this: When a soul is on fire with love—though not in the same degree with the soul of which I have been now speaking, though it is expedient 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 cauterised it all at once. And then in that act of cauterising 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. At this time when the burning brand touches it, the soul feels that the wound it has

LINE
II.

thus received is delicious beyond all imagination. For besides 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—in the spot of the wound, where the substance and the power of the herb reside—diffuse itself most subtly 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 to be seas of fire overflowing with love.

The feelings of the soul, at this time, cannot be described otherwise than by saying that it now understands why the kingdom of Heaven is compared to a mustard seed, which by reason of its great natural heat grows into a lofty tree. 'The kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. Which is the least indeed of all seeds; but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds 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 such gifts and graces, as shall be proportionate to the succession of the Order, as the first-fruits of the Spirit.

Kingdom of
Heaven
compared to
a mustard
seed,—why.

Highest
gifts given
to Founders
of Religious
Orders.

To return to the operation of the Seraph, which in truth

* S. Matth. xiii. 31, 32.

STANZA
II.

The
stigmata of
S. FRANCIS
an expres-
sion of the
inward
wounds of
love.

is to 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 S. Francis, for when the Seraph wounded his soul with love, the 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. 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.

Union of
pain and
delight.

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 presses down the mind that museth upon many things.' ‡ He, therefore, who shall trust too much to

The flesh
must be
restrained,
because it
impedes the
spirit.

* Job x. 16. † Ps. xxx. 20. ‡ Wisd. ix. 15.

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II.

the bodily senses will never become a very spiritual man. I say this 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 S. Paul, whose deep sense of the sufferings of Christ overflowed into his body, so that he said: 'I bear the marks of the 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.

S. PAUL
bore the
marks of the
Passion in
his body.

iii. 'O tender hand, O gentle touch.' 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, Thou wert hard and heavy when Thou didst touch Job, § but to me, gentle, loving, and gracious; as sweet and gentle to me as Thou wert sharp and rough for him; the tenderness with which Thou touchest me surpasses the severity with which Thou didst touch Job. Thou killest and Thou givest life, and there is no one who shall escape out of Thy hand. But Thou, O Divine Life, never killest but to give 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 destitute of the life of God which I now live. This Thou hast wrought in the liberality of Thy bountiful grace, through that touch, where-with Thou dost touch me, of the brightness of Thy glory

Second gift,
—the hand,
i.e. the
Father.

* Galat. vi. 17. † Ps. ciii. 32. ‡ Habac. iii. 6. § Job xix. 21.

STANZA
II.

and the figure of Thy substance,* Thine only begotten Son, in Whom, being Thy Wisdom, Thou reachest 'from end to end mightily.'†

Third gift,—
the touch,
i.e. the Son.

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 Chanaan,' nor 'seen in Teman.'‡ O touch of the Word, so gentle, so wonderfully gentle to me; and yet Thou wert 'overthrowing the mountains, and breaking the rocks in pieces' in Horeb, by the shadow of Thy power going before Thee, when Thou didst announce Thy presence to the Prophet in 'the whistling of a gentle air.'§ O gentle air, how is it that Thou touchest so gently 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.

'Blessed are
the pure in
heart, for
they shall
see God.'

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, because purity corresponds with purity. Thou the more gently 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.'¶ O, again and again, gentle touch, which by the power of thy subtility 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

* Heb. i. 3. † Wisd. viii. 1. ‡ Bar. iii. 22.
§ 3 Kings xix. 11, 12. || S. John xiv. 17. ¶ Ps. xxx. 21.

LINE
III.

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. O gentle touch! as in Thee there is nothing material, so the more profoundly dost Thou touch me, changing what in me is human into Divine, according as 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, O 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 surpassing, and so delicious.

iv. 'Savouring of everlasting life.' What the soul tastes now in this touch of God, is, in truth, though not perfectly, a certain foretaste of everlasting life. It is not incredible that it should be so when we believe, as we do believe, that this touch is 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 language that befits these things is this: Let him who has been favoured with them judge of them by himself, feel them and enjoy them, and be silent about them. For the soul 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

Bliss of the
Divine touch
cannot be
described.

STANZA
II.
Foretaste of
everlasting
life.

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 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.

Now as God is all this, the soul tastes of all in one single touch of God in a certain eminent way. And by reason of this great good which is bestowed upon the soul, some of the unction of the Spirit overflows at times into the body itself, 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 on the subject must be defective, it is enough to repeat, 'savouring of everlasting life.'

Debt paid by
Divine love,
—what.

v. 'And paying the whole debt.' But what debt is it to which the soul here refers, and which it declares to be paid or satisfied? It is this: those souls which attain to this high estate, to the kingdom of the spiritual betrothal, have in general passed through many tribulations and trials, because that 'through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.'‡ And these tribulations are now passed.

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 Obscure Night. The reason of this is that the joy and knowledge of God cannot be established in the soul, if the flesh and spirit are not perfectly purified and refined, and as trials and penances purify and refine the senses, as tribulations, temptations, darkness, and distress

* Apoc. ii. 17 † Ps. xxxiv. 10. ‡ Acts xiv. 21.

refine 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.

It is by these trials to which God subjects the spirit and the flesh that the soul acquires virtues and fortitude and perfection, in bitterness, as the Apostle writes, 'Power is made perfect in infirmity;*' for virtue is made perfect in weakness, and refined in the contest of the passions. Iron cannot be fashioned according to the pattern of the artificer but through the instrumentality of fire and the hammer, and during the process its previous condition is injured. This is the way of God's teaching, as the Prophet says, 'From above He hath sent fire into my bones and hath chastised me.'† He speaks of the hammer also when he saith, 'Thou hast chastised me, and I was instructed.'‡ So, too, the Wise Man asks, 'He that hath not been tried, what manner of things doth he know?'§

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. Thus it may be said to those who desire to advance, but who

LINE
V.
Purgatory
here, or here-
after.

Few attain to
Perfection,—
why.

* 2 Cor. xii. 9. † Lam. i. 13. ‡ Jerem. xxxi. 18. § Ecclus. xxxiv. 11.

STANZA
II.Illustration
from the
prophet
Jeremias.

will not submit to these lesser afflictions nor consent to be exposed to them, in the words of the Prophet, 'If thou hast been wearied with running with footmen, how canst thou contend with horses? and if thou hast been secure in a land of peace, what wilt thou do in the swelling of the Jordan?*' That is, if the ordinary trials of human life to which all men living are liable are too heavy for thee, and a burden which thou canst not carry, 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 swelling of the Jordan? that is, how wilt thou stand against the rushing waters of tribulations and spiritual trials to which the interior life is subject?

Exhortation
to bear suf-
ferings with
patience and
courage.

O souls that seek your own ease and comfort, if you knew how necessary for this high estate is suffering, and how profitable suffering and mortification are with reference 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 are about to live to God in spiritual joy; you would suffer your exterior afflictions so as to merit at the hands of God, that He should look upon you, and 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 must have been 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

* Jerem. xii. 5.

† Tob. xii. 13.

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.'*

LINE
V.

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 in spiritual things.†

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 capacity, that He may deify them, unite them to Himself in His wisdom, which is the highest state, purifying them in that wisdom, as it is written, 'The words of the Lord are pure words, silver tried by the fire, purged from the earth, refined seven times.'‡ The wisdom of the Lord is silver tried by the fire, purged from the earth of our flesh, refined seven times, that is perfectly refined.

Tribulation
a great grace,
—its good
effects.

It is not necessary I should stop here to speak of each of these degrees of purgation, and how they tend to bring the soul to the Divine Wisdom, which in this life is as silver, for though it becomes exceedingly grand, yet it is not comparable to that of pure gold, which is reserved for everlasting glory.

But it is most necessary that we should 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 our healing and our good, not shrinking from them, because they are for the health of our soul. 'If the spirit of him that hath power,' saith the Wise Man, 'ascend upon thee, leave not thy place, because care'—that is healing—'will make the greatest sins to cease.'§

* Tob. xiv. 4. † Job i. 8-20; xlii. 12. ‡ Ps. xi. 7. § Eccles. x. 4.

STANZA
II.

Few deserve
to be made
perfect
through
sufferings.

Sorrow
turned into
joy.

Illustration
from the
life of
Mardochai.

'Leave not thy place,' that is the place of thy trial, which is thy troubles; for the healing which they bring will break the thread of thy sins and imperfections, 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.

I now return to the explanation of the words before me. The soul now remembers that its past afflictions are sufficiently recompensed, for as was its darkness so is its light,* 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,' with David in the like circumstances: 'How great troubles hast Thou shown me, many and grievous, and turning Thou hast brought me to life, and hast brought me back again from the depths of the earth. Thou hast multiplied Thy magnificence, and turning to me Thou hast comforted me.'‡ Thus the soul which once stood without at the gates of the palace of God, like Mardochai weeping in the streets of Susan because his life was threatened, clothed with sack-cloth and refusing the garments which Esther sent him, unrewarded for his faithful service in defending the king's honour and life,§ finds, also, like Mardochai, all its trials and service rewarded in one day. It is not only admitted within the palace and stands before the king in its royal robes, but it has also a diadem on its head, and in its hand a

* Ps. cxxxviii. 12. † 2 Cor. i. 7. ‡ Ps. lxx. 20. § Esth. iv. 1-6.

LINE
V.

sceptre, sitting on the royal throne with the king's signet on its finger, symbols of its power in the kingdom of the Spouse. For those souls who attain to this high estate obtain all their desires; the whole debt due to them is amply paid; the appetites, their enemies which sought their life, are dead, while they are living to God. 'In destroying death Thou hast changed it into life.'

vi. 'In destroying death Thou hast changed it into life.'— 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, 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.'†

By 'death' is meant here the old man, that is the employment of our faculties, memory, intellect, and will, upon the things of this world, and the wasting of our desires upon created things. All this is our old life, the death of the new life which is all spiritual. The soul cannot live this life perfectly unless the old man be perfectly dead, for so the Apostle teaches, when he bids us 'put off' according to former conversation, the old man . . . and put on the new man, who, according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth.‡ In this new life, when it shall have

Two kinds of
spiritual life:

1. Beatific,
i.e. the Vision
of God.

2. Perfect
union with
God by love.

The old, and
the new man.

* 2 Cor. v. 1. † Rom. viii. 13. ‡ Ephes. iv. 22, 24.

STANZA
II.

The perfect soul lives in God, because its acts are in Him.

Intellect, will, and memory transformed in God.

The soul made divine, not in substance, but by grace.

attained to perfect union with God, all the affections of the soul, its powers, and its 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.

This is so, because the intellect, 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.'* 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. Finally, all the motions and acts of the soul, proceeding from the principle of its natural and imperfect 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: 'In destroying death Thou hast changed it into life.'

The soul, therefore, has reason for saying with S. Paul,

* Ps. lxxvi. 6.

† Rom. viii. 14.

'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, fulfilling the words of the Apostle, 'Death is swallowed up in victory,'† and those of the Prophet, 'O death, I will be thy death.'‡

The soul being thus swallowed up of life, detached from all secular and temporal things, and delivered from all its natural deordination, is led into the chamber of the King, where it rejoices 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 wound,' more delicious to me than all the delights of the world. 'O tender hand,' infinitely more tender than all tenderness, and the greater the pressure of it the more tender it is 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; the more profoundly thou dost touch me, the more I taste it. Thou art infinitely more precious than gold and precious stones, for thou payest debts which nothing else can pay, because thou changest admirably death into life.

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

LINE
VI.

Recapitulation of the second stanza.

* Galat. ii. 20. † 1 Cor. xv. 54. ‡ Os. xiii. 14. § Cant. i. 3, 4.

STANZA
II.Joys of the
state of
Perfection.

renewed,' and 'as a palm tree' I 'shall multiply my 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. What David saith in the twenty-ninth Psalm, the soul sings interiorly to God, especially the conclusion thereof, 'Thou hast turned for me my mourning into joy: Thou hast cut my sackcloth and hast compassed me with gladness, to the end that my glory may sing to Thee, and I may not regret'—for this state is inaccessible to pain—'O Lord my God, I will give praise to Thee for ever.'

Here the soul is so conscious of God's solicitude to comfort it, feeling that He is Himself encouraging it 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.'†

STANZA III.

*O Lamps of fire,
In whose splendours
The deep caverns of sense,
Obscure and dark,
With unwonted brightness
Give light and heat together to the Beloved.*

EXPLANATION.

Attention of
the reader
necessary.

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 full of obscurity, while, on the other hand, it will be clear and full of joy to him who has had that experience.

* Job xxix. 18, 20.

† Cant. ii. 16.

LINE
I.

The bride-soul from her inmost heart gives thanks to the Bridegroom for the great mercies which, in the state of union, she has received at His hands, for He has bestowed upon her therein a manifold and most profound knowledge of Himself, which enlightens the powers and senses of the soul, and fills them with love. These powers, previous to the state of union, were in darkness and obscurity, but are now illuminated by the fires of love and respond thereto, offering that very light and love to Him who has kindled and inspired them, when He infused 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 the object 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 which He has communicated to it.

Marks of
true love for
God,—what.

i. 'O Lamps of fire.'—Premising in the first instance that lamps have two properties, that of giving light, and of burning, we must keep in mind, if we are to understand this stanza, that God in His one and simple essence is all the powers and grandeurs of His attributes. He is omnipotent, wise, good, merciful, just, strong, loving; He is all the other attributes of which we have no knowledge here below. And He being all this, and in union with the soul, when He is pleased to reveal Himself to it in a special way, the soul beholds in Him all these powers and grandeurs in the one and simple Essence, perfectly and profoundly known according to the conditions of Faith. And as each one attribute is the very Essence of God, Who is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—each attribute of Whom being God Himself—and as God is infinite light, and infinite Divine Fire, it follows that He gives light and burns as true God in each one of His

God is all His
attributes.

STANZA
III.

attributes. God therefore, according to this knowledge of Him in union, 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.

God light
and heat to
the soul in
many ways.

When the soul reflects upon this, the one lamp is to it as many lamps, for though but one, it can do all, and involves all powers 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 intelligence 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 heat 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, 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.

Moses on
Mount Sinai
saw some of
the lamps
of God.

These lamps were seen by Moses on Mount Sinai, where God passed before Him, and where Moses threw himself prostrate on the earth in all haste. He mentions some of the grandeurs of God which he then beheld, and, loving Him in them, speaks of them separately in the following words: 'O the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion, and true, Who keepest mercy unto thousands; Who takest away iniquity and wickedness

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. This is a most profound knowledge, and the deepest delight of love.

LINE
I.

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 delicate flames, is subtly wounded by each one of them, and by all of them more subtly and more profoundly, in the love of life; the soul now 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 are fire and flames.†

If 'a great and darksome horror seized upon' Abram as he saw the 'lamp of fire passing'‡ before him, when he learned with what rigorous justice God was about to visit the Amorrites, 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, 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 thy Spouse abiding in thee, being omnipotent, gives Himself to thee, and loves thee with omnipotence; being wise, with wisdom; being good, with

Illustration
from the
lamp seen
by Abram.

Beatitude of
the soul,—
in what it
consists.

* Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. † Cant. viii. 6. ‡ Genes. xv. 12, 17.

STANZA
III.

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, to give Myself to thee and to be thine.

Joys of the
soul beloved
by God.

Who shall then describe thy feeling, O blessed soul, when thou shalt behold thyself thus beloved, and so highly honoured? 'Thy belly is like a heap of wheat set about with lilies.'* 'Thy belly,' that is, thy will, is like a heap of wheat covered and set about with lilies; for with the grains of wheat which form the bread of life, and of 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 too shalt be 'a well of living waters which run with a strong stream from Libanus,' † and Libanus is God. Thy joy will now be so marvellously complete, because the words of the Psalmist are accomplished in thee: 'The stream of the river maketh the city of God joyful.' ‡

The lamps of
the fire of
love are also
the living
waters of
wisdom.

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 very 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,

* Cant. vii. 2. † Cant. iv. 15. ‡ Ps. xlv. 5. § S. John iv. 14.

were also waters pure and limpid, according to the words of Ezechiel who thus prophesied the descent of the Holy Ghost: 'I will pour upon you clean water, and put a new spirit within you.'* Thus though it be fire, it is water also, a figure of which we have in the sacrificial fire which Jeremias concealed, † which was water in the place of concealment, but fire when it was brought forth and sprinkled upon the sacrifice. ‡ 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 of which the bride spoke in the Canticle when she said, 'The lamps thereof are 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 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.

ii. 'In whose splendours.' I have already said that these splendours are the communications of the Divine lamps in which the soul in union shines forth with all its faculties, memory, intellect, 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 its flames shine upon and communicate heat to objects external to it, but rather when it heats what is within it, for the soul is now within these splendours,—'in whose splendours.' That is to say, it is within them, not near them, within their splendours, in the flames of the lamps, itself

LINE
I.

Illustration
from the
sacrificial fire
concealed by
Jeremias.

The soul
within the
splendours
of God.

* Ezech. xxxvi. 25, 26. † 2 Mac. ii. 1. ‡ Ib. i. 22. § Cant. viii. 6.

STANZA
III.
Analogy of
natural
flame.

transformed in flame. 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 illuminated 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.

