

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS

DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Translated from the critical edition of

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and edited by

E. ALLISON PEERS

VOLUME I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION
ASCENT OF MOUNT CARMEL
DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

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NIHIL OBSTAT:
GEORGIUS D. SMITH, S.Th.D., Ph.D.,
Censor deputatus.

IMPRIMATUR:
✠ JOSEPHUS BUTT,
Vicarius generalis.

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3. For this cause I have been moved,¹ not by any possibility that I see in myself of accomplishing so arduous a task, but by the confidence which I have in the Lord that He will help me to say something to relieve the great necessity which is experienced by many souls, who, when they set out upon the road of virtue, and Our Lord desires to bring them into this dark night that they may pass through it to Divine union, make no progress. At times this is because they have no desire to enter it or to allow themselves to be led into it; at other times, because they understand not themselves and lack competent and alert directors² who will guide them to the summit. And so it is sad to see many souls to whom God gives both favour and capacity for making progress (and who, if they would take courage, could attain to this high estate), remaining in an elementary stage³ of communion with God, for want of will, or knowledge, or because there is none who will lead them in the right path or teach them how to get away from⁴ these beginnings. And at length, although Our Lord grants them such favour as to make them to go onward without this hindrance or that, they arrive at their goal exceeding late, and with greater labour, yet with less merit, because they have not conformed themselves to God, and allowed themselves to be brought freely⁵ into the pure and sure road of union. For, although it is true that God is leading them, and that He can lead them without their own help, they will not allow themselves to be led; and thus they make less progress, because they resist Him Who is leading them, and they have less merit, because they apply not their will, and on this account they suffer more. For there are souls who, instead of committing themselves to God and making use of His help, rather hinder God by the indiscretion of their actions or by their resistance; like children who, when their mothers desire to carry them in their arms, kick and cry, insisting upon being allowed to walk, with the result that they can make no progress; and, if they advance at all, it is only at the pace of a child.

4. Wherefore, to the end that all, whether beginners or proficients, may know how to commit themselves to God's

¹ A, B: 'In order to write this I have been moved.'

² [*Lit.* 'and wideawake guides.'] E.p. reads 'skilled,' and B 'prepared,' for 'alert.'

³ [*Lit.*, 'a low manner.']

⁴ So e.p. [P. Silverio's text, following Alc., reads: 'disengage themselves from.']

⁵ E.p. omits 'freely.'

guidance, when His Majesty desires to lead them onward, we shall give instruction and counsel, by His help, so that they may be able to understand His will, or, at the least, allow Him to lead them. For some confessors and spiritual fathers,¹ having no light and experience concerning these roads, are wont to hinder and harm such souls rather than to help them along the road ;² they are like the builders of Babel, who, when told to furnish suitable material, gave and applied other very different material, because they understood not the language, and thus nothing was done. Wherefore, it is a difficult and troublesome thing at such seasons³ for a soul not to understand itself or to find none who understands it. For it will come to pass that God will lead the soul⁴ by a most lofty path of dark contemplation and aridity, wherein it seems to be lost, and, being thus full of darkness and trials, afflictions and temptations, will meet one who will speak to it like Job's comforters, and say that⁵ it is suffering from melancholy or low spirits, or morbidity of temperament, or that it may have some hidden sin, and that it is for this reason that God has forsaken it. Such comforters are wont to infer immediately that that soul must have been very evil, since such things as these are befalling it.

5. And there will likewise be those who tell the soul to retrace its steps, since it is finding neither pleasure nor consolation in the things of God as it did aforetime. And in this way they double the trials of the poor soul ; for it may well be that the greatest affliction which it is feeling is that of the knowledge of its own miseries, thinking that it sees itself, more clearly than daylight, to be full of evils and sins, for God gives it that light of knowledge⁶ in that night of contemplation, as we shall presently show. And when the soul finds someone whose opinion agrees with its own, and who says that these things must be due to its own fault, its affliction and trouble increase infinitely and are wont to become more grievous than death. And, not content with this, such confessors, thinking that these things proceed from sin, make these souls go over their lives and cause them to make many general confessions and crucify them afresh ; not

¹ Alc. omits : ' confessors and.'

² E.p. omits : ' along the road.'

³ ' Reasons ' is a copyist's or printer's error. E.p. has ' occasions.'

⁴ E.p. : ' For it will happen that God will lead it.'

⁵ E.p. : ' who will say to it what Job's comforters said to Job, that it, etc.'

⁶ E.p. : ' for God gives it to understand this.'

understanding that this may quite well not be the time for any of such things, and that their penitents should be left to the purgation which God gives them, and be comforted and encouraged to desire it until God be pleased to dispose otherwise ; for until that time, no matter what the souls themselves may do and their confessors may say, there is no remedy for them.

6. This, with the Divine favour, we shall consider hereafter, and also how the soul should conduct itself at such a time, and how the confessor must treat it, and what signs there will be whereby it may be known if this is the purgation of the soul ; and, in such case, whether it be of sense or of spirit (which is the dark night whereof we speak), and how it may be known if it be melancholy or some other imperfection with respect to sense or to spirit. For there may be some souls who will think, or whose confessors will think, that God is leading them along this road of the dark night of spiritual purgation, whereas they may possibly be suffering only from some of the imperfections aforementioned. And, again, there are many souls who think that they have no aptitude for prayer, when they have very much ; and there are others¹ who think that they have much when they have hardly any.

7. There are other souls who labour and weary themselves to a piteous extent, and yet go backward, seeking profit in that which is not profitable, but is rather a hindrance ; and there are still others who, by remaining at rest and in quietness, continue to make great progress. There are others who are hindered and disturbed and make no progress, because of the very consolations and favours that God is granting them in order that they may make progress. And there are many other things on this road that befall those who follow it, both joys and afflictions, both hopes and griefs : some proceeding from the spirit of perfection and others from imperfection. Of all these, with the Divine favour, we shall endeavour to say something, so that each soul² who reads this may be able to see something of the road that he ought to follow, if he aspires to attain to the summit of this Mount.

8. And since this instruction relates to the dark night through which the soul must go to God, let not the reader

¹ E.p. : 'and others, on the contrary.'