Thus then these motions 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 motions are the 'playing' and the joyous feasts of the Holy Ghost in the soul,* 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 stimulants applied to the soul, furthering its translation into His perfect glory now that it is really entered into Him. So also is it with the fire: all the motions and vibrations to and fro which it causes in the air burning within it, are the efforts which the fire makes to ascend to its proper sphere; and all these quiverings are the effects of its perseverance in its upward efforts, but they are all fruitless because the air itself is within its own sphere. In the same way the motions of the Holy Ghost, though full of fire and most effectual to absorb the soul in great glory, do not accomplish their work before 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

* Stanza 1, line 2, p. 223.

LINE
II.

is now admitted, are more continuous than they used to be, more perfect and more durable; but it is in the life to come that 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 centre. 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.

Now overshadowing is the throwing of a shadow; 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.

The shadow of life is light; if Divine, a Divine light, and if the shadow be human, the light is natural. Thus the shadow of beauty will be as another beauty according to the nature and quality of that beauty of which it is the shadow. The

The Divine
splendours
also called
overshadow-
ings.

Darkness,
the shadow
of death:
light, of life.

* S. Luke i. 35.

† Ps. cvi. 10.

STANZA
III.

shadow of strength will be 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. This then being the case, what must be the shadow of 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 properties 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 in one essence.

Vision of the
prophet
Ezekiel.

O what a vision for the soul when it shall experience the power of that which Ezekiel 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;*' when it shall behold that wheel, the wisdom of God, full of eyes within and without, that is the marvellous intelligence 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,†

* Ezech. i. 5, 13, 15.

† Ib. i. 24.

LINE
II.

which signifies the rushing of the Divine waters, at the overflowing of which the Holy Ghost envelops the soul in flames 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 the Lord.* O how high is the condition of this happy soul! 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 sends forth the irrigating streams with a bounteous hand, for these streams penetrate soul and body.

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 thy riches are gathered together in infinite simplicity and unity. There the 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 Whose splendours,'

iii. § 1. 'The deep caverns of sense.' The caverns are the powers of the soul, memory, intellect, and will, and their depth is commensurate with their capacity for great good, for nothing less 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 impure, stained by affections for created

The spiritual
appetite of
the soul only
satisfied by
the Infinite
Good.

* Ezech. ii. 1.

† Wisd. vii. 26.

STANZA
III.

The soul
must be
emptied of
the Finite,
before it can
realise its
desire for the
Infinite.

things. In this life every trifle that enters them is enough to perplex them, and 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. But when they are empty, 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 illuminative life 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.

Three
caverns :

1. The intel-
lect, which
thirsts for
Divine
Truth.

§ 2. As to the first cavern, which is the intellect, 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 panteth after the fountains of waters: so my soul panteth after Thee, O God.*' This thirst is a thirst for the waters of the Divine Wisdom, the object of the intellect. The second cavern is the will,

* Ps. xli. 1.

and the emptiness thereof is a hunger so great after God, that the soul faints away, 'My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the 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 enjoyment of God: 'I will be mindful and remember, and my soul shall languish within me: these things I shall think over in my heart, therefore will I hope.† 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 its greatest pain. Nevertheless the suffering belongs to another condition, for it abides in the depth of 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.

§ 3. But, O my God, seeing it is certain that he who truly longs for God is already, as S. Gregory saith,‡ entered into possession, how comes it that the soul is in pain? If that desire which the Angels have 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

LINE
III.

2. The will,
which longs
for Divine
Love.

3. The me-
mory, which
hopes for
Divine
Fruition.

Capacity for
bliss implies
capacity for
pain,—both,
in one sense,
infinite.

'Qui mente
integra
Deum desi-
derat,
profecto jam
habet quem
amat.'

* Ps. lxxxiii. 1.

† Hom. 30 in Evangel.

‡ Lam. iii. 20, 21.

§ 1 S. Pet. i. 12.

STANZA
III.

fulness, seeing that it longs so earnestly after God, and so herein there ought not to be any anxiety or pain.

The soul may enjoy God in the fruition of grace, and yet suffer through want of the fruition of union.

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 also; the former is one of mutual good will, the latter one of special communion. This difference resembles that which exists between espousals and marriage. The former implies only an agreement and the mutual good will of the parties, contracting together with the bridal presents, and the 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 espousals. So when the soul has attained to such purity in itself, and in its powers, that the will is purged completely from all strange desires and inclinations, in its higher and lower nature, and when it wholly consents unto 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 between 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 all this admits of no comparison with that which belongs to the state of the spiritual marriage.

Now, though it is true that this takes place in the soul when it is perfectly purged of every created affection—because that must occur previous to the spiritual espousals—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 become

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.*

During the time of the espousals, and in expectation 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 become most pressing and keen. For as the unction of the Holy Ghost is a proximate disposition for union with God, the unction is most near unto Him; it fires the soul with the taste thereof, and inspires it with a delicious longing after it. Thus this desire is much more delicious and deep, because the desire for God is a disposition for union with Him.

§ 4. This would be 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 such a task not altogether 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 escape from so great an evil. I will therefore leave my subject for a moment, but I shall return to it soon again. And in truth the consideration of

LINE
III.Perfection
requires
time.Uction of
the Holy
Ghost,—
what.

Digression.

Necessity
of proper
spiritual
guidance.

* Esth. ii. 2, 12.

STANZA
III.

this matter tends to elucidate the nature 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.

God seeks the soul more than it seeks Him.

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,'* 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, in that they proceed from Him, are always directed and ordered by the motives of the perfection of the law of God and of 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 delicate and pure disposition, which is meritorious of the Divine union, and of its transformation in all its powers.

Divine grace acts according to the Law of God, and the Faith.

Holy Ghost the Guide to Perfection.

The soul, therefore, considering that God is the chief agent in this matter, that it is He who guides it and leads it by the hand whither it knows not, namely, unto supernatural things beyond the reach of intellect, 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 of the soul which lead it astray are three, namely, the spiritual director, the devil, and its own self.

Three blind guides.

As to the first of these blind guides, it is of the greatest

* Cant. iii. 6.

† Ib. i. 3.

LINE
III.

First blind guide,—an unfit Director.

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 all respects qualified 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 will therefore inflict great evils on their penitents. Such directors, not understanding these ways of the Spirit, will very frequently be the cause of souls losing the unction of the delicate ointments, by means of which the Holy Ghost is preparing the soul for Himself: for they will guide 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 profit is extremely little.

A Spiritual guide should be:
1. Learned.
2. Prudent.
3. Experienced.

§ 5. In order to have a clear perception 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 those 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, so that by satisfying them by the sweetness thereof they may be detached from the world.

Direction for beginners unfit for those more advanced.

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 in the case of Religious, because

STANZA
III.

Progress
from Medita-
tion to
Contempla-
tion, requires
a corre-
sponding
change in
spiritual
direction.

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 the first fervours cease, when the soul cannot make reflections as before, nor find any sensible comfort, but is fallen into aridity, because the spiritual life is changed, and the spirit is not cognisable by sense. And 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 who 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 the loving knowledge without the instrumentality of its discursive acts, because it is no longer able to form them as before.

§ 6. 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. Souls in this state are not to be forced to meditate, nor 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 placing obstacles in the way of 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, independently of these divers acts, without their being multiplied or elicited, though He produces them sometimes specifically in the soul, and that for some space of time. And in that case, the soul too must be lovingly intent upon God without specifically eliciting other acts beyond those 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.

It is evident therefore, that if the soul does not now abandon its previous ways 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 complete 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. But if the soul is to be the recipient of this grace passively, in the natural way of

LINE
III.

Dispositions
necessary for
Contem-
plation,—
what.

As God deals
with the
soul, so must
it deal with
Him.

STANZA
III.

God speaks
to the soul
when silent
and
detached.

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; 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 the subject of its meditation, not to sensible or spiritual sweetness, because God requires a spirit so free, so annihilated, that every act of the soul, even of thought, of liking or disliking, will impede and disturb it, and break that profound silence of sense and spirit necessary for hearing the deep and delicate voice of God, Who speaks to the heart in solitude;* it is in profound peace and tranquillity that the soul 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.

§ 7. 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 entered on the state of contemplation, tranquil and simple, to recur to its previous meditations, or to cleave to spiritual sweetness, as I have said, and at great length, in the tenth chapter of the first book of the *Obscure Night*, and previously in the last chapter of the second, and in the first of the third book of the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*. The soul 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

* Os. ii. 14.

† Ps. lxxxiv. 9.

will leave them below—'and fix my foot upon the tower' of my faculties—that is, they shall not advance a step even in thought—and I will watch to see what will be said to me,* that is, I will receive what God shall communicate to me passively. 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. The Prophet Isaias teaches the same truth when he says, 'Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand the hearing? them that are weaned from the milk,' that is from sweetness and personal likings, 'that are drawn away from the breasts,† from their reliance on particular knowledge. Take away the mote and the film from thine eye, and make it clean, O thou who art spiritual, and 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.

O spiritual director, remember it is for this liberty and holy rest 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 could find 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

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spiritual
directors.

* Habac. ii. 1. † Is. xxviii. 9. ‡ Exod. xxxiii. 4. § Ib. xii. 35.

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may give it the manna, which, though 'having in it 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 encourages any other desire whatever, for he shall not receive of this.

How the
contempla-
tive soul is to
be guided.

Strive, therefore, to root out of the soul all desire after sweetness, all efforts after meditations; do not disquiet it by any solicitude about spiritual things, still less after earthly things; establish it in an estrangement from all around, and in the utmost possible solitude. For the greater its progress in this, and the more rapidly it attains to this calm tranquillity, 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 own part. The least portion of the action of God on 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. What the soul feels in this state is a certain estrangement and alienation from all things around it, sometimes more, sometimes less, 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 sweet and delicious unctions of the Holy Ghost, whereby He secretly fills the soul with the riches of

Its feelings,
and solitude.

* Wisd. xvi. 20.

His gifts and graces; for being God, He doeth the work of God as God.

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§ 8. 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 to whom the direction of it is entrusted, 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, and a matter of deep grief. O how sad, and how wonderful! The evil done is not perceived, and the cause of it 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 estate 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.

Great and
frequent
evils of
spiritual mis-
direction.

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, inclined 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

An inex-
perienced
director com-
pared to a
rough
blacksmith.

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thou shouldest make diligent efforts of thine own; everything else is delusion and folly. Such a director as this does not understand the gradations of prayer, nor the ways of the Spirit, neither does he consider that what he recommends the soul is too late, since it has passed through that state already, having attained to the state of sensitive abnegation; for when the goal is reached, and the journey ended, all further travelling must be away from the goal.

Such a spiritual 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 in one method and does not profit by the other.

Real guide of
souls, the
Holy Ghost.

Directors are
only instru-
ments, and
must guide
souls by :
1. The Rule
of Faith.
2. The Law
of God.
3. The Spirit
of God.

§ 9. 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 mere instruments only to guide souls by the rule of Faith and the law of God, according to the spirit which God gives to each. Their object 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

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greater solitude, liberty, and tranquillity, so that their spirit may not be tied down to any particular course when God is thus leading them on. The spiritual director must not be anxious or afflicted because he is doing nothing in this case, 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 cloudless sky. As the sun rising in the morning shines into thy house if thou dost but open thy windows, so God, the unsleeping Keeper of Israel,* will shine in upon the emptied soul and fill it with good things. God is here like the sun, above our souls and ready to enter within them. 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 the 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 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. Say not,

Conditions of
Divine
Illumination.

Evangelical
Perfection,—
what.

God the
Architect of
the super-
natural
building.

* Ps. cxx. 4. † S. James i. 17. ‡ Ps. cxxvi. 1. § Prov. xvi. 1, 9.

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III.Further from
self, nearer
to God.

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 intellect 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 intellect, 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.

Not to go
back, is to
advance.The intellect
goes forward
by faith.

§ 10. Or, you will say, perhaps, that the will, if the intellect have no distinct perceptions, will be at the least idle, and without love, because we can love nothing that we do not know. That is very 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 intellect. But during the season 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 intellect is love also in the will. As the knowledge is general and obscure—the intellect being unable to conceive distinctly what it understands—so the will also loves generally and indistinctly. For as God is light and love in

Supernatural
love for God
does not need
distinct
knowledge,
or discursive
acts.LINE
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this delicate communication, He informs equally the intellect and the will, though at times His presence is felt in one more than in the other. At one time the intellect is more filled with knowledge than the will with love, and at another, love is deeper than intelligence.

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.

The will
active in Con-
templation.

These acts of the will which are consequent upon infused contemplation are so much the nobler, the more meritorious and the sweeter, the nobler their source, God, Who infuses this love and kindles it in the soul, for the will is now near unto God, and detached from all 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.

Test of true
progress,—
what.

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 obscure infusion than if he were under the influence of distinct acts of knowledge, because the soul sees clearly then that nothing 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, for they have become insipid. 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

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How the will
is to fulfil
the precept
of Love.

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.

The memory
more fitted
for God, when
emptied of
images.

§ 11. 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 the case of souls who have already entered into the state of quiet and solitary contemplation, and perhaps having never advanced beyond the ordinary state of reflection and meditation themselves, look upon penitents, such as I am speaking of, as idle—for 'the sensual man,' the man who still dwells with the feelings of the sensitive 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. This is followed by great loss, repugnance, dryness, and distractions on the part of such penitents, who desire to abide in their 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. Their 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 the road by which they are to

Mistake
made by in-
experienced
directors.

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

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travel now. 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 those 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.

Such directors as these do not really know what spirituality is. They wrong God most grievously, and 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 esteems 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,* which is the object of His continual desire. He now takes them by the hand, and reigns within them in the abundance of peace. He has deprived the discursive faculties of their strength, wherewith 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.

How direc-
tors may
wrong God.

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.‡ He shows clearly how much He values this sleep and oblivion of the soul, by the mention of those solitary and retired animals. But the spiritual directors of whom I am speaking will not suffer their penitents to repose, but insist upon continual labour, so that God shall find no opportunity for doing His own work; what He is doing they undo and disfigure by the compulsory activity of the

God loves the
repose of the
soul in Him.

* Os. ii. 14. † S. Luke v. 5. ‡ Cant. iii. 5.

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God complains of those who hinder His work.

soul of their penitents; 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.'*

Caution to spiritual directors.

But it may be said that these directors err, perhaps, with good intentions, because their knowledge is 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 case, it is not for them to interfere in what they do not comprehend, but rather to send their penitent to others who understand him better than they. It is not a trivial matter, or a slight fault to cause, by incompetent 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 everyone 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.

Their great responsibility.

How the affairs of God are to be handled.

A director inexcusable, —when.

Liberty of the penitent.

Change of direction,—when necessary.

§ 12. 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 if he persist in keeping a penitent in his power for certain empty reasons and considerations known to himself. It is quite certain that a soul which is to make progress in the spiritual life, and which God is ever assisting, must change its method of prayer, and be in need of a higher instruction, 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

* Is. iii. 14.

under every circumstance of the spiritual life; at least they must not presume that they have, or that it is God's will that a particular soul should 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.

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, which is to guide the soul into holy meditations, and if 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?

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 any other needless for his penitent? Granting even that he is qualified for the whole direction of a particular soul, because, perhaps, such a

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Illustration from the art of sculpture.

Different stages of progress require different methods of guidance.

Who can become all things to all men?

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God complains of those who hinder His work.

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Illustration from the art of sculpture.

Different stages of progress require different methods of guidance.

Who can become all things to all men?

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God leads every soul by a separate path.

Spiritual tyranny,—
what.

Woe pronounced against unfaithful shepherds.

Duties of directors to penitents,—
what.

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 S. Paul, who 'became all things to all men, that he might save all?' *

Thou art thus become a tyrant of souls, the robber of their liberties, assuming to thyself all the freedom of the evangelical doctrine, and taking every precaution lest any of thy penitents should 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 couldst 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 yourselves with the wool . . . but my flock you did not feed. . . . I will require my flock at their hand.' †

These directors, therefore, ought to leave their 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

* 1 Cor. ix. 22.

† Ezech. xxxiv. 2, 10.

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that they require another director; they should, therefore, counsel the change, for a contrary course of proceeding springs from a foolish pride and presumption.

§ 13. Let me now pass on from this and speak of those 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 Himself 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, indeavour 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 in. 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.' *

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 leading souls astray from

Evil of hindering a soul from forsaking the world.

How directors shut gate to themselves and others.

* S. Luke xi. 52.

† S. Matth. vii. 13, 14.

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Ignorance—
when
inexcusable.

Second blind
guide,—the
devil.

He tries to
deceive
the soul by
knowledge
and
sweetness.

the way 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.

§ 14. 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 easily withdraws it from that solitude and recollection wherein the Holy Ghost worketh secretly His great marvels within. And then the soul, naturally prone to sensible satisfactions and sweetness—especially if it aims at them—is most easily induced 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.

In this way, the evil spirit, for a mere nothing, inflicts upon souls the very greatest injuries, causing the loss of great

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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 go 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 frontiers between sense and spirit; there he deludes the soul, and feeds the senses, interposing sensible things so as to detain it, and hinder it from escaping out of his hands.

Satan found
in the border-
land between
sense and
spirit.

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 sensitive part of itself.

The devil 'beholdeth 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

* Is. viii. 6.

† Job xli. 25.

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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 effects it and because of the little trouble it costs him.

Satan compared to the Behemoth and the Leviathan.