² E.p. : 'each one.'

the Bride, which is the Wisdom of God. Even so the angel said likewise to Tobias that, when the third night was past, he should be united with his bride in the fear of the Lord ; for, when this fear of God is perfect, love is perfect, and this comes to pass when the transformation of the soul is wrought through its love.¹

5. These three parts of the night are all one night ; but like night itself, it has three parts.² For the first part, which is that of sense, is comparable to the beginning of night, the point at which things begin to fade from sight. And the second part, which is faith, is comparable to midnight, which is total darkness. And the third part is like the close of night, which is God, the which part is now near to the light of day. And, that we may understand this the better, we shall treat of each of these reasons separately as we proceed.³

CHAPTER III

*Speaks of the first cause of this night, which is that of the privation of the desire in all things, and gives the reason for which it is called night.*⁴

1. We here describe as night the privation of every kind of pleasure which belongs to the desire ; for even as night is naught but the privation of light, and, consequently, of all objects that can be seen by means of light, whereby the visual faculty⁵ remains unoccupied and in darkness, even so likewise the mortification of desire may be called night to the soul. For, when the soul is deprived of the pleasure of its desire in all things, it remains, as it were, unoccupied and in darkness. For even as the visual faculty, by means of light, is nourished and fed by objects which can be seen, and which, when the light is quenched, are not seen,⁶ even so, by means of the desire, the soul is nourished and fed by all

¹ E.p. reads : ' for, when this is perfect, the love of God is so likewise, and this comes to pass when the transformation of the soul is wrought through its love for God.'

² E.p. reads : ' And, that we may the better understand it, we shall treat of each one of these reasons separately as we proceed. And it will be noted that these three nights are all one night, which has three parts.'

³ E.p. omits this sentence, which it has prefixed to the beginning of the paragraph. Alc. alone reads ' reasons ' ; the other authorities have ' things.'

⁴ Alc. alone has the words ' and . . . night.'

⁵ A adds : ' as to all things.'

⁶ E.p. has : ' and, when the light is quenched, this ceases.'

4. Wherefore, if the soul rejects and denies that which it can receive through the senses, we can quite well say that it remains, as it were, dark and empty ; since, as appears from what has been said, no light can enter it, in the course of nature, by any other means of illumination than those aforementioned.¹ For, although it is true that the soul cannot help hearing and seeing and smelling and tasting and touching, this is of no import, nor, if the soul denies and rejects the object, is it hindered more than if it saw it not, heard it not, etc. Just so a man who desires to shut his eyes will remain in darkness, like² the blind man who has not the faculty of sight. And to this purpose David says these words : *Pauper sum ego, et in laboribus a juventute mea.*³ Which signifies : I am poor and in labours from my youth. He calls himself poor, although it is clear that he was rich, because his will was not set upon riches, and thus it was as though he were really poor. But if he had been really poor and had not been so in his will, he would not have been truly poor, for his soul, as far as its desire was concerned, would have been rich and replete. For this reason we call this detachment the night of the soul, for we are not treating here of the lack of things, since this implies no detachment on the part of the soul if it has a desire for them ; but we are treating of the detachment from them of the taste and desire, for it is this that leaves the soul free and void of them, although it may have them ; for it is not the things of this world that either occupy the soul or cause it harm, since they enter it not, but rather the will and desire for them, for it is these that dwell within it.

5. This first kind of night, as we shall say hereafter, belongs to the soul according to its sensual part,⁴ which is one of the two parts, whereof we spoke above, through which the soul must pass in order to attain to union.⁵

6. Let us now say how meet it is for the soul to go forth from its house into this dark night of sense, in order to travel to union with God.

¹ E.p. omits : ' than those aforementioned.'

² E.p. has ' as much as ' for ' like.'

³ Psalm lxxxvii, 16 [A.V. lxxxviii, 15]. E.p. omits the Latin text and the words ' Which signifies.'

⁴ E.p. omits the rest of this paragraph.

⁵ Only Alc. gives : ' in order to attain to union.'

CHAPTER IV

*Wherein is declared how necessary it is for the soul truly to pass through this dark night of sense, which is mortification of desire, in order that it may journey to union with God.*¹

1. The reason for which it is necessary for the soul, in order to attain to Divine union with God, to pass through this dark night of mortification of the desires and denial of pleasures in all things, is because all the affections which it has for creatures are pure darkness in the eyes of God, and, when the soul is clothed in these affections, it has no capacity for being enlightened and possessed by the pure and simple light of God;² if it cast them not first from it; for light cannot agree with darkness; since, as S. John says: *Tenebræ eam non comprehenderunt.*³ That is: The darkness could not receive the light.

2. The reason is that two contraries (even as philosophy teaches us) cannot coexist in one person; and that darkness, which is affection for the creatures, and light, which is God, are contrary to each other, and have no likeness or accord between one another, even as S. Paul explained to the Corinthians, saying: *Quæ conventio luci ad tenebras?*⁴ That is to say: What communion can there be between light and darkness? Hence it is that the light of Divine union cannot dwell in the soul if these affections first flee not away from it.

3. In order that we may the better prove what has been said, it must be known that the affection and attachment which the soul has for creatures renders the soul like to these creatures; and the greater is its affection, the closer is the equality and likeness between them; for love creates a likeness between that which loves and that which is loved. For which reason David, speaking of those who set their affections upon idols, said thus: *Similes illis fiant qui faciunt ea: et omnes qui confidunt in eis.*⁵ Which signifies: Let them that set their heart upon them be like to them. And thus,

¹ A adds: 'This is proved by comparisons of passages and figures from Sacred Scripture, etc.'

² E.p.: 'for being possessed in the pure and simple light of God.'

³ S. John i, 5. Neither this nor any of the other Latin texts in this chapter is found in e.p.

⁴ 2 Corinthians vi, 14.

⁵ Psalm cxiv, 8 [A.V. cxv, 8].

he that loves a creature becomes as low as is that creature, and, in some ways, lower ; for love not only makes the lover equal to the object of his love, but even subjects him to it. Wherefore in the same way it comes to pass that the soul that loves anything else¹ becomes incapable of pure union with God and transformation in Him. For the low estate of the creature is much less capable of union with the high estate of the Creator than is darkness with light. For all things of earth and heaven, compared with God, are nothing, as Jeremiah says in these words : *Aspexi terram, et ecce vacua erat, et nihil ; et celos, et non erat lux in eis.*² I beheld the earth, he says, and it was void, and it was nothing ; and the heavens, and saw that they had no light. In saying that he beheld the earth void, he means that all its creatures were nothing, and that the earth was nothing likewise. And, in saying that he beheld the heavens and saw no light in them, he says that all the luminaries of heaven, compared with God, are pure darkness. So that in this sense all the creatures are nothing ; and their affections, we may say, are less than nothing, since they are an impediment to transformation in God and the loss thereof, even as darkness is not only nothing but less than nothing, since it is loss of light. And even as he that is in darkness comprehends not the light, so the soul that sets its affections upon³ creatures will be unable to comprehend God ; and, until it be purged, it will neither be able to possess Him here below, through pure transformation of love, nor yonder in clear vision. And, for greater clarity, we will now speak in greater detail.

4. All the being of creation, then, compared with the infinite Being of God, is nothing. And therefore the soul that sets its affections upon the being of creation is likewise nothing in the eyes of God, and less than nothing ; for, as we have said, love makes equality and similitude, and even sets the lover below the object of his love. And therefore such a soul will in no wise be able to attain to union with the infinite Being of God ; for that which is not can have no agreement with that which is. And, coming down in detail to certain examples,⁴ all the beauty of the creatures, compared with the infinite beauty of God, is the height of

¹ The editions add, for a better understanding of the phrase, ' apart from God.'

² Jeremiah iv, 23.

³ A, B, e.p. : ' that has affection for.'

⁴ The words ' And . . . examples ' are found in Alc. only.

deformity,¹ even as Solomon says in the Proverbs : *Fallax gratia, et vana est pulchritudo.*² Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain. And thus the soul that is affectioned to the beauty of any creature is as the height of deformity³ in the eyes of God. And therefore this soul that is deformed will be unable to become transformed in beauty, which is God, since deformity cannot attain to beauty ; and all the grace and beauty of the creatures, compared with the grace of God, is the height of misery⁴ and of unattractiveness. Wherefore the soul that is ravished by the graces and beauties of the creatures has only supreme⁵ misery and unattractiveness in the eyes of God ; and thus it cannot be capable of the infinite grace and loveliness of God ; for that which has no grace is far removed from that which is infinitely gracious ; and all the goodness of the creatures of the world, in comparison with the infinite goodness of God, may be described as wickedness. For there is naught good, save only God.⁶ And therefore the soul that sets its heart upon the good things of the world is supremely⁷ evil in the eyes of God. And, even as wickedness comprehends not goodness, even so such a soul cannot be united with God,⁸ Who is supreme goodness. All the wisdom of the world and human ability, compared with the infinite wisdom of God, are pure and supreme ignorance,⁹ even as Saint Paul writes *ad Corinthios*, saying : *Sapientia hujus mundi stultitia est apud Deum.*¹⁰ The wisdom of this world is foolishness in the eyes of God.

5. Wherefore any soul that makes account of all its knowledge and ability in order to come to union with the wisdom of God is supremely ignorant in the eyes of God and will remain far removed from that wisdom ; for ignorance knows not what wisdom is, even as S. Paul says that this

¹ [The words often translated 'deformity,' 'deformed,' or 'vileness,' 'vile,' are the ordinary contraries of 'beauty,' 'beautiful,' and might be rendered, more literally but less elegantly, 'ugliness,' 'ugly.']

² Proverbs xxxi, 30.

³ E.p. softens this phrase to : 'has its share of deformity.'

⁴ [For 'grace . . . misery' the Spanish has 'gracia . . . desgracia.' The latter word, however, does not, as might be supposed, correspond to English 'disgrace.']

⁵ E.p. omits 'supreme' ; the Spanish word [having a more literally superlative force than the English] can hardly be applied, save in a restricted sense, to what is finite.

⁶ S. Luke xviii, 19.

⁷ This again is omitted from e.p.

⁸ E.p. adds : 'in perfect union.'

⁹ B abbreviates greatly here and then omits the remainder of the chapter.

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians iii, 19,

wisdom seems foolishness to God ; since, in the eyes of God,¹ those who consider themselves to be persons with a certain amount of knowledge are very ignorant, since the Apostle, writing to the Romans, says of them : *Dicentes enim se esse sapientes, stulti facti sunt*. That is : Considering themselves to be wise, they became foolish.² And those alone gain the wisdom of God who are like ignorant children, and, laying aside their knowledge, walk in His service with love. This manner of wisdom S. Paul taught likewise *ad Corinthios* : *Si quis videtur inter vos sapiens esse in hoc seculo, stultus fiat ut sit sapiens. Sapientia enim hujus mundi stultitia est apud Deum*.³ That is : If any among you seemeth to be wise, let him become ignorant that he may be wise ; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with respect to God. So that, in order to come to union with the wisdom of God, the soul has to proceed rather by unknowing than by knowing ; and all the dominion and liberty of the world, compared with the liberty and dominion of the spirit of God, is the most abject⁴ slavery, affliction and captivity.

6. Wherefore the soul that is enamoured of prelacy,⁵ or of any other such office, and longs for liberty of desire, is considered and treated, in the sight of God, not as a son, but as a base slave and captive,⁶ since it has not been willing to accept His holy doctrine, wherein He teaches us that he who would be greater must be less, and he who would be less must be greater.⁷ And therefore such a soul will be unable to attain to that true liberty of spirit which is encompassed in His Divine union. For slavery can have no part with liberty ; and liberty cannot dwell in a heart that is subject to desires, for this is the heart of a slave ; but it dwells in the free man, because he has the heart of a son. It was for this reason that Sarah bade her husband Abraham cast out the bondwoman and her son, saying that the son of the bondwoman should not be heir with the son of the free woman.⁸

7. And all the delights and pleasures of the will in all the things of the world, in comparison with all those delights

¹ E.p. abbreviates : 'knows not what wisdom is, and, in the eyes of God. . . .'
² Romans i, 22. ³ 1 Corinthians iii, 18-19.

⁴ [*Lit.*, 'is supreme.']

⁵ [The word is applicable to any kind of preferential position.]

⁶ E.p. reads : 'not as a dear son, but as a base person, a captive of its passions,' etc.

⁷ E.p. : ' . . . doctrine which teaches us that he who would be greater must be less,'

⁸ Genesis xxi, 10.

calls them 'little ones,' because they make themselves like to that which they love, which is little. And therefore she tells them to be wise and to take note that she is treating of great things and not of things that are little like themselves. That the great riches and the glory that they love are with her and in her, and not where they think. And that high riches and justice dwell in her ; for, although they think the things of this world to be such, she tells them to take note that her things are better, saying that the fruit that they will find in them will be better for them than gold and precious stones ; and that that which she engenders in souls is better than the choice silver which they love ; by which is understood any kind of affection that can be possessed in this life.

CHAPTER V

Wherein the aforementioned subject is treated and continued, and it is shown by passages and figures from Holy Scripture how necessary it is for the soul to journey to God through this dark night of the mortification of desire in all things.