§ 15. We may also understand in the same sense the following words, spoken by God to Job: 'Behold he will drink up a river and not wonder: and he trusteth that the Jordan'—the highest perfection—'may run into his mouth. In his eyes as with a hook he shall take him, and bore through his nostrils with stakes.' 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.

Again it is said, 'The beams of the sun shall be under him, and he shall strew gold under him like mire.' 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.

A advice to souls whom God is leading to Contemplation.

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 you 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.

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§ 16. 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, aridity, 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 intellect. 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 is not suffered to remain stationary.

Third blind guide,—the soul itself.

How a soul may hinder its own progress.

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.'*

Spiritual progress not ascertained by consciousness.

* Eccles. ix. 17.

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Let the soul abandon itself to the hands of God and confide in Him. 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 exercise of its proper faculties.

Subject of
the *Caverns*
resumed.

§ 17. Let us now return to the deep caverns of the faculties, in which I said the sufferings of the soul were ordinarily very great when God is anointing it, and preparing it for union with Himself by His subtle and delicate unctions. These unctions of God are so subtle 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 immense. Now if the unction which disposes the caverns for the union of the spiritual marriage be so wonderful, what shall the accomplishment thereof be?

As desire,
so fruition.

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 exquisite delight of the fruition of the sense of the soul, which is that power and energy of its very substance for perceiving and delighting in the objects of the faculties.

Faculties of
the soul
called
Caverns,—
why.

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 fancy is the place where all the objects of the outward senses are treasured up, so is this common sense of the soul in a like

way enlightened and made rich by a possession so grand and so glorious.

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iv. 'Obscure and dark.'—The eye sees not in two ways, 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 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 wanting 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 ignorances.'*

Difference
between
blindness
and darkness.

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 intellect without God abode in darkness. For until the Lord said, 'Let light be,'† darkness was upon the face of the deep of the cavern of 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. In that case it desires the darkness rather than light, and so goes on from darkness to darkness, guided by the darkness, for

Conditions of
sight :
1. Object.
2. Medium.
3. Organ.

* Ecclus. li. 26. Ignorantias meas illuminavit. See *Obscure Night*, Bk. ii. c. 12.

† Genes. i. 3.

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III.

darkness can guide the soul only to darkness again. As 'day to day uttereth speech and night to night showeth knowledge,'* so the deep of darkness calleth another deep, and the deep of light another; † like calling upon like. Thus, then, 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 acceptable.

Eye of the intellect suffused by the affections of the will.

The mind 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 grand. Thus, then, a single desire entertained by the soul suffices to impede the vision of all the Divine grandeurs which are beyond its desires 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 things must cast away from himself 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.

How to rectify judgment of the things of God.

While this cloud and cataract cover the eye of the judgment, nothing is visible except the cloud itself, sometimes of one colour, sometimes of another, according to circumstances,

* Ps. xviii. 2.

† Ib. xli. 8.

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 wandering of concupiscence overturneth the innocent mind.'* Those persons, therefore, who are not so spiritually advanced as to be perfectly purified from their desires and inclinations, but are still somewhat sensual, believe and account those things to be important which are in truth of no account in spirituality, being intimately connected with sense; they make no account and despise those things which are highly spiritual, further removed from sense, yea sometimes they look upon them as folly, as it is written, 'The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God: for it is foolishness to him and he cannot understand.' †

LINE
IV.
Purity of heart necessary for spiritual vision.

The 'sensual man' is he who still lives according to the desires and inclinations of the natural man, and even though these natural 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 leanest on thy spiritual tastes, exerting thine own natural desire, thou bringest a cataract

The sensual man described.

Character of acts determined by their motives.

How self-love degrades actions.

* Wisd. iv. 12.

† 1 Cor. ii. 14.

STANZA
III.

over thine eye, thou art wholly sensual, thou canst neither perceive nor judge what is spiritual, for that transcends all natural sense and desire.

If you still doubt, I have nothing further to add except to bid you read over again what I have written, and if you will do so perhaps your doubts will vanish. What I have said is the substance of the truth, and I cannot now enlarge upon it. This sense of the soul, hitherto obscure 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 heat together to the Beloved.'

The purified
soul reflects
the light of
God.

v. vi. 'With unwonted brightness give light and heat together to the Beloved.'—These caverns of the soul's faculties being now 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 glory; 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 received from Him. Now, indeed, they give back unto Him, in the way they received them, those very splendours which He communicates, as crystal reflects the rays of the sun when shone upon. But this state of the soul effects this in a nobler manner, because of the intervention of the will.

'With unwonted brightness;' 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 intellect—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

LINES
V., VI.

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 heat received from Him.

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, 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. 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 every debt is paid, 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.

The trans-
formed soul
a shadow of
God.

The perfect
return of
love.

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 in Himself, still it does

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III.

so, perfectly and wisely, giving all that He has given it in requital 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 grace, in the sense I have explained; and in that gift He loves it anew, and gives Himself 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 their 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 His 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.

Illustration.

The soul can offer such a gift, though far greater than itself, just as he who rules over many kingdoms and nations, though greater than he is, can bestow them upon whom he will. This is the source of the soul's great delight, that it sees itself able to give unto God more than itself is worth, that it gives Himself to God with such liberality, 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.

* S. John xvii. 10.

Source of the
soul's delight,
—what.

I must here observe briefly on the perfection of beauty wherewith the soul makes this oblation unto God. In the act of union, as the soul enjoys a certain image of fruition, caused by the union of the intellect and affection in God, it makes this oblation of God to God, and of itself to Him, in most wonderful ways; delighting itself therein and constrained thereto. With respect to love, the soul stands before God in strange beauty, with respect to this shadow of fruition in the same way, and also with respect to praise and gratitude. As to the first, that is love, the soul has three grand perfections of beauty. 1. It loves God by means of God. This is an admirable perfection, because the soul, set on fire by the Holy Ghost, and having the Holy Ghost dwelling within 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.'* 2. The second perfection is to love 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 the soul. 3. 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 the soul, but much more, because He is all this essentially in Himself.

There are also three perfections of beauty with respect to that shadow of fruition, marvellously great. 1. The soul enjoys God here, united with God Himself, for as the soul unites its intellect with wisdom and goodness, and perceives so clearly — though not so clearly as in the life to come — it delights greatly in all these things, clearly understood, as I said before. 2. The second principal perfection of beauty is that the soul delights itself in God alone without the admixture of any created thing. 3. The third is that it enjoys Him alone for what He is, without the admixture of any selfish feeling, or of any created object.

* S. John xvii. 26.

LINES
V., VI.
Perfections
of the soul's
beauty:

1. In love.

(1) It loves
God by
means of
God.(2) It loves
God in
God.(3) It loves
God for
God.2. In the
shadow of
fruition.(1) It is
united to
God.(2) To
nothing
else.(3) With a
pure
heart.

STANZA
III.3. In praise :
(1) As the
end of its
creation.(2) For
blessings
received.(3) For
what God
is.4. In grati-
tude(1) For all
benefits.(2) For the
delight of
praising
God.(3) For
God in
Himself.

There are also three principal perfections of beauty in the praises of God which the soul offers to Him in union. 1. 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.*' 2. The second is, that it praises Him for blessings received, and because of the pleasure which the praise of so great a Lord inspires. 3. The third is, it praises Him for what He is in Himself, for if the praises of God were unaccompanied by any pleasure at all, still the soul would praise Him for what He is.

Gratitude also involves three principal perfections. 1. Thanksgiving for all natural and spiritual blessings, and for all benefits received. 2. The second is the great delight of praising God, in the way of thanksgiving, for it is moved with great vehemence to such an act. 3. The third is that the soul gives thanks unto God only for what He is, which is much more efficacious and more delightful.

STANZA IV.

*How gently and how lovingly
Thou liest awake 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.

Here the soul turns towards the Bridegroom in great love, magnifying Him and giving Him thanks for two marvellous acts 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.

The first effect is the awakening of God in the soul, and the way of that is gentleness and love. The second is the

* Is. xliii. 21.

breathing of God in the soul, and the way of that is grace and glory 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 if 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.

i. ii. 'How gently and how lovingly Thou liest awake in my bosom.'—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 seem to be 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 S. 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.'†

LINES
I., II.Paraphrase
of the fourth
stanza.First effect
of Divine
union,—
The awaken-
ing of God in
the soul.Its nature
and effects.

* S. John i. 3; see p. 46.

† Acts xvii. 28.

STANZA
IV.

The reason is this; when the grand Emperor wills to reveal Himself to the soul, moving Himself in the way of giving it light, and yet not moving at all—He upon whose shoulder is the government,* 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, all natural things upon it move with it; so is it when the Prince moves, for He bears the court, not the court Him. This, however, is an exceedingly imperfect illustration; for here not only all seem to move, but also to reveal the beauties, power, loveliness of their being, the root of their duration and life in Him. There, indeed, the soul understands how all creatures, higher and lower, live, continue, and energise in Him, and enters also into the meaning of these words, ‘By Me kings reign, by Me princes rule, and the mighty decree justice.’‡

Though it is true that the soul here sees that all these things are distinct from God, in that they have a created existence, and understands them in Him in 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 causes, and not causes by their effects.

This movement in the soul is wonderful, for God is Himself immovable. Without movement on the part of God, the soul is renewed and moved by Him; and the Divine life and Being and the harmony of creation is revealed unto it with marvellous newness, the cause assuming the designation of the effects resulting from it. If we regard the effect, we may say with the Wise Man that God moves, ‘for Wisdom is more

* Is. ix. 6.

† Heb. i. 3.

‡ Prov. viii. 15, 16.

How creatures, although distinct from, are in God.

Joy of knowing the creature in the Creator.

How the Immoveable moves.

active than all active things,’* not because it moves itself but because it is the source and principle of all motion, and ‘remaining in herself the same, reneweth all things;’ † this is the meaning of the words, ‘more active than all active things.’

Thus then, strictly speaking, it is the soul itself 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, presentially, 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 obscurely, 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.

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 its awakening, this awakening is most properly referred to God: ‘Thou liest awake in my bosom.’

LINES
I., II.

The soul awakes to see God in all things.

God unveiling His Face.

In this life the veil of faith still remains.

The awakening referred to God,—why

* Wisd. vii. 24.

† Ib. 27.

‡ Ps. xliii. 23.

STANZA
IV.

ii. 'Thou liest awake in my bosom.' Awake us, O Lord, and enlighten us, that we may know and love those good things which Thou hast set always before us, and that we may 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 goodness of God, in the inmost depths of its being, that is its 'bosom.' For in the soul resounds an infinite power, with the voice of a multitude of excellences, of thousands of 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.

How can the soul bear this Divine communication?

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 Majesty.' † Glory oppresses him who beholds it, if he be not made glorious by it. 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 excellences. It is 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 would not that He should contend with me with much strength, lest He should overwhelm me with the weight of His greatness.' §

Two reasons.

The soul, however, does not faint away and tremble at this awakening so powerful and glorious. There are two reasons

* Cant. vi. 9. † Esth. xv. 16. ‡ Job xxvi. 14. § Ib. xxiii. 6.

for this: 1. It is now in the state of perfection, and therefore the lower portion of it is purified and conformed to the spirit. It is in consequence 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, so that he might behold His glory.*

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 heart,' † but the moment he looked graciously upon her, touched her with his sceptre and kissed her, she recovered herself, for he said to her, 'I am thy brother, fear not.' So is it with the soul in the presence of the King of kings, for the moment He shows himself as its Spouse 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

LINES
I., II.
1. It is now
in the state
of Perfection.

2. God shows
Himself
gentle and
loving.

Illustration
from the life
of Esther.

* Exod. xxxiii. 22. † Esth. xv. 10. ‡ Ib. xv. 11.

STANZA
IV.

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 alone Thou secretly dwellest.'

God dwells in all souls, but in different ways.

iii. 'Where alone Thou secretly dwellest.'—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 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.

His presence most intimate to the soul most purified.

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 thus dwells in secret; for Satan himself cannot penetrate this secrecy, nor discover this converse, nor can

* Ps. xlv. 10.

any intellect ascertain how it is effected. But in this secrecy 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.

O how blessed is that soul ever conscious of God reposing and resting Himself 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.'*

He is there as it were asleep in the embraces of the soul, and the soul is, in general, conscious of His presence, and, in general, has the fruition of it most deeply. 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?

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 secret from the devil and the intellect, like that of the others, 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

LINE
III.
Continual consciousness of the presence of God.

Happiness of the soul should make it vigilant.

Lower degrees of Divine union described.

* Cant. i. 11.

STANZA
IV.

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.'

Second effect
of Divine
union,—
The
breathing of
God in the
soul.

iv. v. vi. 'And in Thy sweet breathing, full of grace and glory, how tenderly Thou fillest me with Thy love.'—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 aspiration of God is an act of His in the soul, whereby in the awakening of the deep knowledge of the Divinity, He breathes into it 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 quit the subject.

Its nature
and effects.

INSTRUCTIONS AND CAUTIONS.

INSTRUCTIONS AND CAUTIONS

TO BE CONTINUALLY OBSERVED BY HIM WHO SEEKS TO BE
A TRUE RELIGIOUS AND TO ARRIVE QUICKLY AT GREAT
PERFECTION.

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 difficulties 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.

How to overcome the three spiritual enemies:
1. The World.
2. The Devil.
3. The Flesh.

If he will do this, with but ordinary attention, without other efforts or other practices, at the same time carefully observing what his rule prescribes, he will advance rapidly to great perfection, acquire all virtues in succession, and attain unto holy peace.

All the evils to which the soul is subject proceed from three sources: 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 conquer one; and if we conquer one, we shall also conquer the others in the same proportion.

Three
cautions
against the
world.

In order to escape perfectly from the evils which the world inflicts, there are three cautions to be observed.

FIRST CAUTION.

1. Love all
men equally,
in and for
God.

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 fear lest the natural affections, which men always feel for their kindred, should thereby revive again. 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 the obligations which they impose upon you; 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.

He most
worthy of
love who is
nearest to
God, Who is
Love.

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 labour 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 about 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 will you ever get rid of the imperfections and escape the evils which result to your soul from intercourse with men.

SECOND CAUTION.

The second caution 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—than with all these things which, as He 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.

2. Cultivate
poverty of
spirit and
detachment
from all
temporal
goods.

THIRD CAUTION.

The third caution is most necessary, that you may avoid all evil in relation to the other Religious of the Community. Many persons from not heeding this have not only lost their peace of mind, but have also fallen, and fall daily, into great disorders and sin. Be especially careful never to let your mind dwell upon, still less your tongue to speak of, what is passing in the Community, its past or its present state. Do not speak of any Religious in particular, do not discuss his condition or his conversation, or anything that belongs to him, however important, 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 labour to preserve yourself in complete oblivion of all. If you lived among the Angels and gave heed to what was going on, many things would

3. Avoid
criticising
other mem-
bers of the
religious
House.

* S. Matth. vi. 33.

seem to you not to be good, because you do not understand them.

Example of
Lot's wife.

Take warning from the example of Lot's wife who, because she was disturbed at the destruction of Sodom, looked 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 in purity before God, and not to suffer the thought of this or that to disturb you.

No place so
secure but
the devil
may enter.

Be sure of this, there is no lack of stumbling blocks in religious houses, because there is no lack of devils who are always labouring to throw down the saints. God permits this in order to try them and to prove them, and if you will not take care of yourself by observing this caution, you will never become a true Religious, do what you may, neither will you attain to holy detachment and recollection, or escape the evils I am speaking of. If you live otherwise, in spite of your zeal and good intentions, Satan will lay 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 this. Remember those words of the Apostle, '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
cautions
against
Satan.

Three cautions 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

* Genes. xix. 26.

† S. Jam. i. 26.

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 to take the advice of him who has authority to give it. This then is the

Satan as an
angel of
light.

FIRST CAUTION.

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. 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 caution in little things as well as in great, notwithstanding your apparent success, 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.

1. Never act
unless
through holy
obedience.

SECOND CAUTION.

The second caution is one very necessary, because the devil interferes exceedingly in the matter to which it refers. The

* 1 Kings xv. 22.

2. Regard the lawful Superior as holding the place of God.

observance of it brings great gain and profit, and the neglect of it great loss and ruin. Never look upon your superior, be he who he may, otherwise than if you were looking upon God, in Whose place he stands. 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 favour, of your superior. I tell you that a great many Religious in the way of perfection have been ruined by not looking upon their superiors as they ought to have done; their obedience was almost worthless in the eyes of God, because it was 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 CAUTION.

3. Study humility in thought, word, and work.

The third caution directed against Satan is this: strive with all your heart after humility in thought, word, and work, taking more pleasure in others than in yourself, wishing to see them in all things preferred to yourself, and this too with all your power from a sincere heart. In this way you will overcome evil with good, drive the devil away, and have joy in your heart. Labour to do this with respect to 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 than to give it, even to the least of your brethren.

Three cautions to be observed by those who would conquer themselves, and master the cunning of the flesh.

Three cautions against the flesh.

FIRST CAUTION.

If you wish to be delivered from the uneasiness and imperfections which present themselves before you, in the habits and conversation of the Religious, and profit by what may occur, you must keep in mind that you entered the Community only to be mortified and tried, and that all the inmates of it are there, as in truth is the case, for the express purpose of trying you. Some mortify you by words, others by works, and others by thoughts; 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 of your House; you will not have holy peace, nor will you deliver yourself from much evil.