1. From what has been said it may be seen to some extent how great a distance there is between all that the creatures are in themselves and that which God is in Himself, and how souls¹ that set their affections upon any of these creatures are at an equal distance from God ; for, as we have said, love produces equality and similarity. This distance was clearly realized by S. Augustine, who said in the *Soliloquies*, speaking with God :² Miserable man that I am, when will my littleness and imperfection agree with Thy uprightness ? Thou indeed art good, and I am evil ; Thou art merciful, and I am unholy ; Thou art holy, I am miserable ; Thou art just, I am unjust ; Thou art light, I am blind ; Thou, life, I, death ; Thou, medicine, I, sick ; Thou, supreme truth, I, utter vanity.³ All this is said by this Saint.⁴

2. Wherefore, it is supreme ignorance for the soul to think that it will be able to pass to this high estate of union with

¹ E.p. : ' We have already spoken of the distance that there is between the creatures and God, and how souls,' etc.

² A, B omit : ' speaking with God.'

³ A, B, C : ' universal vanity.' D : ' supreme vanity.'

⁴ *Soliloq.*, chap. ii (Migne : *Patr. lat.*, vol. xl, p. 866). E.p. adds : ' The which this Saint says concerning the inclination of man for the creatures.'

God if first it void not the desire of all things, natural and supernatural, which may hinder it, according as we shall declare hereafter ;¹ for there is the greatest possible distance between these things and that which comes to pass in this estate, which is naught else than transformation in God. For this reason Our Lord, when instructing us in this way, said through S. Luke : *Qui non renuntiat omnibus quæ possidet, non potest meus esse discipulus.*² This signifies : He that renounces not all things that he possesses with his will cannot be My disciple. And this is evident ; for the doctrine that the Son of God came to teach³ was contempt for all things, so that a man might receive as a reward the spirit of God in himself. For, as long as the soul rejects not all things, it has no capacity to receive the spirit of God in pure transformation.

3. Of this we have a figure in Exodus, wherein we read that God⁴ gave not the children of Israel the food from Heaven, which was manna, until the flour which they had brought from Egypt failed them. By this is signified that first of all it is meet to renounce all things, for this angels' food is not fitting for the palate that would find delight in the food of men. And not only does the soul become incapable of receiving the Divine Spirit when it stays and pastures on other strange pleasures, but those souls greatly offend the Divine Majesty who desire spiritual food and are not content with God alone, but desire rather to intermingle desire and affection for other things. This can likewise be seen in this same book of Holy Scripture,⁵ wherein it is said that, not content with that simplest of food, they desired and craved fleshly food.⁶ And that Our Lord was grievously offended that they should desire to intermingle a food that

¹ So Alc. The other authorities have merely : ' which may pertain to it,' and e.p. adds to this : ' through self-love.' Even when softened by Diego de Jesús this phrase of the Saint did not escape denunciation, and it was the first of the ' propositions ' condemned in his writings (cf. p. lxiv, above). It was defended by P. Basilio Ponce de León in his *Reply* (p. lxxv), and more extensively by P. Nicolás de Jesús María (*Elucidatio*, Pt. II, Chap. i). In reality little defence is needed other than that contained in the last chapters of the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, which clearly show the harm caused by supernatural favours, when these are abused, to the memory, the understanding and the will. Who, after all, can doubt that we may abuse ' things supernatural ' and by such abuse hinder the soul's union with God ?

² S. Luke xiv, 33.

³ A, e.p. : ' to teach the world.'

⁴ E.p. : ' that God's Majesty.'

⁵ E.p. alters this to : ' in the same Scripture.' [It does not, in fact, occur in the same book.]

⁶ Numbers xi, 4.

to have been commanded by God to be put in the Ark, where the manna was, save the book of the Law,¹ and the rod of Moses, which signifies the Cross.² For the soul that aspires to naught else than the keeping of the law of the Lord perfectly and the bearing of the Cross of Christ will be a true Ark, containing within itself the true manna, which is God,³ when that soul attains to a perfect possession in itself of this law and this rod, without any other thing soever.

CHAPTER VI

*Wherein are treated two serious evils caused in the soul by the desires, the one evil being privative and the other positive.*⁴

1. In order that what we have said may be the more clearly and fully understood, it will be well here to set down and state how⁵ these desires are the cause of two serious evils in the soul: the one is that they deprive it of the spirit of God, and the other is that the soul wherein they dwell is wearied, tormented, darkened, defiled and weakened, according to that which is said in Jeremiah, Chapter II: *Duo mala fecit Populus meus: dereliquerunt fontem aquæ vivæ, et foderunt sibi cisternas, dissipatas, quæ continere non valent aquas.* Which signifies: They have forsaken Me, Who am the fountain of living water, and they have hewed them out broken cisterns, that can hold no water.⁶ Those two evils—namely, the privative and the positive—may be caused by any disordered act of the desire. And, first of all, speaking of the privative, it is clear⁷ from the very fact that the soul becomes affectioned to a thing which comes under the head of creature, that the more the desire for that thing fills the soul,⁸ the less capacity has the soul for God; inasmuch as two contraries, according to the philosophers, cannot coexist in one person;⁹

¹ Deuteronomy xxxi, 26.

² Numbers xvii, 10.

³ E.p. ends the chapter here.

⁴ E.p. adds: 'This is proved by passages from Scripture.'

⁵ E.p.: 'it will be well here to state how.'

⁶ Jeremiah ii, 13.

⁷ So Alc.—A, B, e.p. read: 'These two evils are caused by one act of the desire. For it is clear,' etc.

⁸ [Lit., 'the greater the bulk that that desire has in the soul.']

⁹ E.p. modifies: '... it has for God; for, as we said in Chapter iv, two contraries cannot coexist in one person; and affection for God and affection for creatures are contraries and so cannot coexist in one person.' A, B omit 'according to the philosophers' and 'as we said in the fourth chapter.'

and further, since, as we said in the fourth chapter, affection for God and affection for creatures are contraries, and thus there cannot be contained within one will affection for creatures and affection for God.¹ For what has the creature to do with the Creator? What has sensual to do with spiritual? Visible with invisible? Temporal with eternal? Food that is heavenly, spiritual and pure with food that is of sense alone and is purely sensual? Christlike detachment with attachment to aught soever?

2. Wherefore, as in natural generation no form can be introduced unless the preceding, contrary form is first expelled from the subject, which form, while present, is an impediment to the other by reason of the contrariety which the two have between each other; even so, for as long as the soul is subjected to the sensual spirit,² the spirit which is pure and spiritual cannot enter it. Wherefore our Saviour said through S. Matthew: *Non est bonum sumere panem filiorum, et mittere canibus.*³ That is: It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs. And elsewhere, too, he says through the same Evangelist⁴: *Nolite sanctum dare canibus.*⁵ Which signifies: Give not that which is holy unto the dogs. In these passages Our Lord compares those who deny their creature desires, and prepare themselves to receive the spirit of God in purity, to the children of God; and those who would have their desire feed upon the creatures, to dogs. For it is given to children to eat with their father at table and from his dish, which is to feed upon his spirit, and to dogs are given the crumbs which fall from the table.