1. Remember a community is a place of trial.

SECOND CAUTION.

Never omit any practices, if they are such as befit you, because they are disagreeable; neither observe them, on account of the pleasure which results from them, unless they be as necessary as those which are not agreeable. Otherwise you will find it impossible to acquire firmness, and conquer your weakness.

2. Disregard likes and dislikes.

THIRD CAUTION.

In all your spiritual exercises never set your eyes upon the sweetness of them so as to cling to it, but embrace rather that in them which is unpleasant and troublesome. If you do not observe this rule, you will never destroy self love, nor acquire the love of God.

3. Do not seek sweetness in devotions.

LETTERS.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

TO MOTHER CATHERINE OF JESUS, A BAREFOOTED CARMELITE AND
COMPANION OF S. TERESA OF JESUS.

*He informs her of his state since his imprisonment, and gives her
spiritual consolation.*

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 should you be absent from her, you may account yourself happy in comparison with me, who am shut up in so lonely and distant a prison-house. 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 dwell near her. God has worked it all for good; for in truth to be abandoned by creatures serves as a file to free us from the fetters of earth, and to suffer darkness is the direct way to the enjoyment of great light.

God grant that we may not walk in darkness. Oh! how many things would I fain say to you! But I am constrained to write in enigmas, 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 of these parts, for I am weary.

Your servant in Christ,

FRIAR JOHN OF THE CROSS.

BAEZA : the 6th of July, 1581.

LETTER II.

TO THE RELIGIOUS OF VEAS.

He gives them some spiritual advice, full of heavenly instruction, and worthy of perpetual remembrance.

JESUS AND 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 desire for you all possible good; but because it seemed to me that enough had been already said to effect all that was needful, and that what is wanting to you, 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 preserve our spirit beyond the reach of the devil and of our own sensuality, or we shall find ourselves unawares at a great loss, and strangers to the virtues of Christ, and appear in the end with our labour lost and our work done the wrong way. The lamps which we

believed to be alight will be found extinguished in our hands, because the breath whereby we thought to keep them burning has served rather to blow them out. To avert this evil, and to preserve our spirit, as I have said, there is no surer remedy than to suffer, to work, to be silent and to close our senses, accustoming ourselves to solitude, and seeking to forget and to be forgotten by creatures, and to be indifferent to whatever may happen, 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 tranquillity of love, that so it may be ready to suffer all things which may come upon you. For so momentous a thing is perfection, and so priceless the treasure of spiritual joy, that it is God's will this should be barely sufficient; for it is impossible to make progress but by the way of virtuous doing and silent suffering. I have heard, my daughters, *that the soul which is easily drawn to talk and converse with creatures, pays little heed to the presence of God; for if it remembered Him, it would be soon drawn forcibly inwards, loving silence and avoiding all exterior conversation; as God wills that the soul should delight in Him rather than in any creature, however pleasing and profitable it may be.* I commend myself to your charitable prayers; and do you rest assured that, scant as is my charity, 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 III.

TO MOTHER ELEANORA BAPTIST, Prioress of the Convent
at VEAS.

*The Blessed Father consoles her under an affliction which she
was suffering.*

JESUS

Be in your soul. Think not, my daughter in Christ, that I have not sorrowed over your labours and sufferings, and those of your companions; though when I consider that as God has called you to an apostolical life, that is to a life of contempt, He is now leading you in that way, I cannot but rejoice thereat. God wills, indeed, that Religious be so wholly and absolutely Religious that they shall have done with all things, and that all things shall have done with them; inasmuch as He is pleased to be their riches, their consolation, their glory, and their bliss. God has, moreover, conferred a great grace upon your Reverence, for now, forgetting all other things, you may enjoy Him to the utmost of your desire, 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 is certain, and whether the Mother Prioress is coming. I commend myself especially to my daughters Magdalen and Anna and the rest, not having leisure to write to each of them separately.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From GRANADA: the 8th February, 1588.

LETTER IV.

TO MOTHER ANNE OF S. 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, will you need to be carried in the arms of others? I desire now to see in you a great detachment of spirit, and such a freedom from any dependance 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 straight 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 beggars.

Your servant in Christ,

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From GRANADA.

LETTER V.

TO THE SAME RELIGIOUS.

On the same subject.

JESUS

Be in your soul, dearest daughter in Christ. Though you say nothing to me I have something to say to you; and that is, to bid you close the entrance of your soul to those vain fears which make the spirit cowardly. Leave to our Lord

that which He has given and daily gives, and think not to measure God by the narrowness of your own capacity, for not thus must we deal with Him. Prepare yourself to receive a great grace from our Lord.

Your servant in Christ,

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

FROM GRANADA.

LETTER VI.

TO THE SAME RELIGIOUS.

The Holy Father informs her of the foundation of the monastery at Cordova, and of the removal of the community of 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 congregation. You must know, however, that this meeting has never taken place, for I have been waiting to finish these visitations and foundations which our Lord has hastened forward in such wise that there has been no time to spare. 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 together on the occasion, and there was a solemn procession of the Most Holy Sacrament from the Cathedral Church—all the houses being hung with tapestry—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 one of the principal houses at a cost of about 14,000 ducats, being worth more than 20,000. They are now established there. His Eminence the Cardinal is to place the Blessed Sacrament in their chapel with great solemnity on the Feast of S. 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 S. John I shall set forth for Ecija, where, with the Divine blessing, we shall found another; thence to Malaga; and then to the congregation. I wish I had authority to make this foundation, as I had for the others. I do not expect much difficulty; but I hope in God that so it will be, and at the congregation I will do what I can; and you may say so to these gentlemen to whom I am writing.

Be pleased to send me the little book containing the *Stanzas of the Spouse*, which I think Sister — of the Mother of God will by this time have copied for me. Remember to present my humble respects to Señor Gonzalo Muñoz, to whom 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, 1588.

LETTER VII.

TO F. AMBROSE MARIANO OF S. BENEDICT, PRIOR OF MADRID.

Containing wholesome instructions for the training of Novices.

JESUS

Be with your Reverence. Our need of Religious is very great, as your Reverence knows, for the multitude of foundations which we are making. It is therefore necessary that your Reverence should have patience and allow Father Michael to leave this place, and 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 they have made choice of Father Angelo for that office, believing that he will agree perfectly with the Prior, which is a point of the utmost importance in every religious house. Your Reverence will give to each of these Fathers his letters, and will not fail to take care that no Priest meddle or converse with the Novices, it being well known to your Reverence that nothing is more injurious to them than to pass through many hands, or to be managed by any but their own master. Since, however, you have so many under your care, it is reasonable that your work should be lightened by the assistance of Father Angelo. You can therefore give him the necessary authority, as the authority of Sub-Prior is also conferred upon him to give him greater weight in the house.

It seemed that Father Michael was no longer much needed here, and that he might do greater service to the Order elsewhere. Of Father Gratian I have nothing new to communicate. Father Antony is now here.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

FROM SEGOVIA: Nov. 9, 1588.

LETTER VIII.

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, inasmuch as for this end He created and redeemed you. As to the three questions which you have proposed to me, I could say much more than time and the brevity which becometh a letter will allow. I will, however, suggest three points, the consideration of which you will find very profitable.

With regard to the sins which God so greatly abhors, that He was constrained to die because of them, 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 their society, and conversing with them only when strictly obliged to do so. For all such conversation, beyond what necessity or the reason absolutely requires, has never profited any man, however holy he may have been. To this watchfulness add an exact and loving observance of the law of God.

With regard to the Passion of Our Lord, endeavour to chastise your body with discretion, to hate and to mortify yourself, and never in anything to follow your own will and your own inclination, seeing that these were the causes of His death and passion. Whatever you may do, do it all under the advice of your director. As to the third point, the contemplation of heavenly glory, to meditate upon and love it

aright, we 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 become pleasing to God; because the best things here below, when compared with the eternal good for which God created us, are vile and bitter; and yet, brief as is their bitterness and deformity, it shall abide for ever in the soul which has chosen them for its portion.

I have not forgotten your matter; but at present, much as I desire it, I can do nothing for its furtherance. Recommend it earnestly to our Lord, and take our Lady and S. 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 your charity ask your friends to do the same. May God give you His Spirit.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From SEGOVIA: February, 1589.

LETTER IX.

TO A SPIRITUAL SON IN RELIGION, TEACHING HIM HOW TO OCCUPY HIS WILL WITH GOD BY 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 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 upon the soul through the will and the desire of those things

which seem good, befitting, and pleasurable. Now, because these things seem to be pleasing and precious, the affections of the will are attracted by them, and the will hopes for them, delighting 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 these emotions of pleasure in all 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 no delectable thing in which it can have joy and delight can be God, for as God is not cognisable by the apprehensions of the other faculties, neither can He be 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 it 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 as He is, nor ever known Him under any apprehension of the desire, and cannot therefore comprehend what He is, so its taste can never know what He is; its very being, desire, and taste can never know how to desire God, because He is above and beyond all its powers.

It is, therefore, plain that no distinct object among those in which the will rejoices, 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 could 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: those means are really an act of the will.

Now, as an act of the will is perfectly distinct from the feeling which attends it, it is by that act that union with God is wrought—that act ends in Him, and is love; and not by the impressions and apprehensions of the desire which are in the soul as ends themselves, and not as means of union. True, these impressions may serve as motives of love, if the will uses them for the purpose of advancing, and not otherwise. These sweet impressions of themselves do not lead the soul to God, but rather cause it to rest upon them: but an act of the will to love God causes the soul to put 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 any one 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. The issue then would be that the act of the will would be vitiated, for as God is incomprehensible and inaccessible, 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, to the satisfaction of faith, in emptiness and darkness as to its own feelings, above all that it can understand by the operations of the intellect, believing and loving in a higher way than that of the understanding.

He then is very unwise, who, when sweetness and spiritual delight fail him, thinks for that reason that God also has

failed him; and when he has that sweetness and delight, rejoices and is glad, thinking for that reason that God is with him. 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; that is, the whole strength of the will is not directed to God only; for by clinging to and resting on the creature by desire, the will cannot ascend upwards beyond it to God Who is inaccessible. 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 those words of the Psalmist: 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.'* Now, in this place 'the mouth' of the will is desire: that mouth opens, when not filled or hindered with the morsels of its own satisfactions: for when the desire is intent upon anything, it is then shut, because out of God everything is shut up.

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 the 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 Isaiah teaches when he says: 'All you that thirst come to the waters.'† He invites all who thirst for God only to come to the fulness of the Divine waters

* Psalm lxxx. 11.

† Isaiah lv. i.

of the union with Him: namely, those who have 'no money' of the 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 you may be.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

SEGOVIA, April 14, 1589.

LETTER X.

TO MOTHER LEONORA OF S. GABRIEL, A BAREFOOTED CARMELITE NUN.

The Holy Father having sent her from the Convent of Seville to found that of Cordova, gives her some spiritual instruction concerning interior solitude and the good government of her Community.

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 done for your greater profit; for the more He is minded to give us, the more does he enlarge our desires, even leaving us empty that there may be the more space for Him to fill with blessings. You shall be well repaid for those which, for the love of your Sisters, you now leave behind you in Seville; for the immense benefits of God can only be received and contained by empty and solitary hearts; and, therefore, because He has a special love for you, our Lord will have you to be alone for the desire He has 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. And true it is that

even were the soul in Heaven, if the will were not bent to love it, the soul would be still unsatisfied. So is it with God—though He 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 will be 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; though I know that I have no need to enforce this upon one of such experience in religion, and so well instructed in all that is needful for such foundations. For this reason, we chose your Reverence for this work from among many less well fitted for it. Be pleased to remember me particularly to Sister Mary of the Visitation, and to Sister Joanna of S. 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 XI.

TO MOTHER MARY OF JESUS, PRIORESS OF THE BAREFOOTED CARMELITES OF CORDOVA.

Containing useful lessons for Religious engaged in the foundation of a new Convent, of which they are to form 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 by His appointment that you entered so poor a dwelling,

under the heat of such a burning sun. He would have you to give edification to the people, and to show them that it is your vocation to follow Christ in destitution of all things; so shall those who come to you hereafter 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; and that you will never, and can never, experience greater necessities than those to which you voluntarily subject your heart: for the poor in spirit is content and joyful in the want of all things; 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, which renders all things subject to the soul, suffering nothing to bring it into subjection, and leaving every thought free to burn more and more intensely with love! Salute all the sisters in our Lord. Tell them that since 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 that fervour which God is wont to infuse into the first founders of a work, to make a wholly new beginning of the way of perfection; walking therein in all humility and entire detachment from all things, both within and without, no longer at a child's pace, but with a strong will conformed to their vocation of mortification and penance. Let them see that Christ costs them something, and let them not be like those who are ever seeking their own ease, and looking for consolation either in God or out of Him. But let them seek to suffer either in Him or out of Him, by means of silence, hope, and loving memory. Make

all this known to Gabriela and the Sisters at Malaga. To the others I have already written. God grant you His holy grace. Amen.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From SEGOVIA: the 28th of July, 1589.

LETTER XII.

TO MOTHER MAGDALEN OF THE HOLY GHOST, A RELIGIOUS OF THE SAME CONVENT OF CORDOVA.

He treats of the spirit which should mark a new foundation.

JESUS

Be in your soul, my daughter in Christ. I rejoice to see the good resolution expressed in your letter. I bless God, who provides for all things! Much need will you have of a strong purpose in the beginning of this foundation, to 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 does His Majesty at such times give a special grace, 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 it has cost you much to forsake what you have left behind, you must not count it much; 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 Joanna, and let her recommend me to God. May He be in your heart. Amen.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From SEGOVIA: the 28th of July, 1589.

LETTER XIII.

TO THE LADY JOANNA DE PEDRAÇA, A PENITENT OF THE
HOLY FATHER AT 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 suggest. It would be a great pain to me did I believe that you seriously think what you say. It would be an evil return on my part for so much kindness, especially when I have not deserved it. 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 walking in the darkness and emptiness of spiritual poverty, you imagine that all things and all men are failing you; nor is this wonderful, since you imagine that God Himself fails you. And yet in truth there is nothing wanting to you, nor have you need of aid or counsel from any, all these doubts and fears being without foundation. He who desires nothing but God does not walk in darkness, however blind and poor he may seem to himself to be; and he who indulges in no presumptuous thoughts, nor seeks his own satisfaction either in God or in creatures, nor to do his own will in anything, is in no danger of falling, nor in any need of counsel. You are in the right path, my daughter; once for all, be resigned, and live in peace. 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 made so little account of yourself, nor of all the things in the world put together; 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 using our whole power and strength in doing His will? When we do this, what need have we of other imaginations, other lights, other consolations gathered here and there, in which ordinarily lurk many snares and dangers to the soul, which is deceived and led astray by its appetites and perceptions: its very faculties cause it to err. It is therefore a singular grace from God when He so darkens and impoverishes the soul as to leave in it nothing which can lead it astray. And that it may not go astray, it has nothing to do but to walk in the beaten path of the laws of God and of the Church, living solely by faith, obscure and true, in assured hope and perfect charity, looking for all its blessings in Heaven; living here as pilgrims, beggars, exiles, orphans, desolate wanderers, possessing nothing, and looking for everything above. Rejoice, then, and put your trust in God, who has given you these tokens that you *can* do, nay, that you *ought* to do, much for Him. 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 beyond, tranquillise your soul, which is in a good and safe condition, and go to communion as usual. Go to confession when you have some clear matter for the sacrament, but beyond this be not too eager to speak of your interior. When you have anything distinct to mention, write to me, and that promptly and frequently, which you can always do through Doña Anna, 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, 1580.

LETTER XIV.

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 cease to take thought for it; and so you should fall into many temporal and spiritual necessities; 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 spirit will fail you, and your virtues will become weak. For if in time past you have desired poverty, now that you are Superior 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 the things of this world; inasmuch as our Lord hath bidden us to take no thought for our food, or for our raiment, or 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 excel-

lent 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.

Many salutations in our Sovereign Good, to my daughters Magdalen of S. Gabriel, Mary of S. Paul, Mary of the Visitation, and Mary of S. Francis. May He be ever with your spirit, my daughter. Amen.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From MADRID: the 20th of June, 1590.

LETTER XV.

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. Your letter was most grateful to me, and has added to the obligations I already owe you. That things have not fallen out as you desired, should be a consolation to you, and a motive of much thanksgiving to God; because His Majesty has thus disposed them to the greater benefit of us all. It remains only that we submit our will in this, 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 from 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 receive benefit by my being set aside; for so will they be delivered from falling into the defects which by reason of my miseries 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 left at liberty. But I shall do my utmost to escape from this burthen also. However this may be, Mother Anne of Jesus will not get out of my hands as she expects, and so will have no occasion to die of grief at losing the opportunity, as she thinks, of becoming a great saint. But whether going or staying, wherever or however I may be, I will never forget her nor blot her out of the book of my remembrance, 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 likened in some measure, through suffering, to our great God, who was humbled and crucified for us, because our life here is good for no other end but to 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 of July, 1591.

LETTER XVI.

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 the Author of these things is not man, but God, Who knows what is best for us, and orders all things for our greater 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 XVII.

TO DOÑA ANNA DE PEÑALOSA.

He informs her of his recent illness, and congratulates her on the ordination of a Priest.

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, has obliged me to have recourse to 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 Luis is now a priest of God; may he be so for many a year, and may His Divine Majesty fulfil all the desires of his soul. Oh, what a blessed state has he now entered for casting away all solicitude, and speedily enriching his soul! Congratulate him from

me. I dare not venture to ask him sometimes to remember me in his 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 to go speedily to Him.

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.

THE FOLLOWING IS THE OPINION AND ADVICE WHICH THE BLESSED FATHER GAVE TOUCHING THE SPIRIT AND METHOD OF PRAYER OF ONE OF THE NUNS OF HIS ORDER.

IN the affective prayer of this soul, there are, as it seems to me, 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 consists in great detachment from all desire. The second is, that she is too confident, and has too little fear of delusions; in such a case the Spirit of God is never present to keep a soul from sin.* The third is, that she is inclined 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 in the state of this soul; when these gifts—as she says here—are real, they 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 conceal them. Though they are not equally observable in all apprehensions of God, yet these, which she calls Union, are never found without them. Because a soul is humbled before it is exalted; † and ‘it is good for me that Thou hast humbled me.’ ‡ The fifth is, that the style and language she uses do

* Prov. xv. 27. † Prov. xviii. 12. ‡ Psalm cxviii. 71.

not seem to me those of the spirit she refers to; for that spirit teaches a style which is more simple, and free from affectation, and which avoids all 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 every evil spirit will suffer a good deal for his own credit.

SPIRITUAL MAXIMS.

NOTE.

These maxims in the earlier editions of the Saint's works did not exceed a hundred in number. But in the later editions a new arrangement has been adopted: the maxims have been classified, and others have been added to them, taken from the Treatises and the Letters, with a view, apparently, of increasing the number to 365. In this the editors have failed, for two of the maxims have been repeated, and in this translation they are only 363.

SPIRITUAL MAXIMS.

PROLOGUE.

O MY GOD, sweetness and joy of my heart, behold 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, and 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 this 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 the footsteps of Thy most sweet Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and imitating His life, estate, and virtues according to the rule

of detachment and of spiritual poverty. 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 imitation 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 imitation of Christ, is, in my opinion, nothing worth.

2. Your first care must be to be anxiously and lovingly earnest in your endeavours to imitate Christ in all your actions; doing everyone of them to the uttermost of your power, as our Lord Himself would have done them.

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.

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 fall into error.

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.

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 in the annihilation of self.

7. He who makes any account whatever of himself, neither denies himself nor follows Christ.

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 Him, is worth nothing.

12. What does he know who does not know how to suffer for Christ? The greater and the heavier the sufferings—when suffering is in question—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.

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.

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 also to unite it with Him.

16. Without walking truly in the practice of these three virtues, it is impossible to attain to the perfect love of God.

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.

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 on the way to God.

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.

20. By Faith the soul travels protected against the devil, its strongest and craftiest foe; and S. Peter knew of no stronger defence against him when he said: Resist him, strong in faith.

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 exchange the mutable and comprehensible for the immutable and the incomprehensible, Who is God.

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, not seeing, 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.

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.

25. As in natural generation no new form results without the corruption of the one previously existing—for this obstructs

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 within it.

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.

27. The soul is most recollected in Faith; for then 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.

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.

29. The soul that leans upon any 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 impeded, because it is not perfectly blind in Faith, which is its true guide.

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 during their recollection, pronounce it to have come from God; so they tell us, God has spoken or I have had an answer from God. In truth all this is nothing: these persons have been speaking to themselves, out of a longing for such communications.

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 can be asked or desired, and I have given Him to be your Brother, Master, Companion, Ransom, and Reward.

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.

33. You are not to believe that which reaches you in a supernatural way, but only that which reaches you through the teaching of Christ and His ministers.

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 for this, seeing that we have our natural reason and the Evangelical Law to guide us in all things.

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.

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.

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.

38. A living Hope in God gives the soul such courage and elevation in 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.

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 hope of everlasting life.

40. Through a living Hope in God the heart is so raised up above the world and delivered from all its snares, that it can neither be touched nor even be seen by it.

41. In all your trials have recourse to God in all confidence, and you will be comforted, enlightened, and instructed.

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, provided the natural 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.

43. Have an interior desire that God may give you all He knows to be needful for you, to 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 good.

45. The more God gives, the more He makes us desire; until He leaves us empty that He may fill us with His blessings.

46. So pleased is God with the soul hoping in Him, and looking to nothing else, that it may be truly said the more that soul hopes for, the more it obtains.

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.

48. Do not rejoice in temporal prosperity, because you do not certainly know that your eternal life is secure.

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.

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 God.

51. How can you venture to live without fear, seeing that you must appear before God to give account of your lightest words and thoughts?

52. Lo! many are called and few are chosen; and if you are not careful, your final ruin is more certain than your salvation; for the way that leadeth to eternal life is strait.

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 shall come to die?

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.

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.

56. The worth of love does not consist in high feelings, but in detachment: in patience under trials for the sake of God Whom we love.

57. God has a greater esteem for the lowest degree of purity of conscience, than for the greatest service you can render Him if that be wanting.

58. To seek God for 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.

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.

60. Herein a man may know whether he really loves God: Is he satisfied with anything less than God?

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 height of the 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.

64. Study always to please God; pray that His will may be accomplished in you; love Him much, for it is His due.

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.

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 desires of the creature.

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 sum of imperfections has been cleared away, and the heat with gross satisfaction of the senses has died out.

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.

74. They provoke the Divine Majesty to anger exceedingly, who, seeking for spiritual food, are not content with God only, but intermingle therewith carnal and earthly satisfactions.

75. He who loves any other thing with God makes light of Him, because He puts into the balance with Him that which is at an infinite distance from Him.

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; now this is contrary to the pure love of God.

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 on whom He bestows His gifts and graces; but they who seek to please Him and to give Him something at their own cost—setting their own pleasure aside—are very few.

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.

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.

82. Some souls call God their Spouse and their Beloved; but He is not really beloved by them, because their heart is not whole with Him.

83. What good will it do 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.

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 other than God.

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.

86. He who seeks nothing but God walks not in darkness, however blind and poor he may be in his own estimation.

87. For a man to be in pain for God is a sign that he has given himself up to Him, and that he loves Him.

88. He who in the midst of dryness and abandonment is painfully anxious about God, and afraid that he does not serve Him, offers Him a sacrifice that pleaseth Him well.

89. When God is really loved, He hears most readily the cry of the soul that loves Him.

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.

91. The loving soul is meek, gentle, humble, and patient; the soul that is hard in self-love hardens itself still more. If Thou, O good J sus, in Thy love dost not make the soul gentle, it will persist in its natural hardness.

92. The soul that loves is neither wearied nor wearies.

93. Behold the infinite wisdom and the hidden mysteries; the peace, the love, the silence of the Divine Bosom; the deep science God teaches there; what we call anagogic acts—ejaculatory prayer—how they set the heart on fire!

94. The perfect love of God cannot subsist without the knowledge of God and of self.

95. Perfect love naturally seeks nothing, and claims nothing, for itself, but all for the beloved; if this be the case with earthly love, how much more with the love of God?

96. The ancient friends of God scarcely ever fail Him, because they are raised above all occasions of failure.

97. True love accepts prosperity and adversity with an equal spirit, that of joy and delight.

98. The soul that labours to divest itself of all that is not

God for God's sake is immediately enlightened by, and transformed in, God, in such a way that the soul seems to be God Himself, and to possess the things of God.

99. Satan fears a soul united with God, as he fears God Himself.

100. The soul, in the union of love, resists even the first impulses.

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.

102. He who truly loves God does not blush before men for what he does for God; neither does he conceal his good works out of shame, though the whole world may condemn them.

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.

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.

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.

107. A pure and perfect work, wrought for God in a pure heart, makes a perfect kingdom for its Lord.

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.

109. The pure in heart find in all things the knowledge of God, sweet, chaste, pure, spiritual, joyous, and loving.

PEACE.

110. By keeping guard over the senses, which are the gates of the soul, we keep also and increase its tranquillity and purity.

111. Man would never lose peace if he forgot and cast aside his thoughts and notions, and withdrew from the sight, hearing, and discussion of passing events, so far as he well may.

112. If we forget all created things, there is then nothing to disturb our peace; nothing to excite our desires. These are they that disturb it; for, as the proverb says, What the eye hath not seen, the heart does not desire.

113. The restless and perturbed soul, not built up in mortification of the passions and desires, is, as such, incapacitated for spiritual good, for that enters only into the soul which is under control and ordered in peace.

114. God reigns only in the peaceful and unselfish soul.

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.

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 justice of God, for the everlasting joy of the elect.

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.

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.

120. To endure all things with an equable and peaceful mind, not only brings with it many blessings to the soul, but it also enables us, in the midst of our difficulties, to have a clear judgment about them, and to minister the fitting remedy for them.

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 even in that which gives pain to the soul of the imperfect.

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 is not moved for ever.

LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR.

123. Wisdom enters by love, silence, and mortification. It is a 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.

125. Do not entertain a suspicious thought of a brother, for that takes away purity of heart.

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.

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.

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 ; remorse of conscience comes from the recollection of the creature.

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.

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.

133. The passions and desires, when under control and restrained, are the sources of all virtues, and, when they have broken loose, of all the vices and imperfections of the soul also.

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. Obscures it. 4. Defiles it. 5. Weakens it.

135. All created things are but the 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.

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 lasts.

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 which does not deny itself.

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.

139. As a man is tormented and afflicted who lies down naked amid thorns and briers, so is the soul tormented and afflicted which lies down in the midst of its desires : they pierce, torture, and tear it painfully.

140. As vapours obscure the air and hide the light of the sun, so the soul, captive to its desires, is intellectually in darkness, so that neither the sun of natural reason nor that of the supernatural wisdom of God can inform or enlighten it.

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.

142. Who can tell how impossible it is for the soul, subject to desires, to judge of the things of God ? for while there is a film 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.

143. A bird that has perched upon a twig covered with

birdlime labours in a twofold way—in extricating itself and in cleaning itself; so a soul, that has given way to desires; it has to extricate itself in the first place, and then, when it has done so, it has 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.

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.

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.

147. The desires are like the suckers which grow on a tree, they sap its strength and destroy its fertility.

148. There are no corrupt humours which so enfeeble a man's gait, and make him to loathe his food, as the desire of the creature enfeebles the soul, indisposing it for the practice of virtue.

149. Many souls have no inclination for virtue, because their desires are impure, 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 the life of God in it; they at last are the only things that live in it, because the soul has not killed them first.

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, in order to have purity of soul.

152. As wood is never transformed into fire if but one degree of heat necessary for that end be wanting, so the soul

that has but one imperfection can never be perfectly transformed in God.

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, fly upwards to God.

154. The desires and attachments of the soul have the property attributed to the remora, which, though it be but a little fish, yet it arrests the progress of the ship to which it clings.

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!

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.

157. Of one spark cometh a great fire, and one imperfection is enough to beget another. 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.

158. Voluntary and perfectly deliberate desires, however slight they may be, if only habitual, are those which chiefly impede our progress to perfection.

159. Any imperfection to which the soul is attached 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.

160. God is justly angry with those souls whom He, in the power of His arm, has delivered from the world, and from the occasions of grievous sins, but who are yet weak and negligent in mortifying certain imperfections; for this He permits them to fall in their desires from bad to worse.

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.

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.

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.

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 for information 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.

165. Man knows not how to order his joy and grief reasonably and prudently, because he knows not the difference between good and evil.

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?

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.

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.

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.

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.

171. The light of God, which illumines the angels, enlightening and setting them on fire with love, as pure spirits disposed for that inflowing, illumines men ordinarily in obscurity, pain, and distress, because of men's impurity and weakness: so is the sun to a weak eye; the light it gives is painful.

172. When man has become spiritualised and refined in the fire of Divine love which purifies him, he then receives 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.

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 rewarded.

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.

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 to virtue.

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 foul into the abyss.

A SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR.

177. A soul without a director is like a kindled coal, which, if left by itself, cools instead of burning.

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.

179. The tree that is cultivated and kept carefully by its owner produces fruit in due season, and the owner is not disappointed.

180. He who falls alone remains alone in his fall; he makes little account of his soul, because he trusts in himself alone.

181. He who is burdened when he falls, rises with difficulty under his burden.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

189. Let the soul that would advance, and not go back, take care into whose hands it commits itself; for, as is the master, so is the scholar, and as is the father so is the child.

190. The inclinations and tastes of the director are easily impressed upon the penitent.

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.

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.

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.

194. God is angry with those who teach His law and keep it not; and who preach spirituality to others without being spiritual themselves.

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.

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.

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.

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.

RELIGION AND 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.

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 thoughts with the Spirit of God.

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.

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.

FRUITS OF PRAYER.

205. Let God be the spouse and friend 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.

206. Enter into your innermost heart, and labour in the presence of God, the spouse of your soul, Who is ever present doing you good.

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 established in the soul.

209. By shutting the eyes to the defects of others, keeping silence, and conversing continually with God, great imperfections are rooted out of the soul, which thereby becomes the mistress of great virtues.

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.

THE QUALITY 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.

212. Wait lovingly upon God, without any desire to feel or understand anything particular in 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.

214. He who will not allow his desires to carry him away will wing his flight like a bird whose wings are strong.

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.

219. They call upon God in truth who pray for that which is most true: that which belongs to their eternal salvation.

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 but also that which He sees most 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 ought not then to reject, yea rather it 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 loved and known.

223. He whose senses are subject to the Spirit, purged from all sensible objects, even in his first movements, elicits delights in the sweet knowledge and contemplation of God.

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.

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.

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 constantly about Him, and saw His wonderful works, were not the better for His presence.

PLACE FOR PRAYER.

227. Keep yourself apart for one thing only, 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, nor 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 the Divine silence.

229. For the purposes of prayer that place is to be chosen in which sense and spirit may be least hindered from rising up to God.

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 the senses, and not recollection of spirit.

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. And they who become pilgrims for recreation, rather than devotion, are many in number.

IMPEDIMENTS 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.

233. God being, as He is, inaccessible, do not repose 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 drawing near unto Him.

234. Never consent to admit into your soul that which is not substantially spiritual ; for if you do so you will lose the sweetness of devotion and recollection.

235. He who relies much on the senses 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.

236. The imperfect destroy true devotion, because they seek sensible sweetness in prayer.

237. The fly that touches the honey cannot fly : so the soul that clings to spiritual sweetness ruins its own freedom and hinders contemplation.

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.

239. He who does not feel 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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, unfelt; in the second place, because the soul has been accustomed to the practice of meditation, which is more cognisable by the senses.

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.

247. They who have passed on to the state of contempla-

tion, must not for that reason suppose that they are never to make their meditations 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.

248. Except in the act of contemplation, in all exercises and good works, the soul must make use of good meditations on, and recollection of, what is good 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.

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 must do the same; 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 contemplation and in the love of God.

250. Though occasionally, in the height of contemplation and pure intuition of the Divinity, the soul may not remember the most sacred humanity of Christ, because God elevates the spirit to the most supernatural knowledge, yet studiously to forget it is in nowise seemly, seeing that by the contemplation thereof, and loving meditation thereon, the soul ascends to the highest state of union; for Christ our Lord is the Truth, the Gate, the Way, and the Guide to all good.

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.

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.

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.

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 aridity and trouble of spirit, is subject and obedient, than with that which, without obedience, performs all its duties with great sweetness of spirit.

256. God would rather have from you the lowest degree of obedience and subjection, than all those services you would render Him.

257. Subjection and obedience is the penance of reason and discretion; and is therefore a more pleasing sacrifice in the eyes of God than all other bodily penances.

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, they grow in vice, rather than in virtue.

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.

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.

VIII.

FORTITUDE AND PATIENCE.

261. It is better when burdened to be joined to the strong, than unburdened to the weak. When you are loaded with afflictions you are joined to God, Who is your strength, and He is the strength of the afflicted. When you are unburdened you are joined to yourself, who are weakness itself, for virtue and fortitude grow in the soul, and are strengthened, in tribulations.

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 the flesh is flesh: a good spirit is born only of the Spirit of God, and is communicated neither through the world nor the flesh.

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.

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 he be not possessed of great courage, physical strength, and resolute perseverance.

265. Feed not in the forbidden pastures, which are those of this life: the blessed are they who hungered and thirsted after justice, and it is they who are filled.

266. Verily he has overcome all things in whom the pleasures of them excite no joy, and the bitterness of them no sadness.

267. By fortitude the soul labours, practises virtue, and overcomes vice.

268. Let your heart be strong against everything that may attract 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 good it is to suffer whatever may come from Him who is the true good.

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.

272. We are not to measure our trials by ourselves, but ourselves by our trials.

273. If souls but knew the advantage of suffering and mortification for the attainment of great blessings, they would never seek for consolation anywhere.

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.

275. The way of suffering is more secure and 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.

276. The soul that is not 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?'

* Eccles. xxxiv. 9.

277. The most perfect suffering brings with it the most perfect understanding.

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.

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.

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.

281. All the functions and powers of his senses, who no longer lives after the flesh, are directed to Divine contemplation.

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.

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.

SILENCE.

284. The Father uttered one Word; that Word is His Son: and He utters Him for ever in everlasting silence, and the soul to hear It must be silent.

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.