3. From this we are to learn that all creatures are crumbs that have fallen from the table of God. Wherefore he that feeds ever upon⁶ the creatures is rightly called a dog, and therefore the bread is taken from the children, because they desire not to rise from feeding upon the crumbs, which are the creatures, to the table of the uncreated spirit of their Father. Therefore, like dogs, they are ever hungering, and justly so, because the crumbs serve to whet their appetite rather than to satisfy their hunger. And thus David says of them: *Famen patientur ut canes, et circuibunt civitatem. Si vero*

¹ Cf. p. 34, n. 9.

² E.p.: 'sensual and animal spirit.'

³ S. Matthew xv, 26.

⁴ So Alc. A, B: *Et alibi*. E.p.: 'and elsewhere.'

⁵ S. Matthew vii, 6.

⁶ [*Lit.*, 'he that goes feeding upon.']

*non fuerint saturati, et murmurabunt.*¹ Which signifies : They shall suffer hunger like dogs and shall go round about the city, and, when they see not themselves satisfied, they shall murmur. For this is the property of one that has desires, that he is ever discontented and dissatisfied, like one that suffers hunger ; for what has the hunger which all the creatures suffer to do with the fullness which is caused by the spirit of God ? Wherefore this fullness that is uncreated² cannot enter the soul, if there be not first cast out that other created hunger which belongs to the desire of the soul ; for, as we have said,³ two contraries cannot dwell in one person, the which contraries in this case⁴ are hunger and fullness.

4. From what has been said it will be seen how much greater is the work of God⁵ in the cleansing and the purging of a soul from these contrarieties than in the creating of that soul from nothing. For these contrarieties, these contrary desires and affections, are more completely opposed to God and offer Him greater resistance than does nothingness ;⁶ for nothingness resists not at all.⁷ And let this suffice with respect to the first of the important evils which are inflicted upon the soul by the desires—namely, resistance to the spirit of God—since much has been said of this above.

5. Let us now speak of the second effect which they cause in the soul. This is of many kinds, because the desires weary the soul and torment and darken it, and defile it and weaken it. Of these five things we shall speak separately, in their turn.

6. With regard to the first, it is clear that the desires weary and fatigue the soul ; for they are like restless and discontented children, who are ever demanding this or that from their mother, and are never satisfied. And even as one that digs because he covets a treasure is wearied and fatigued, even so is the soul wearied and fatigued in order to attain that which its desires demand of it ; and although in the end it may attain it, it is still weary, because it is never satisfied ;

¹ Psalm lviii, 15-16 [A. V., lix, 14-15].

² E.p. : 'this fullness of God.'

³ E.p. : '... cast out from it this hunger of the desire ; for, as has been said,' etc.

⁴ E.p. omits : 'in this case.'

⁵ [Lit., 'how much more God does.'] E.p. adds : 'in a certain way.'

⁶ E.p. : '... affections seem to hinder (*estorbar*) God more than does nothingness.'

⁷ E.p. : 'for nothingness resists not His Majesty at all, and creature desire does resist Him.'

for, after all, the cisterns which it is digging are broken, and cannot hold water to satisfy thirst. And thus, as Isaiah says : *Lassus adhuc sitit, et anima ejus vacua est.*¹ Which signifies : His desire is empty. And the soul that has desires is wearied and fatigued ; for it is like a man that is sick of a fever, who finds himself no better until the fever leaves him, and whose thirst increases with every moment. For, as is said in the Book of Job : *Cum satiatus fuerit, arctabitur, æstuabit, et omnis dolor irruet super eum.*² Which signifies : When he has satisfied his desire, he will be the more oppressed and straitened ; the heat of desire hath increased in his soul and thus all grief will fall upon him. The soul is wearied and fatigued by its desires, because it is wounded and moved and disturbed by them as is water by the winds ; in just the same way they disturb it, allowing it not to rest in any place or in any thing soever. And of such a soul says Isaiah : *Cor impii quasi mare fervens.*³ The heart of the wicked man is like the sea when it rages. And he is a wicked man that subjects not his desires. The soul that would fain satisfy its desires grows wearied and fatigued ; for it is like one that, being an hungered, opens his mouth that he may sate himself with wind, when, instead of being satisfied, his craving becomes greater, for the wind is no food for him. To this purpose said Jeremiah : *In desiderio animæ suæ attraxit ventum amoris sui.*⁴ As though he were to say : In the desire of his will he snuffed up the wind of his affection. And later he tries to describe the aridity wherein such a soul remains, and warns it, saying : *Prohibe pedem tuum a nuditate, et guttur tuum a siti.*⁵ Which signifies : Withhold thy foot (that is, thy thought) from detachment and thy throat from thirst (that is to say, thy will from the indulgence of the desire which causes greater drought) ;⁷ and, even as the lover is wearied and fatigued upon the day of his hopes, when his attempt has proved to be vain, so the soul is wearied and fatigued by all its desires and by indulgence in them, since they all cause it greater emptiness and hunger ; for, as they commonly say, desire is like the fire, which increases as wood

¹ Isaiah xxix, 8. The editions supply the translation of the first part of the Latin text, which the Saint and the codices omitted : ' After being wearied and fatigued, he still thirsteth,' etc.

² Job xx, 22.

³ Isaiah lvii, 20.

⁴ E.p. : ' And thus Jeremiah says of such a soul.'

⁵ Jeremiah ii, 24.

⁶ Jeremiah ii, 25.

⁷ E.p. reads ' dryness ' for ' drought ' and omits several lines, continuing : ' Desire is like the fire,' etc.

is thrown upon it, and which, when it has consumed the wood, must needs burn away.

7. And desire is in yet worse condition here ; for the fire goes down when the wood is consumed, but desire, though it increases when fuel is added to it, decreases not correspondingly when the fuel is consumed ; on the contrary, instead of going down, as does the fire when its fuel is consumed, it fails from weariness, for its hunger is increased and its food diminished. And of this Isaiah speaks, saying : *Declinabit ad dexteram, et esuriet : et comedet ad sinistram, et non saturabitur.*¹ This signifies : He shall turn to the right hand, and shall be hungry ; and he shall eat on the left hand, and shall not be filled. For they that mortify not their desires, when they 'turn', justly see the fullness of the sweetness of spirit of those who are at the right hand of God, which fullness is not granted to themselves ; and justly, too, when they eat on the left hand,² by which is meant the satisfaction of their desire with some creature comfort, they are not filled. For, leaving that which alone can satisfy, they feed on that which causes them greater hunger. It is clear, then, that the desires weary and fatigue the soul.