286. Speak little; and do not meddle in matters when you are not desired to do so.

287. Complain of no one: ask for nothing, but if it should be necessary to ask, do so in few words.

288. Abstain from contradiction: on no account let your words be other than pure.

289. Let your language be offensive to none; let it be about matters such as will cause you no trouble if everybody knew of them.

290. Preserve your spirit in peace, lovingly attentive to God: and when you must speak, do so calmly and peaceably.

291. Be silent about what God may say to you, remembering the words of Scripture: 'My secret to me.'*

292. Never forget that of every word uttered without the direction of obedience, God will require a strict account.

293. Intercourse with people beyond what is strictly necessary, and required by reason, has never been good for any man, however holy he may have been.

294. It is impossible to make progress otherwise than by doing and suffering everything in silence.

295. For growth in virtue, the important thing is to be silent, and to work: conversation distracts, silence and work bring recollection.

296. 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.

297. I have understood that the soul which is ready for

* Is. xxiv. 16.

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.

298. 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.

x.

HUMILITY.

299. The first thing the soul must have in order to attain to the knowledge of God is the knowledge of itself.

300. 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 becoming known to men.

301. The secrecy of conscience is broken when a man reveals to others the blessings he has received: the reward of his actions is the praise of men.

302. The wise Spirit of God Who dwells in humble souls inclines them to keep His treasures in secret, and to make visible their imperfections.

303. 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, but rather much whereof to be afraid.

304. God, when He gives His love to a soul, regards not its greatness in itself, but rather the greatness of its contempt of self, and its humility.

305. What you most seek, and most anxiously desire, you will never find if you seek it of yourself, not even in the most profound contemplation; but only in deep humility and submission of heart.

306. If you will glory in yourself, cast away everything not your own: what remains will be nothing, and it is nothing you should glory in.

307. 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.

308. Never excuse yourself: listen calmly to the reprimand and consider it to come from God.

309. Look upon it as a special mercy of God, that people ever speak kindly to you: you do not deserve it.

310. 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 that is your duty.

311. Love to be unknown to yourself and others: never regard the good nor the evil of others.

312. 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.

313. In order to mortify really the desire of honour out of which so many other desires proceed, you will do those things which will bring you into contempt, and you will wish others to do the same: you will speak disparagingly of yourself and you will contrive that others may do so too: you will think humbly and contemptuously of yourself, and you will wish others to do so also.

314. 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.

315. Virtue consists not in apprehensions of, and feelings about God, however sublime they 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 us profoundly rooted in the soul.

316. 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.

317. 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.

318. 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.

319. 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.

320. When the devil speaks, he makes men ready and eager to accept dignities, but he makes them reject humiliations and self-abasement.

VANITY.

321. 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, the slave of his passions.

322. The soul that is not humble, the devil most easily deludes, and makes it believe a thousand lies.

323. 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, merely because they do not keep in view the honour and glory of God alone, but rather the empty satisfaction of their own will.

324. 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.

325. 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.

326. 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.

XI.

VOLUNTARY POVERTY.

327. If rejoicing in riches can be made in any way enduring, 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.

328. The spiritual man must be very careful of the beginnings of joy in temporal things, lest from little it should become great, increasing from one degree to another; out of slight beginnings great evils result. One spark is enough to set a mountain on fire.

329. However small an attachment may be, be not too confident that you can cut it off at any time, but 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?

330. 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.

331. 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.

332. 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.

AVARICE.

333. 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.

334. 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.

335. 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.

336. 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.

337. 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, running incessantly hither and thither within the length of the chain that binds him.

POVERTY OF SPIRIT.

338. 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.

339. 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.

340. God in the old law commanded that the altar of sacrifice should be empty within. This is to teach us that the soul, which is to become an altar worthy of His Majesty, should be emptied of all things.

341. 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.

342. 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.

343. 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.

344. Live in this world as if God and your soul only were in it ; so shall your heart be never made captive by any earthly thing.

345. Do not weary yourself to no purpose : do not seek spiritual joy and sweetness, unless it be by denying yourself in that which you aim at.

346. 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.

347. The goods of God, which are beyond all measure, can be contained only in an empty and solitary heart.

348. So far as it lies in your power, refuse nothing asked of you, though you may have need of it yourself.

349. 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 an abiding peace and tranquillity of spirit.

350. 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 despised ; 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 of this world.

351. 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.

352. All people will be your servants, and all things will minister to you, if only you will forget them and yourself.

353. 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.

354. 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 laws of virtue.

355. Poverty of spirit looks to the substance of devotion, and makes use only of what is sufficient for it: weary of the multiplicity and curiosity of visible means.

356. 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.

357. 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.

358. The love of God in a pure and simple soul, detached from every desire, is frequently in act.

359. 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?

360. 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.

361. 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 great meditations and communications.

362. 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.

363. 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.

XII.

PRAYER OF THE ENAMoured SOUL.

O Lord God, my Love, if Thou art still mindful of my sins, and will 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 me to do 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, and I pray for it 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, Omnipotent, 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.

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, omnipotent, if the shadow of the power of Thy justice in earthly sovereigns who govern and rule the nations can do so much, what must be Thy omnipotent justice, dealing with the just man and the sinner?

O Lord my God, Thou art not estranged from him who

privation; and he who has set his heart upon nothing, finds fulness everywhere.

354. 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 laws of virtue.

355. Poverty of spirit looks to the substance of devotion, and makes use only of what is sufficient for it: weary of the multiplicity and curiosity of visible means.

356. 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.

357. 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.

358. The love of God in a pure and simple soul, detached from every desire, is frequently in act.

359. 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?

360. 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.

361. 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 great meditations and communications.

362. 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.

363. 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.

XII.

PRAYER OF THE ENAMoured SOUL.

O Lord God, my Love, if Thou art still mindful of my sins, and will 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 me to do 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, and I pray for it 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, Omnipotent, 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.

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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 said to me in Thy Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ, in Whom Thou dost tell 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.

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, the Mother of God, and 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.

O sweetest love of God, too little known; he who has found thee is at rest: let everything be changed, 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 Supreme 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.

THE OBSCURE NIGHT OF THE SOUL.

I

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

II

In darkness and security,
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 but He 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,
 He reposed and slept;
 I kept Him, and the waving
 Of the cedars fanned Him.

VII

Then His hair floated in the breeze
 That blew from the turret;
 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;
 I fainted away, abandoned,
 And, amid the lilies forgotten,
 Threw all my cares away.

A SPIRITUAL CANTICLE BETWEEN THE SOUL
 AND CHRIST.

I

THE BRIDE.

WHERE hast Thou hidden Thyself?
 Why hast Thou forsaken me in my groaning, O my
 Beloved?
 Thou didst fly like the hart, away,
 When Thou hadst 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,
 Tell Him I languish, agonize, and die.

III

In search of my Love
 I will traverse mountains and strands;
 I will gather no flowers,
 I will fear no wild beasts;
 And I will overpass the mighty and the frontiers.

IV

Ye groves and thickets
 Planted by the hand of the Beloved;
 Ye 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 beholding them only
 As He passed,
 He clothed them with His beauty.

VI

THE BRIDE.

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

VII

All they who serve
 Relate a thousand graces of Thee ;
 And all wound me more and more,
 And they leave me dying,
 While they babble I know not what.

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 what Thou hast stolen ?

X

Quench Thou my troubles,
 For none else can do so ;
 And let mine eyes behold Thee
 Who art their light,
 And it is for Thee alone I would use them.

XI

Reveal Thy presence,
 And let the vision of Thy beauty kill me.
 Behold, the disease
 Of love is incurable
 Except in Thy presence and in the light of Thy
 countenance.

XII

O Fount of crystal !
 O that on Thy silvered surface
 Thou wouldest mirror forth at once
 Those eyes desirable
 Which I have in my heart delineated !

XIII

Turn them away, O my Beloved !
 I fly away.

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

Cease, O thou killing north wind !
Come, O south wind, thou that awakenest love !
Blow through my garden,
And let its odours flow,
And my 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 my threshold.

XIX

Hide Thyself, O my Beloved !
Let Thy face shine on the mountains.
Do not tell it,
But regard the companions
Of her who traverses strange islands.

XX

THE BRIDEGROOM.

Light-winged birds,
Lions, fawns, bounding deer,
Mountains, valleys, strands,
Waters, winds, fires,
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 peace.

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 her Beloved.

XXIII

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

XXIV

THE BRIDE.

Our bed is of flowers
By the 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 inmost 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
 I am no longer seen or found,
 Say that I am lost ;
 That, being enamoured,
 I lost myself ; and yet I gained.

XXX

Of emeralds, and of flowers
 In the early morning culled,
 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 hast regarded on my neck,
 Thou wert captivated ;
 And wounded by one of my eyes.

XXXII

When Thou didst regard me,
 Thine eyes imprinted Thy grace in me :
 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
 Her 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 her 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 lofty caverns of the rocks
 Which are all secret,
 There we shall enter in
 And taste of the new wine of the pomegranate.

XXXVIII

There Thou wilt show me
 What my soul desired ;
 And there Thou wilt give at once,
 O Thou, my life !
 What 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 fire that consumes, but without pain.

XL

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

THE LIVING FLAME OF LOVE.

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 in 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,
 In destroying death Thou hast changed it into life.

III

O Lamps of fire,
 In whose splendours
 The deep caverns of sense,
 Obscure and dark,
 With unwonted brightness
 Give light and heat together to the Beloved.

IV

How gently and how lovingly
 Thou liest awake 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.

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 in my very life I hope
That I am dying because I am not dead.

II

This life that I am living
Is but 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 seen.
O, wretched that I am !
For thus I persevere ;
I die because I am not dead.

IV

The fish that from the water leapeth
Is there not unrelieved ;
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 am not dead.

V

When I see Thee in the Sacrament
And begin to be relieved,
The absence of fruition
Creates a deeper pang ;
In all things greater suffering,
And I am sick at heart
And die, because I am not dead.

VI

And if, O Lord, I have a joy
In hopes of seeing Thee ;
My sorrow is increased,
Because I still may lose Thee.
Living in dread so great
And hoping as I hope,
I die, because I am not dead.

VII

Deliver me from this death,
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
I had perfect knowledge,
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

That cloud of darkness
Illumining the night,
The higher it ascended
The less I understood.
Whoever understands it,
Knows therefore ever less,
All science transcending.

V

He who comes here truly
Annihilates himself,
And all his previous knowledge
Seems ever less and less;
His science grows, and he
Abides as one nought knowing,
All science transcending.

VI

This knowing of nought knowing
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,
He will always have it, all science transcending.

VIII

If you would learn wherein
 This sovereign wisdom doth consist :
 In a sense profound
 Of the essence of God :
 It is an act of His compassion,
 To abide, nought understanding,
 All science transcending.

THE SAME SUBJECT.

I

In the wake of a loving cast,
 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 cast 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 the greatest acquisition
 In obscurity was made ;
 But as my love was violent
 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 ;

For this cast alone I hoped,
 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
 To this cast sublime,
 The more lowly, base, and vile,
 And humiliated I grew.
 I said, none can reach it;
 I abased myself still more and more;
 So that 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 lives in detachment
 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 my mortal life
 My misery is not so great:
 For if I have not light
 I have the life celestial;
 For in the love of that life,
 In obscurity the greatest
 The soul is submissive,
 Without light and in darkness living.

III

Love has wrought this;
 Since I have known it,
 That be it ill or well with me
 I have the same pleasure.
 It has transformed 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 may happily be 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 may happily be 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 may happily be found.

III

He that is on fire with love
 Divinely touched of God
 Receives a taste so new
 That all his own are gone.
 Like one who of a fever ill
 Disdains the food before him,
 And longs for that I know not,
 Which may happily be 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 the whole creation
 Beholds itself estranged,
 And tastes that I know not,
 Which may happily be 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 may happily be found.

VI

And now of Him enamoured,
 Tell me if you are in pain;
 For as He has no sweetness
 In all created things,
 But without form and figure,
 Without support or rest,
 Tasting there I know not what,
 Which may happily be found.

VII

Do not think the inner heart,
 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 may happily be 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 may happily be 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 may happily be found.

SONG OF THE SOUL REJOICING IN THE KNOW-
 LEDGE OF GOD BY FAITH.

I know the fountain well which flows and runs,
 Though of the night.

I

That everlasting fountain is a secret well,
 And I know well its home,
 Though of the night.

II

Its source I know not, because it has none;
 But I know that therein all things have their source,
 Though of the night.

III

I know that nothing can be in beauty like it,
 And that of it heaven and earth do drink,
 Though of the night.

IV

I know well it is of depths unfathomable,
 And that none may ever sound it,
 Though of the night.

V

Its brightness never is obscured,
 And I know that from it all light proceeds,
 Though of the night.

VI

I know its streams are so abundant,
 It waters hell and heaven and earth,
 Though of the night.

VII

The torrent that from this fountain rises
I know well, is so grand and so strong,
Though of the night.

VIII

The torrent that from Both proceeds,
I know that Neither of them It precedes,
Though of the night.

IX

This everlasting fountain lies concealed
In the living Bread to give us life,
Though of the night.

X

It calls on every creature to be filled
With its waters, but in the darkness,
Though of the night.

XI

This living fount which I desire
I see it in this Bread of life,
Though of the night.

SONG OF CHRIST AND THE SOUL.

I

THERE is a shepherd alone in his grief,
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 wounded with love,
Nor because of the pain of his grief,
Though his heart has been pierced so deep;
But because he thinks he is forgot.

III

His beautiful shepherdess, so does he think,
Has forgotten him: that thought alone
Overwhelms him with grief in a land not his own,
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 hanging thereby breathed his last,
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

That very Word was God,
And the Beginning as well ;
He was in the Beginning,
And yet had none.

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 has given 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, 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 One exults
In that He hath this Being.

X

This Being is Each One,
And makes Them One alone
In a way ineffable,
Beyond all thoughts or word.

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.
The Sire uttered words of gladness
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,
 What 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.
 He gave the Sire 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 outflow.

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 of those above.

VIII

Those below in hope are living
 Of the faith that He has given,
 For He one day 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.

XVI

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 they 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, descended 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 sat me down and wept.

II

I remembered thee, O Sion,
 With thy love my heart was sorè;
 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 the captive's wrongs,
Strangers 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 refraining,
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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 liii. 5, II. 33. The mighty have sought after my soul.
 lvii. 5, I. 263. The deaf asp that stoppeth her ears.
 " 9, I. 30. Fire hath fallen upon them, and they have not seen the sun.
 " 10, I. 31. Before your thorns could know the briar.
 lviii. 5, I. 438. Without iniquity have I run.
 " 10, I. 37, 240, 407; II. 153. I will keep my strength to Thee.
 " 15, I. 24. They shall suffer hunger like dogs.
 lxi. 2, II. 149. Shall not my soul be subject to God.
 " 11, I. 244, 254; II. 31. If riches abound set not your heart upon them.
 lxii. 2, I. 407; II. 91. For Thee my soul hath thirsted.
 " 3, I. 290, 363. In a desert land.
 lxiii. 7, 8, I. 290. Man shall come to a deep heart, and God shall be exalted.

PSALMS—*continued.*

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- lxvii. 10, i. 434. Thou didst send Thine inheritance a free rain.
 „ 14, ii. 63. Ye shall be as a dove.
 „ 16, ii. 189. The mountain of God is a rich mountain.
 „ 34, i. 199, 317; ii. 79. He will give to His voice the voice of power.
 lxxviii. 2, i. 387; ii. 112. Save me, O God.
 lxx. 20, ii. 248. Thou hast multiplied Thy magnificence.
 lxxi. 8, i. 138. He shall rule from sea to sea.
 „ 12, i. 138. He shall deliver the poor from the mighty.
 lxxii. 8, i. 219. They have thought and spoken wickedness.
 „ 21, ii. 22, 143. My heart hath been inflamed.
 „ 22, i. 79, 356, 394. I am brought to nothing and I knew not.
 „ 7, i. 251. They have passed into the affection of the heart.
 xxvi. 3, i. 367. My soul refused to be comforted.
 „ 6, ii. 250. I had in my mind the eternal years.
 „ 14, i. 82. Thy way, O God, is in the holy place.
 „ 19, i. 430. Thy lightnings enlightened the world.
 lxxvii. 30, i. 19. He slew the fat ones among them.
 „ 31, i. 150. As yet the meat was in their mouth.
 lxxxiii. 2, i. 437; ii. 263. My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord.
 „ 3, ii. 212, 222, 234. My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.
 „ 4, ii. 183. The sparrow hath found herself a house.
 „ 6, i. 431. Blessed is the man whose help is from Thee.
 lxxxiv. 9, i. 352; ii. 270. He will speak peace unto His people.
 lxxxv. 8, i. 82, 228. There is none among the gods like unto Thee, O Lord.
 lxxxvii. 6, i. 385. Like the slain sleeping in the sepulchres.
 „ 9, i. 385. Thou hast put away my acquaintance far from me.
 „ 16, i. 13. I am poor and in labours from my youth.
 lxxxix. 4, ii. 232. A thousand years in Thy sight are as yesterday.
 „ 9, ii. 231. Our years shall be considered as a spider.
 xevi. 2, i. 382; ii. 67. Clouds and darkness are round about Him.
 ci. 8, i. 110; ii. 85. I am become as a sparrow on the housetop.
 „ 27, i. 258. They shall perish, but Thou remainest.
 cii. 5, i. 416. Thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's.
 ciii. 32, ii. 241. He looketh upon the earth and maketh it tremble.
 civ. 4, i. 434. Seek ye the Lord.
 cvi. 10, ii. 259. Sitting in darkness and the shadow of death.
 cx. 1, i. 435. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord.
 cxii. 7, i. 362. Lifting up the poor out of the dunghill.
 cxiii. 8, i. 14. Let them that make them become like unto them.
 cxv. 15, ii. 59, 230. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.
 cxvii. 12, i. 27. They surrounded me like bees.
 „ 32, i. 438; ii. 133. I have run the way of Thy commandments.

PSALMS—*continued.*

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- cxviii. 61, i. 27. The cords of my sins have encompassed me.
 „ 81, i. 434. My soul hath fainted for Thy salvation.
 „ 131, ii. 112. I opened my mouth and panted.
 „ 140, ii. 221. Thy word is a vehement fire.
 cxx. 4, ii. 275. He shall neither slumber nor sleep that keepeth Israel.
 cxxii. 2, i. 443. As the eyes of the handmaid.
 cxxvi. 1, ii. 275. Unless the Lord build the house.
 cxxxvii. 6, i. 82. The Lord is high and looketh on the low.
 cxxxviii. 11, i. 60, 227; ii. 209. Night shall be my light in my pleasures.
 „ 12, i. 390; ii. 67, 248. The darkness and the light are alike to Thee.
 cxlii. 7, i. 434. My spirit hath fainted away.
 cxliv. 16, ii. 38. Thou openest Thy hand.
 „ 18, i. 314. The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him.
 cxlvii. 17, i. 127, 374. He sendeth His crystals like morsels.

PROVERBS.

- ii. 4, ii. 54. If thou shalt seek her as money.
 iv. 23, ii. 18. With all watchfulness keep thy heart.
 viii. 4, i. 17. O ye men, to you I call.
 „ 15, ii. 298. By me kings reign.
 „ 18, i. 17. With me are riches and glory.
 „ 31, ii. 100, 127, 223. My delights were to be with the children of men.
 ix. 10, i. 181. The knowledge of the holy is prudence.
 x. 24, i. 141. To the just their desire shall be given.
 xv. 15, ii. 116. A secure mind is like a continual feast.
 xvi. 1, ii. 275. It is the part of man to prepare the soul.
 „ 9, ii. 275. The Lord must direct his steps.
 xviii. 12, i. 432. Before destruction the heart of a man is exalted.
 xxiii. 31, i. 262. Look not upon the wine when it is yellow.
 xxiv. 16, i. 40. A just man shall fall seven times and shall rise again.
 xxv. 27, ii. 300. He shall be overwhelmed by glory.
 xxvii. 19, i. 181. The hearts of men are laid open to the prudent.
 xxx. 2, ii. 142. I am the most foolish of men.
 „ 15, i. 38. The horse leech hath two daughters that say, Bring, bring.
 xxxi. 30, i. 15, 257. Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain.

ECCLESIASTES.

- i. 14, i. 245. All is vanity and vexation of spirit.
 ii. 2, i. 246. Laughter I counted error.

ECCLESIASTES—*continued.*

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 ii. 2, i. 258. Why art thou vainly deceived.
 ,, 10, i. 32. Whatsoever my eyes desired I refused them not.
 ,, 26, i. 245. Riches a fruitless solicitude of the mind.
 iii. 12, i. 220. There is no better thing than to rejoice.
 iv. 10, i. 162. Woe to him that is alone.
 v. 1, i. 145. God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few.
 ,, 9, i. 245. He that loveth riches shall reap no fruit from them.
 ,, 12, i. 245, 252. Riches kept to the hurt of the owner.
 vii. 1, i. 187. What needeth a man to seek things that are above him.
 ,, 3, i. 247. It is better to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting.
 ,, 4, i. 247. Anger is better than laughter.
 ,, 5, i. 246. The heart of the wise is where there is mourning.
 viii. 4, i. 199. The Word of God is full of power.
 ix. 1, ii. 14. Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred.
 ,, 17, ii. 287. The words of the wise are heard in silence.
 x. 1, i. 279. Dying flies spoil the sweetness of the ointment.
 ,, 4, ii. 247. Care will make the greatest sins to cease.
 xii. 7, ii. 231. And the spirit return to God who gave it.

CANTICLE OF CANTICLES.

- i. 1, i. 439, 451. Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.
 ,, 3, ii. 133, 162, 266. Draw me, we will run after Thee.
 ,, 4, i. 440; ii. 177, 251. I am black but beautiful.
 ,, 6, ii. 15. Shew me where Thou feedest.
 ,, 10, ii. 63. We will make thee chains of gold.
 ,, 11, ii. 303. While the king is at his repose.
 ,, 11, ii. 99. My spikenard sent forth the odour thereof.
 ,, 15, ii. 127. Our bed is of flowers.
 ii. 1, ii. 126, 166. I am the flower of the field.
 ,, 3, ii. 181. I sat down under His shadow.
 ,, 4, i. 94; ii. 140. He brought me into the cellar of wine.
 ,, 5, ii. 165. Stay me with flowers.
 ,, 6, ii. 138. His left hand is under my head.
 ,, 9, ii. 21. My beloved is like a roe.
 ,, 10, ii. 206, 229. Arise, make haste, my love.
 ,, 11, ii. 122. Winter is now past.
 ,, 13, ii. 193, 206. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come.
 ,, 14, ii. 79, 207. Let thy voice sound in my ears.
 ,, 15, ii. 93. Catch us the little foxes.
 ,, 16, ii. 252. My Beloved to me, and I to Him.
 iii. 1, i. 434, 439, 454; ii. 30. In my bed by night I sought Him.

CANTICLE OF CANTICLES—*continued.*

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 iii. 2, i. 414; ii. 24. I will seek Him whom my soul loveth.
 ,, 4, i. 434, 453; ii. 30. When I had passed by them I found Him.
 ,, ,, i. 439. I held Him and will not let Him go.
 ,, 5, i. 203; ii. 117, 155, 279. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up.
 ,, 6, ii. 211. Who is she that goeth up by the desert.
 ,, ,, ii. 266. As a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices.
 ,, 7, i. 448; ii. 131. Behold threescore valiant ones.
 ,, 9, ii. 130. King Solomon hath made himself a litter.
 ,, 10, i. 444. The seat of gold, the going up of purple.
 ,, 11, ii. 118, 163. Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see King Solomon.
 iv. 1, ii. 178, 179. Behold thou art fair, O my love, thy eyes are dove's eyes.
 ,, 4, ii. 131. Thy neck is as the tower of David.
 ,, 6, ii. 188. I will go to the mountain of myrrh.
 ,, 9, i. 443; ii. 42, 169. Thou hast wounded my heart.
 ,, 12, i. 215; ii. 117. My spouse is a garden enclosed.
 ,, 15, ii. 256. A well of living waters.
 ,, 16, ii. 99. Blow through my garden.
 v. 1, ii. 121. I am come into my garden.
 ,, 2, i. 110. I sleep and my heart watcheth.
 ,, 4, ii. 134. My Beloved put His hand through the keyhole.
 ,, 6, ii. 140, 222. My soul melted when He spoke.
 ,, ,, ii. 51. I sought Him and found Him not.
 ,, 7, ii. 24. They struck me and wounded me.
 ,, 8, i. 414, 433; ii. 42. Tell Him that I languish with love.
 ,, 14, ii. 194. His belly is of ivory set with sapphires.
 vi. 2, ii. 160. I to my Beloved, and my Beloved to me.
 ,, 3, ii. 178. Behold Thou art fair, my Beloved.
 ,, ,, ii. 165. Terrible as an army set in array.
 ,, 4, i. 192, 351; ii. 82. Turn away thy eyes from me.
 ,, 9, ii. 115. Who is she that cometh forth as the morning.
 ,, ,, ii. 300. Terrible as an army set in array.
 ,, 10, i. 449. I went down into the garden of nuts.
 ,, 11, i. 110, 427; ii. 143. I knew not.
 ,, ,, ii. 93. My soul troubled me for the chariots of Aminadab.
 vii. 1, ii. 165. How beautiful are thy steps in shoes.
 ,, 2, ii. 256. Thy belly is like a heap of wheat set with lilies.
 ,, 13, ii. 154. The new and the old I have kept for Thee.
 viii. 1, i. 417, 451; ii. 122, 128. Who shall give Thee to me for my brother.
 ,, 2, ii. 140, 195. I will give Thee a cup of spiced wine.
 ,, 5, ii. 211, 228. Leaning upon her Beloved.
 ,, 5, ii. 124. Under the apple tree I raised thee up.

CANTICLE OF CANTICLES—*continued.*

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 viii. 6, i. 231, 234, 436; ii. 65. Put Me as a seal upon thy heart.
 " " ii. 255, 257. The lamps thereof are fire and flames.
 " " ii. 66. Love is strong as death.
 " 8, ii. 107. Our sister is little.

WISDOM.

- i. 5, i. 219, 264. The Holy Ghost will withdraw Himself from thoughts that are without understanding.
 " 7, ii. 88. The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world.
 iii. 6, i. 387. As gold in the furnace He hath proved them.
 iv. 10, ii. 233. He pleased God, and was beloved.
 " 12, i. 249; ii. 291. The bewitching of vanity obscureth good things.
 vi. 13, ii. 30. Wisdom is glorious and never fadeth away.
 vii. 11, i. 403. All good things came to me with her.
 " 21, i. 180, 210. Wisdom, which is the worker of all things, taught me.
 " 22, i. 274. Which nothing hindereth, beneficent.
 " 23, i. 250. They all love bribes.
 " 24, i. 396; ii. 226, 299. Wisdom reacheth everywhere by her purity.
 " 26, ii. 261. The brightness of eternal light.
 " 27, ii. 299. She reneweth all things.
 viii. 1, ii. 242. She reacheth from end to end mightily.
 " " i. 122; ii. 1. Wisdom ordereth all things sweetly.
 ix. 15, i. 374; ii. 104, 210, 240. The corruptible body is a load upon the soul.
 xi. 17, i. 152. By what things a man sinneth, by the same also is he tormented.
 xvi. 20, i. 19, 397; ii. 272. Having in it the sweetness of every taste.
 " 21, i. 350, 397. Serving every man's will.
 " 25, i. 327. Even then it was transformed into all things.
 xviii. 14, i. 453. While all things were in quiet silence.

ECCLESIASTICUS.

- v. 5, ii. 174. Be not without fear about sin forgiven.
 ix. 14, ii. 137. Forsake not an old friend.
 " 15, ii. 136. A new friend is as new wine.
 xi. 10, i. 244. If thou be rich, thou shalt not be free from sin.
 " 34, i. 42. Of one spark cometh a great fire.
 xliii. 1, i. 33. He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled with it.
 xix. 1, i. 42. He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little.

ECCLESIASTICUS—*continued.*

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 xxiii. 6, i. 38. Take from me the greediness of the belly.
 xxxiv. 9, i. 371. What doth he know that hath not been tried.
 " 11, ii. 245. He that hath not been tried, what doth he know.
 xxxv. 21, i. 109. The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds.
 xli. 1, ii. 60. O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee.
 " 3, ii. 59. O death, thy sentence is welcome.
 li. 29, i. 403. My entrails were troubled in seeking her.
 " 26, i. 410; ii. 289. He hath enlightened my ignorances.

ISAIAS.

- ii. 2, ii. 188. In the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared.
 " 3, ii. 188. Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord.
 iii. 12, i. 259. They that call thee blessed deceive thee.
 " 14, ii. 280. You have devoured the vineyard.
 v. 20, i. 223. Darkness for light, and light for darkness.
 " 30, i. 424. The light is darkened with the mist thereof.
 vi. 2, i. 73. Upon it stood the seraphim.
 " 4, i. 115. The Lord showed His glory in the seraphim.
 vii. 9, i. 59. If you will not believe you shall not understand.
 viii. 6, ii. 285. The waters of Siloe that go with silence.
 ix. 6, ii. 298. The government is upon His shoulder.
 " 20, i. 26. He shall turn to the right hand and shall be hungry.
 xi. 3, ii. 139. He shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord.
 xix. 14, i. 163, 370. The Lord hath mingled in the midst thereof the spirit of giddiness.
 xxiv. 16, ii. 230. From the ends of the earth we have heard praises.
 " " ii. 83. My secret to myself.
 xxvi. 9, i. 408. My soul hath desired Thee in the night.
 " 17, i. 400. So are we become in Thy presence.
 " 20, ii. 17. Hide Thyself a little for a moment.
 xxviii. 9, i. 136, 362; ii. 271. Whom shall He teach knowledge?
 " 19, i. 362. Vexation alone shall make you understand.
 xxix. 8, i. 25. Faint with thirst and his soul is empty.
 xxx. 1, 2, i. 156. Woe to you . . . who walk to go down into Egypt.
 xxxi. 9, ii. 226. His furnace in Jerusalem.
 xl. 17, ii. 232. All nations are as if they had no being at all.
 " 18, i. 83. To whom then have you likened God?
 " 31, i. 438. They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength.
 xliii. 3, ii. 178. I have given Egypt for thy atonement.
 " 4, ii. 176. Since thou becomest honourable in My eyes.
 " 21, ii. 296. This people have I formed for Myself.
 xlv. 3, ii. 18. I will give thee hidden treasures.

ISAIAS—*continued.*

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 xlv. 15, II. 14. Verily Thou art a hidden God.
 xlviii. 18, I. 216. Thy peace had been as a river.
 IV. 1, I. 23. All you that thirst come to the waters.
 lvii. 20, I. 26. The wicked are like the raging sea which cannot rest.
 lviii. 10, I. 362; II. 186. Then My light shall rise up in darkness.
 lix. 10, I. 33. We have stumbled at noon as if in darkness.
 lxiv. 4, I. 63, 83, 229, 265, 398; II. 199. Eye hath not seen, O God,
 besides Thee.
 lxv. 24, II. 54. Before they call I will hear.
 lxvi. 12, II. 78. I will bring upon her a river of peace.
 „ „ II. 147. They shall caress you.

JEREMIAS.

- i. 6, I. 428. Ah, Lord God!
 „ 11, I. 115. A rod watching.
 ii. 2, I. 437. I have remembered thee.
 „ 13, I. 23. My people have done two evils.
 „ „ I. 251. They have forsaken me.
 „ 14, II. 101. Is Israel a bondman?
 „ 24, I. 26. He snuffed up the wind of his love.
 „ 25, I. 26. Keep thy foot from being bare.
 iv. 10, I. 137. You shall have peace, and behold the sword reacheth
 even unto the soul.
 „ 23, I. 14. I beheld the earth and lo, it was void and nothing.
 viii. 15, I. 137. We looked for peace, and no good came.
 xii. 5, II. 246. If thou hast been wearied with running with footmen.
 xx. 7, I. 146. I am become a laughing-stock all the day.
 xxiii. 21, I. 286. I did not send prophets, yet they ran.
 „ 28, I. 201. What hath the chaff to do with the wheat.
 „ 29, II. 221. Are not My words as a fire.
 „ 32, I. 286. They cause My people to err by their lying.
 xxxi. 18, I. 371. II. 245. Thou hast chastised me.
 xlv. 2, I. 183. God revealed to Jeremias the weakness of Baruch.
 xlix. 16, I. 281. Thy arrogance hath deceived thee.

LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAS.

- i. 13, I. 409; II. 245. From above He hath sent fire into my bones.
 iii. 1, I. 389. I am the man that see my poverty.
 „ 8, I. 393. He shutteth out my prayer.
 „ 9, I. 393. He hath shut up my ways with square stones.
 „ 17, I. 400, 401. My soul is repelled off from peace.
 „ 19, II. 27. Remember my poverty.

LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAS—*continued.*

- Ch. Ver. Vol. Page
 iii. 20, I. 220; II. 263. I will be mindful and remember.
 „ 29, I. 393, 444. He shall put his mouth in the dust.
 „ 44, I. 393. Thou hast set a cloud before Thee.
 „ 47, I. 146. Prophecy is become to us a fear.
 iv. 1, I. 261. How is the gold become dim.
 „ 7, I. 34. Her Nazarites were whiter than snow.
 „ 8, I. 34. Their face is now made blacker than coals.

BARUCH.

- iii. 11, II. 101. Thou art grown old in a strange country.
 „ 22, II. 242. It hath not been heard of in the land of Chanaan.
 „ 23, I. 84. The way of Wisdom they have not known.
 „ 31, I. 430. There is none that is able to know her ways.

EZECHIEL.

- i. 5, II. 260. The likeness of four living creatures.
 „ 8, I. 242. They had faces and wings on the four sides.
 „ 24, II. 79, 260. The voice of the Most High God.
 ii. 1, II. 261. The vision of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.
 xviii. 10, I. 35. All the idols of the house of Israel were painted on the
 walls.
 „ 14, I. 35. Behold women sat there mourning for Adonis.
 „ 16, I. 36. Five and twenty men having their backs to the temple of
 the Lord.
 xiv. 7, I. 154. If he come to the prophet to enquire of me.
 „ 9, I. 154. And when the prophet shall err . . .
 xvi. 5, II. 124. Thou wast cast out upon the face of the earth.
 xviii. 22, II. 174. I will not remember all his iniquities.
 xxiv. 10, I. 387. Heap together the bones.
 „ 11, I. 387. Set it empty on burning coals.
 xxxiv. 2, II. 282. Woe to the shepherds of Israel.
 xxxvi. 25, II. 257. I will pour upon you clean water.