CHAPTER VII

*Wherein is shown how the desires torment the soul. This is proved likewise by comparisons and quotations.*³

1. The second kind of positive evil which the desires cause the soul is in their tormenting and afflicting of it, after the manner of one who is in torment through being bound with cords from which he has no relief until he be freed. And of these David says : *Funes peccatorum circumplexi sunt me.*⁴ The cords of my sins, which are my desires, have constrained

¹ Isaiah ix, 20.

² Thus Alc. [with 'run' for 'eat']. A, B, e.p. read : ' . . . when they turn from the way of God (which is the right hand) are justly hungered, for they merit not the fullness of the sweetness of spirit. And justly, too, when they eat on the left hand,' etc. [While agreeing with P. Silverio that Alc. gives the better reading, I prefer 'eat' to 'run' : it is nearer the Scriptural passage and the two Spanish words, *comen* and *corren*, could easily be confused in MS.]

³ Thus Alc. and e.p. A, B read : ' This is proved by comparisons and quotations from the Sacred Scripture.'

⁴ Psalm cxviii, 61 [A.V., cxix, 61].

me round about. And in the same way wherein one that lies naked upon thorns and briars is tormented and afflicted, even so is the soul tormented and afflicted when it rests upon its desires. For they take hold upon it and wound it and distress it and cause it pain, even as do thorns. Of these David says likewise : *Circumdederunt me sicut apes : et exarserunt sicut ignis in spinis.*¹ Which signifies : They compassed me about like bees,² wounding me with their stings, and they were enkindled against me, like fire among thorns ; for in the desires, which are the thorns, the fire of anguish and torment increases. And even as the husbandman, coveting the harvest for which he hopes, afflicts and torments the ox in the plough, even so does concupiscence afflict the soul in its desire to attain that for which it longs. This can be clearly seen in that desire which Delilah had to know whence Samson derived his strength that was so great, for the Scripture says that it fatigued and tormented her so much that it caused her to swoon, almost to the point of death, and she said : *Defecit anima ejus, et ad mortem usque lassata est.*³

2. The more intense is the desire, the greater is the torment which it causes the soul. So that the torment increases with the desire ; and the greater are the desires which possess the soul, the greater are its torments ; for in such a soul is fulfilled, even in this life, that which is said in the Apocalypse concerning Babylon,⁴ in these words : *Quantum glorificavit se, et in deliciis fuit, tantum date illi tormentum, et luctum.*⁵ That is : As much as she has desired to exalt and fulfil her desires, so much give her of torment and anguish. And even as one that falls into the hands of his enemies is tormented and afflicted, even so is the soul tormented and afflicted that is led away by its desires. Of this there is a figure in the Book of the Judges, wherein it may be read that that strong man, Samson, who at one time was strong⁶ and free and a judge of Israel, fell into the power of his enemies, and they took his strength from him, and put out his eyes, and bound him in a mill, to grind corn,⁷ wherein they tormented and afflicted him greatly ;⁸ and thus it happens

¹ Psalm cxvii, 12 [A.V., cxviii, 12].

² A, B : 'like stinging bees.'

⁴ E.p. omits : 'concerning Babylon.'

⁶ E.p. : ' . . . figure in that strong man, Samson, who at one time was so strong,' etc.

⁷ [Lit., 'bound him to grind in a mill.']

³ Judges xvi, 16.

⁵ Revelation xviii, 7.

⁸ Judges xvi, 21.

to the soul in which these its enemies, the desires, live and rule ; for the first thing that they do is to weaken the soul and blind it, as we shall say below ; and then they afflict and torment it, binding it to the mill of concupiscence ; and the bonds with which it is bound are its own desires.

3. Wherefore God, having compassion on these that with such great labour, and at such cost to themselves, go about endeavouring to satisfy the hunger and thirst of their desire in the creatures, says to them through Isaiah : *Omnes silientes, venite ad aquas ; et qui non habetis argentum, properate, emite, et comedite : venite, emite absque argento, vinum, et lac. Quare appenditis argentum non in panibus, et laborem vestrum non in saturitate ?*¹ As though He were to say : All ye that have thirst of desire, come to the waters, and all ye that have no silver of your own will and desires, make haste ; buy from Me and eat ; come and buy from Me wine and milk (that is, spiritual sweetness and peace), without the silver of your own will, and without giving Me any labour in exchange for it, as ye give for your desires.² Wherefore do ye give the silver of your will³ for that which is not bread—that is, of the Divine Spirit—and set the labour of your desires upon that which cannot satisfy you ? Come, hearkening to Me, and ye shall eat the good that ye desire and your soul shall delight itself in fatness.

4. This attaining to fatness is a going forth from all pleasures of the creatures ; for the creatures torment but the Spirit of God refreshes. And thus He calls us through S. Matthew, saying : *Venite ad me omnes, qui laboratis, et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos, et invenientis requiem animabus vestris.*⁴ As though He were to say : All ye that go about tormented, afflicted and burdened with the burden of your cares and desires, go forth from them, come to Me, and I will refresh you and ye shall find for your souls the rest which your desires take from you, wherefore they are a heavy burden, for David says of them : *Sicut onus grave gravatae sunt super me.*⁵

¹ Isaiah lv, 1-2.

² A, B repeat : ' wine and milk—that is, peace and sweetness.'

³ E.p. : ' of your own will.'

⁴ S. Matthew xi, 28-9.

⁵ Psalm xxxvii, 5 [A.V., xxxviii, 4].

3. Desire blinds and darkens the soul ; for desire, as such, is blind, since of itself it has no understanding in itself, the reason being to it always, as it were, a child leading a blind man.¹ And hence it comes to pass that, whensoever the soul is guided by its desire, it becomes blind ; for this is as if one that sees were guided by one that sees not, which is, as it were, for both to be blind. And that which follows from this is that² which Our Lord says through S. Matthew : *Si cæcus cæco ducatum præstet, ambo in foveam cadunt.*³ If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. Of little use are its eyes to a moth, since desire for the beauty of the light dazzles it and leads it into the flame.⁴ And even so we may say that one who feeds upon desire is like a fish that is dazzled, upon which the light acts rather as darkness, preventing it from seeing the harm which the fishermen are preparing for it. This is very well explained by David himself, where he says of such persons : *Supercecidit ignis, et non viderunt solem.*⁵ Which signifies : There came upon them the fire, which burns with its heat and dazzles with its light.⁶ And it is this that desire does to the soul, enkindling its concupiscence and dazzling its understanding so that it cannot see its light. For the cause of its being thus dazzled is that, when another light of a different kind is set before the eye, the visual faculty is attracted by⁷ that which is interposed so that it sees not the other ; and, as the desire is set so near to the soul that it is in the soul itself, the soul meets this first light and is attracted by⁸ it ; and thus it is unable to see the light of clear understanding, neither will see it until the dazzling power of desire is taken away from it.