DANIEL.

- ix. 22, I. 196. I am now come forth to teach thee.
 „ 27, I. 261. There shall be in the temple the abomination of desolation.
 x. 11, I. 439. Daniel, stand upright.
 „ 16, II. 84. At the sight of thee my joints are loosed.

OSEE.

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 ii. 14, i. 215; ii. 181, 270, 279. I will lead her into the wilderness.
 „ 20, i. 377, 442; ii. 62. I will espouse thee to me in faith.
 xiii. 9, i. 420. Perdition is thine own.
 „ 14, ii. 251. O death, I will be thy death.

JONAS.

- ii. 4, i. 386. Thou hast cast me forth unto the deep.
 iii. 4, i. 143. Yet forty days and Ninive shall be destroyed.
 iv. 2, i. 146. Therefore I went before to flee unto Tharsis.
 „ 11, i. 32. They know not how to distinguish between their right hand and their left.

MICHEAS.

- vii. 3, i. 280. The evil of their hands they call good.

NAHUM.

- i. 9, ii. 174. There shall not rise a double affliction.

HABACUC.

- ii. 1, i. 234, 363. ii. 271. I will stand upon my watch.
 iii. 6, ii. 241. The mountains are crushed in pieces.

SOPHONIAS.

- i. 12, ii. 13. I will search Jerusalem with lamps.

ZACHARIAS.

- ii. 8, ii. 54. He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of my eye.

II. MACHABEES.

- i. 22, ii. 257. Jeremias commanded them to take the fire.
 ii. 1, ii. 257. There was a great fire kindled.

S. MATTHEW.

- iv. 8, i. 172. The devil showed our Lord all the kingdoms of the world.
 v. 3, i. 282. Blessed are the poor in spirit.
 „ 8, i. 440. Blessed are the clean in heart.

S. MATTHEW—*continued.*

- Ch. Ver. Vol. Page
 v. 26, ii. 13. Thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing.
 vi. 2, i. 277, 278. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward.
 „ 3, i. 278, 447. Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth.
 „ 6, i. 316. When thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber.
 „ „ ii. 17. Pray to thy Father in secret.
 „ 7, i. 315. When ye pray, speak not much.
 „ 10, ii. 229. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done.
 „ 24, i. 207; ii. 158. No man can serve two masters.
 „ 33, i. 314. Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice.
 vii. 3, i. 329. Why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye.
 „ 6, i. 24. Give not that which is holy to dogs.
 „ 13, ii. 283. Enter ye in at the narrow gate.
 „ 14, i. 74, 325, 345, 359. How narrow is the gate.
 „ „ ii. 12. Strait is the way that leadeth to life.
 „ 22, i. 164, 284. Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name.
 „ 23, i. 164. I never knew you.
 viii. 20, i. 78. The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.
 „ 33, ii. 158. He that shall deny Me before men.
 „ 36, i. 417. A man's enemies shall be they of his own household.
 xi. 28, i. 29. Come to Me all you that labour and are burdened.
 „ 30, i. 77. My yoke is sweet, and My burden light.
 xii. 30, i. 42. He that gathereth not with Me scattereth.
 xiii. 12, ii. 177. He that hath, to him shall be given.
 „ 22, i. 244. Thorns . . . the deceitfulness of riches.
 „ 31, ii. 239. The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed.
 „ 44, ii. 17, 149. The treasure hidden in a field.
 „ 58, i. 299. He wrought not many miracles there, because of their unbelief.
 xv. 8, i. 303, 304. This people honoureth Me with their lips.
 „ 14, i. 30, 129. If the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit.
 „ 26, i. 24. It is not good to take the bread of children.
 xvi. 24, i. 263. If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself.
 „ 25, i. 344; ii. 159. He that shall lose his life for My sake shall find it.
 „ 26, i. 245. What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world.
 xvii. 5, i. 157. This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.
 xviii. 20, i. 161. Where there are two or three gathered together in My name.
 xix. 23, i. 244. A rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.
 „ 29, i. 256, 271. A hundredfold reward even in this life.
 xxi. 9, i. 303. The multitudes cried Hosanna to the Son of David.
 xxii. 13, i. 304. Cast him into the exterior darkness.

S. MATTHEW—*continued.*

- Ch. Ver. Vol. Page
 xxiii. 5, i. 277. All their works they do to be seen of men.
 „ 15, i. 246. You go round about the sea and the land to make one proselyte.
 „ 24, i. 329. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel.
 xxiv. 19, i. 38. Woe unto them that are with child.
 xxv. 8, i. 331. Give us of your oil.
 „ 21, i. 94. Because thou hast been faithful over a few things.
 „ 28, ii. 177. Take ye away the talent from him.
 xxvi. 39, i. 316. Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.
 xxvii. 46, i. 79. My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me.
 xxviii. 10, i. 289. Go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee.

S. MARK.

- viii. 34, i. 75. If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself.
 „ 35, i. 77. Whosoever will save his life shall lose it.
 ix. 38, i. 318. Do not forbid him.
 xiii. 11, i. 288. Take no thought beforehand what you shall speak.

S. LUKE.

- i. 13, ii. 26. Fear not, Zachary, for thy prayer is heard.
 „ 35, ii. 259. The power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.
 „ 52, ii. 78. He hath exalted the humble.
 ii. 25, ii. 139. A just man full of fear.
 iv. 24, i. 299. No prophet is accepted in his own country.
 vii. 37, i. 413. Behold a woman that was in the city, a sinner.
 viii. 12, i. 282. They by the wayside are they that hear.
 ix. 54, i. 286. Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven.
 x. 20, i. 285, 290. Rejoice not in this, that spirits are subject unto you.
 „ 42, ii. 154. One thing is necessary.
 xi. 1, i. 315. Teach us to pray.
 „ 5, i. 72. Friend, lend me three loaves.
 „ 9, ii. 29. Seek and you shall find.
 „ 26, i. 95. He taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself.
 „ 52, ii. 283. Woe to you lawyers.
 xii. 20, i. 245, 256. Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee.
 „ 35, i. 38. Let your loins be girt.
 „ 37, ii. 147. He will gird himself and make them sit down to meat.

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 „ 33, i. 19, 72, 222. Every one of you that doth not renounce all.
 xv. 5, ii. 118. When he hath found it, lay it on his shoulders rejoicing.
 „ 9, ii. 118. Rejoice with me.
 xvi. 8, i. 251. The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.
 „ 10, i. 253. He that is faithful in that which is least.
 „ 19, i. 268. The rich man feasted sumptuously every day.
 xvii. 21, i. 307; ii. 16. The kingdom of God is within you.
 xviii. 1, i. 316. We ought always to pray and not to faint.
 „ 11, i. 225, 277, 329. O God, I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men.
 xix. 41, i. 303. Christ wept over Jerusalem.
 xxii. 8, ii. 98. Go and prepare for us the pasch.
 „ 26, i. 16. He that is greater among you, let him become as the younger.
 xxiv. 6, i. 289. He is not here, but is risen.
 „ 21, i. 139. We hoped that it was He who should have redeemed Israel.
 „ 25, i. 139. O foolish, and slow of heart.
 „ 26, i. 289. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things.

S. JOHN.

- i. 3, ii. 297. Without Him was made nothing.
 „ 4, ii. 76. In Him was life.
 „ 5, i. 14, 412. The light shineth in darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it.
 „ 12, i. 67; ii. 204. He gave them power to be made the sons of God.
 „ 13, i. 67. Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh . . . but of God.
 „ 16, ii. 172, 176. Grace for grace.
 „ 18, i. 82, 229. No man hath seen God at any time.
 „ „ ii. 14. The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father.
 ii. 3, ii. 28. They have no wine.
 iii. 5, i. 68. Unless a man be born again of water and of the Holy Ghost.
 „ 6, i. 272, 338. That which is born of the flesh is flesh.
 iv. 14, ii. 62, 114, 256. A fountain of water springing up into life everlasting.
 „ 23, i. 306. The true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth.

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- iv. 24, i. 307. God must be adored in spirit and in truth.
- „ 28, ii. 222. The woman left her waterpot.
- „ 34, i. 48. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me.
- „ 48, i. 289. Unless you see signs and wonders you believe not.
- vi. 64, ii. 231. The flesh profiteth nothing.
- „ „ ii. 221. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.
- „ 67, ii. 221. Many of His disciples went back.
- „ 69, ii. 222. Thou hast the words of eternal life.
- vii. 38, ii. 219. Rivers of living water.
- „ 39, ii. 63. The spirit which they should receive who believed in Him.
- ix. 39, i. 65. For judgment I am come into this world.
- x. 9, i. 78. I am the door.
- xi. 3, ii. 28. Behold he whom Thou lovest is sick.
- „ 50, i. 139. It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people.
- xii. 16, i. 144. When Jesus was glorified then they remembered that these things were written of Him.
- „ 29, ii. 79. An angel spoke to Him.
- „ 32, ii. 38. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth.
- xiv. 2, ii. 225. In My Father's house there are many mansions.
- „ 6, i. 78. I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.
- „ 17, ii. 242. You shall know Him.
- „ 21, i. 179. He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father.
- „ 23, ii. 218. We will come to Him and make our abode with Him.
- „ 26, i. 144. He will teach you all things.
- xv. 7, ii. 20. You shall ask whatever you will and it shall be done unto you.
- „ 15, ii. 151. I have called you friends.
- xvi. 23, i. 440. In that day you shall not ask Me anything.
- xvii. 3, ii. 191. Now this is eternal life, that they may know Thee.
- „ 10, ii. 187, 294. All My things are Thine, and Thine are Mine.
- „ 20, ii. 204. Not for them only do I pray.
- „ 24, ii. 204. That they may see My glory.
- „ 26, ii. 295. That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them.
- xix. 30, i. 159. It is consummated.
- xx. 2, i. 289. They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre.
- „ 3, i. 289. The two disciples came to see the sepulchre.
- „ 14, i. 434. When she had thus said she turned herself back.
- „ 15, i. 289, 414; ii. 51. If thou hast carried Him away, tell me where thou hast laid Him.
- „ 19, i. 215. Peace be unto you.
- „ 29, i. 289. Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed.

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- i. 6, i. 139. Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel.
- ii. 2, ii. 78. A sound as of a mighty wind.
- iv. 29, i. 288. Grant unto Thy servants that with all confidence they may speak Thy word.
- vii. 32, i. 83, 438. Moses durst not behold.
- viii. 20, i. 252. Because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.
- xiii. 27, i. 138. The Jews fulfilled the prophecies when they put the Lord to death.
- „ 46, i. 80. To you it behoveth us first to speak the word of God.
- xiv. 21, ii. 244. Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.
- xvii. 28, ii. 46, 297. In Him we live, and move, and are.
- „ 29, i. 99. We must not suppose the Divinity to be like unto gold.
- xix. 15, i. 318. Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you.
- xxii. 11, i. 424. I did not see for the brightness of that light.

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- i. 20, ii. 34. For the invisible things of Him are clearly seen.
- „ 22, i. 16. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.
- „ 28, i. 253. God delivered them up to a reprobate sense.
- ii. 21, i. 318. Thou therefore that teachest another teachest not thyself.
- viii. 13, ii. 34, 249. If by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh.
- „ 14, i. 213; ii. 250. Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.
- „ 23, ii. 21. We ourselves groan within ourselves.
- „ 24, i. 72, 444. Hope that is seen is not hope.
- „ 26, ii. 1. The Spirit asketh for us with unspeakable groanings.
- x. 17, i. 59, 186, 289. Faith cometh by hearing.
- xi. 23, ii. 189. How incomprehensible are His judgments.
- xii. 2, i. 379. Be reformed in the newness of your mind.
- „ 3, i. 195. Not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise.
- xiii. 1, i. 122. Those that are, are ordained of God.

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- ii. 1, i. 319. And I, brethren, when I came to you.
- „ 2, i. 158. I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

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 ii. 9, i. 63, 83, 229, 265, 398; ii. 199. Eye hath not seen nor ear heard.
 „ 10, i. 181; ii. 395, 237. The Spirit searcheth all things.
 „ 14, i. 140, 270; ii. 143, 278, 291. The sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit.
 „ 15, i. 181; ii. 237. The spiritual man judgeth all things.
 iii. 1, 2, i. 128. As little ones in Christ, I gave you milk to drink, not meat.
 „ 16, i. 307. Know you not that you are the temple of God.
 „ 18, i. 16. If any man among you seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool.
 „ 19, i. 16; ii. 142. The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.
 vi. 17, i. 120, 209. He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.
 vii. 27, i. 247. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.
 „ 29, i. 44, 247. This therefore I say, brethren, the time is short.
 ix. 22, ii. 282. I became all things to all men.
 x. 4, ii. 192. This rock is Christ.
 xii. 7, i. 283. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit.
 „ 8, i. 180. Diversity of spiritual gifts.
 „ 9, i. 283. Faith, and the grace of healing.
 „ 10, i. 179. The discerning of spirits.
 xiii. 1, i. 284. If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels.
 „ 2, ii. 72. And have not charity, I am nothing.
 „ 4, ii. 73. Charity is patient.
 „ 5, ii. 228. Seeketh not her own.
 „ 6, i. 344. Rejoiceth with the truth.
 „ 7, i. 438. Charity believeth all things.
 „ 10, i. 86; ii. 18, 64. When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.
 „ 11, i. 125, 378. When I became a man I put away the things of a child.
 „ 12, ii. 197. Now I know in part.
 xv. 54, ii. 251. Death is swallowed up in victory.

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- i. 7, ii. 248. As you are partakers of the sufferings.
 iii. 6, i. 136. The letter killeth, but the Spirit quickeneth.
 iv. 17, i. 272. An eternal weight of glory.
 v. 1, ii. 230, 249. We have a building of God.
 „ 4, ii. 58. We would not be unclothed, but clothed upon.
 vi. 10, i. 255, 396. As having nothing, and possessing all things.
 „ 14, i. 14. What fellowship hath light with darkness?
 „ 16, ii. 16. You are the temple of the living God.
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 xii. 2, i. 170. Whether in the body, I know not.
 „ 3, ii. 70. Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell.
 „ 4, i. 176; ii. 82, 105, 106. Secret words which it is not granted to man to utter.
 „ 9, i. 47; ii. 161, 245. Virtue is made perfect in infirmity.

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- i. 8, i. 159, 186. Though we or an angel from heaven preach to you.
 ii. 2, i. 162. Lest I should run, or had run in vain.
 „ 14, i. 164. When I saw that they walked not uprightly.
 „ 20, ii. 65, 121, 251. I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me.
 iv. 6, ii. 203. God hath sent the spirit of His Son into your hearts.
 v. 17, i. 270; ii. 33, 92. The flesh lusteth against the spirit.
 vi. 17, ii. 241. I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body.

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- ii. 15, ii. 123. Making void the law of commandments.
 iii. 17, ii. 190. Being rooted and founded in charity.
 iv. 22, ii. 249. Put off according to former conversation the old man.
 „ 24, i. 379, 416. Put on the new man.
 vi. 11, ii. 33. Put now on the armour of God.

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- i. 21, ii. 159. To die is gain.
 „ 23, ii. 58. Having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.
 iii. 20, i. 445. Our conversation is in heaven.
 iv. 7, i. 400; ii. 116. The peace of God which surpasseth all understanding.

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- ii. 3, i. 158; ii. 27, 193. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
 „ 9, i. 158. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally.
 iii. 5, i. 251. Avarice, the service of idols.
 „ 14, ii. 72, 149, 164. Have charity, which is the bond of perfection.

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 „ 3, ii. 37, 61, 242. Who being the brightness of His glory.
 „ „ ii. 298. Upholding all things by the word of His power
 xi. 1, i. 71, 222. Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for.
 „ 6, i. 442. Without Faith it is impossible to please God.
 „ „ i. 62, 85. He that cometh to God must believe that He is.

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- i. 17, ii. 162, 275. Every perfect gift is from above.
 „ 26, ii. 310. If any man think himself to be religious.
 ii. 20, i. 240. Faith without works is dead.

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- i. 12, ii. 263. On whom the angels desire to look.
 iv. 18, ii. 12. The just man shall scarcely be saved.
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- i. 2, ii. 205. Grace to you and peace.
 „ 19, i. 186. We have the more firm prophetic word.

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- iii. 2, i. 440. When He shall appear, we shall be like Him.
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 „ 18, ii. 59, 130. Perfect charity casteth out fear.

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- ii. 7, ii. 200. I will give to eat of the tree of life.
 „ 10, ii. 200. Be thou faithful unto death.
 „ 17, ii. 200, 244. To him that overcometh I will give the hidden
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 „ 26, ii. 200. I will give him power over the nations.
 iii. 5, ii. 200. He that shall overcome, shall be clothed in white gar-
 ments.
 „ 8, i. 347. Behold I have given before thee an opened door.
 „ 12, ii. 200. I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God.
 „ 20, ii. 88. Behold I stand at the gate and knock.
 „ 21, ii. 200. To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit in My
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