4. For this reason one must greatly lament the ignorance of certain men, who burden themselves with extraordinary penances and with many other voluntary practices, and think that this practice or that will suffice to bring them to

¹ E.p. has : ' . . . is blind, since of itself it is unreasonable ; and it is reason that always guides and directs the soul rightly in its operations.'

² E.p. : ' is exactly that.'

³ S. Matthew xv, 14.

⁴ [*Hoguera*. More exactly : ' fire,' ' bonfire,' ' blaze.']

⁵ Psalm lvii, 9 [cf. A.V., lviii, 8].

⁶ So Alc. The other MSS. have : ' The light fell upon them and struck their eyes and dazzled them.' E.p. reads : ' The fire came upon them and they saw not the sun.'

⁷ Alc. has : ' is blinded by,' probably a copyist's error [*ciégase* for *cébase*].

⁸ Here A and B have *ciégase*, whereas Alc. and e.p. read *cébase*.

the union of Divine Wisdom ; but such is not the case if they endeavour not¹ diligently to mortify their desires. If they were careful to bestow half of that labour on this, they would profit more in a month than they profit by all the other practices in many years. For, just as it is necessary to till the earth if it is to bear fruit, and unless it be tilled it bears naught but weeds, just so mortification of the desires is necessary if the soul is to profit. Without this mortification, I make bold to say, the soul no more achieves progress on the road to perfection and to the knowledge of God and of itself, however many efforts it may make, than the seed grows when it is cast upon² untilled ground. Wherefore the darkness and rudeness of the soul will not be taken from it until the desires be quenched. For these desires are like cataracts, or like motes in the eye, which obstruct the sight until they be cast away.

5. And thus David, realizing the blindness of these souls, and the completeness of their exclusion from the light of truth, and the greatness of God's wrath against them, speaks with them, saying : *Priusquam intelligerent spinæ vestre rhamnum : sicut viventes, sic in ira absorbet eos.*³ And this is as though He had said : Before your thorns (that is, your desires) hardened and grew, changing from tender thorns into a thick hedge and shutting out the sight of God even as oft-times the living find their thread of life broken in the midst of its course, even so will God swallow them up in His wrath.⁴ For the desires that are living in the soul, so that it cannot understand Him, will be absorbed by God by means of chastisement and correction, either in this life or in the next, and this will come to pass through purgation. And He says that He will absorb them in wrath, because that which is suffered in the mortification of the desires is

¹ E.p. has : ' who burden themselves with unrestrained [*lit.*, *desordenadas*, disordered, unruly] penances and with many other unrestrained practices—I mean voluntary ones—and place their confidence in these, and think that these alone, without any mortification of their desires in other respects, will be sufficient to lead them to the union of Divine Wisdom ; but this is not the case if they endeavour not,' etc.

² E.p. : ' being scattered over.'

³ Psalm lvii, 10 [A.V., lviii, 9].

⁴ [P. Silverio following] Alc. reads : ' Before your thorns (that is, your desires) understood, even as the living, after this manner He will absorb them in His wrath.' All the other MSS., however, and also e.p., read as in the text.

punishment for the ruin which they have wrought in the soul.¹

6. Oh that men could know how great is the blessing of Divine light whereof they are deprived by this blindness which proceeds from their affections and desires, and into what great hurts and evils these make them to fall day after day, for so long as they mortify them not ! For a man must not rely upon a clear understanding, or upon gifts that he has received from God, and think that he may indulge his affection or desire, and will not be blinded and darkened, and fall gradually into a worse estate. For who would have said that a man so perfect in wisdom and the gifts of God as was Solomon would have been reduced to such blindness and foolishness of the will as to make altars to so many idols and to adore them himself, when he was old ?² And no more was needed to bring him to this than the affection which he had for his wives and his neglect to deny his desires and the delights of his heart. For he himself says concerning himself, in Ecclesiastes, that he denied not his heart that which it demanded of him.³ And this man was capable of being so completely led away by his desires that, although it is true that at the beginning he was cautious, nevertheless, because he denied them not, they gradually blinded and darkened his understanding, so that in the end they succeeded in quenching that great light of wisdom which God had given him, and therefore in his old age he forsook God.

7. And if unmortified desires could do so much in this man who knew so well the distance that lies between good and evil, what will they not be capable of accomplishing by working upon our ignorance ? For we, as God⁴ said to the Prophet Jonah concerning the Ninevites, cannot discern between⁵ our right hand and our left.⁶ At every step we consider evil to be good, and good, evil, and this arises from

¹ E.p. reads: 'For God in His wrath will swallow up those whose desires live in the soul and shut out the knowledge of God, either in the next life in the affliction and purgation of purgatory, or in this life with afflictions and trials which He sends to detach them from their desires, or through the mortification of their own desires. This God does that He may remove thereby the false light of desire which is between Himself and us, and which was dazzling us and hindering us from knowing Him ; so that, the sight of the understanding being enlightened, the ruin wrought by the desires may be repaired.'

² Ecclesiastes ii, 10.

³ 3 Kings [A.V., 1 Kings] xi, 4.

⁴ E.p. : 'as the Lord.'

⁵ [Lit., 'we . . . know not what there is between.']

⁶ Jonah iv, 11.

our own nature. What, then, will come to pass if the hindrance of desire¹ is added to our natural darkness? Naught but that which Isaiah describes thus : *Palpavimus, sicut cæci parietem, et quasi absque oculis attrectavimus : impigimus meridiem, quasi in tenebris.*² The prophet is speaking with those who love to follow these their desires. It is as if he had said : We have groped for the wall as though we were blind, and we have been groping as though we had no eyes, and our blindness has attained to such a point that we have stumbled at midday as though it were in the darkness.³ For he that is blinded by desire has this property, that, when he is set in the midst of truth and of that which is good for him, he can no more see it than if he were in darkness.

CHAPTER IX

Wherein is described how the desires defile the soul. This is proved by comparisons and quotations from Holy Scripture.

1. The fourth evil which the desires cause in the soul is that they stain and defile it, as is taught in Ecclesiastes, in these words : *Qui tetigerit picem, inquinabitur ab ea.*⁴ This signifies : He that touches pitch shall be defiled therewith. And a man touches pitch when he allows the desire of his will to be satisfied by any creature. Herein it is to be noted that the Wise Man compares the creatures to pitch ; for there is more difference between excellence of soul⁵ and the best of the creatures⁶ than there is between pure diamond⁷, or fine gold, and pitch. And just as gold or diamond, if it were heated and placed upon pitch, would become foul and be stained by it, inasmuch as the heat would have cajoled and allured the pitch, even so the soul that is hot with desire for any creature draws forth⁸ foulness from it through the heat of its desire and is stained by it. And there is more

¹ [Lit., 'if desire.']

² Isaiah lix, 10.

³ E.p. has slight verbal variations here, the chief being 'as in darkness' for 'as though we had no eyes,' and 'in obscurity' for 'in the darkness.'

⁴ Ecclesiasticus xiii, 1.

⁵ E.p. : 'between the excellence which the soul may have.'

⁶ [More literally : 'and all the best that is of the creatures.' 'Best' is neuter and refers to qualities, appurtenances, etc.]

⁷ [Lit., 'bright diamond.']

⁸ E.p. : 'even so the soul, in the heat of its desire which it has for any creature, derives, etc.'

much so that, if we set out to speak of the foul and vile appearance that the desires can give the soul, we should find nothing, however full of cobwebs and worms it might be, not even the corruption of a dead body, nor aught else that is impure and vile, nor aught that can exist and be imagined in this life, to which we could compare it. For, although it is true that the disordered soul, in its natural being,¹ is as perfect as when God created it, yet, in its reasonable being, it is vile, abominable,² foul, black and full of all the evils that are here being described, and many more. For, as we shall afterwards say, a single unruly desire, although there be in it no matter of mortal sin, suffices to bring a soul into such bondage, foulness and vileness that it can in no wise come to accord with God in union³ until the desire be purified. What will be the vileness of the soul that is completely unrestrained with respect to its own passions and given up to its desires, and how far withdrawn will it be from God and from His purity?

4. It is impossible to explain in words, or to cause to be understood by the understanding, what a variety of impurity is caused in the soul by variety of desire. For, if it could be expressed and understood, it would be a wondrous thing, and one also which would fill us with pity, to see how each desire, in accordance with its quality and degree, be it greater or smaller, leaves in the soul its mark and deposit⁴ of impurity and vileness, and how one single disorder of the reason can be the source of innumerable different impurities, some greater, some less, each one after its kind.⁵ For even as the soul of the righteous man has in one single perfection, which is the uprightness of the soul, innumerable gifts of great richness, and many virtues of great loveliness, each one full of grace after its kind according to the multitude and difference in the affections of love which it has had in God, even so the disordered soul, according to the variety of the desires which it has for the creatures, has in itself a miserable variety of impurities and meannesses, wherewith it is endowed by the said desires.

¹ E.p. : 'natural substance.'

² E.p. omits 'abominable.'

³ E.p. : ' . . . of mortal sin, befouls and stains the soul and renders it unfit to come to accord with God in perfect union.' A, B : 'in any union.' [The Spanish of the text reads literally : 'in a union.']

⁴ E.p. : ' . . . how each desire, in agreement with its quality and intention, leaves its mark and deposit,' etc.

⁵ E.p. omits : 'and how . . . its kind.'

5. This variety of desire¹ is well described in the book of Ezekiel, where it is written that God showed this prophet, in the interior of the Temple, painted around its walls, all likenesses of creeping things which crawl on the ground, and all the abominations of unclean beasts.² And then God said to Ezekiel : Son of man, hast thou not indeed seen the abominations that these do, each one in the secrecy of his chamber?³ And God commanded the Prophet to go in farther and he would see greater abominations ; and he says that he there saw women seated, weeping for Adonis, the god of love.⁴ And God commanded him to go in farther still, and he would see yet greater abominations, and he says that he saw there five-and-twenty old men whose backs were turned toward the Temple.⁵

6. The diversity of creeping things and unclean beasts that were painted in the first chamber of the Temple are the thoughts and conceptions which the understanding fashions from the lowly things of earth, and from all the creatures, which are painted, just as they are, in the temple of the soul, when the soul⁶ embarrasses its understanding with them, which is the soul's first habitation. The women that were farther within, in the second habitation, weeping for the god Adonis, are the desires that are in the second faculty of the soul, which is the will ; the which are, as it were, weeping, inasmuch as they covet that to which the will is affectioned, which are the creeping things painted in the understanding. And the men that were in the third habitation⁷ are the images and representations of the creatures, which the third part⁸ of the soul,—namely memory—keeps and reflects upon⁹ within itself. Of these it is said that their backs are turned toward the Temple because when the soul, according to these three faculties, completely and perfectly embraces anything that is of the earth, it can be said to have its back turned toward the Temple of God, which is the right reason of the soul, which admits within itself nothing that is of creatures.¹⁰

¹ [*Lit.*, 'of desires.'] A, B, e.p. have : 'of impurities.'

² Ezekiel viii, 10.

³ [Ezekiel viii, 12.]

⁴ Ezekiel viii, 14.

⁵ Ezekiel viii, 16.

⁶ E.p. : 'which, being so contrary to things eternal, defile the temple of the soul, and the soul,' etc.

⁷ So Alc., e.p. A, B and some editions have : 'third chamber.'

⁸ E.p. : 'third faculty.'

⁹ [*Lit.*, 'revolves'—'turns over in its mind' in our common idiom.]

¹⁰ E.p. : 'admits within itself no created thing that is opposed to God.'

7. And let this now suffice for the understanding of this foul disorder of the soul with respect to its desires. For if we had to treat in detail of the lesser foulness¹ which these imperfections and their variety make and cause in the soul, and that which is caused by venial sins, which is still greater than that of the imperfections, and their great variety, and likewise that which is caused by the desires for mortal sin, which is complete foulness of the soul, and its great variety, according to the variety and multitude of all these three things, we should never end, nor would the understanding of angels suffice to understand it.² That which I say, and that which is to the point for my purpose, is that any desire, although it be for but the smallest imperfection, stains and defiles the soul.³

CHAPTER X

*Wherein is described how the desires weaken the soul in virtue and make it lukewarm.*⁴

1. The fifth way in which the desires harm the soul is by making it lukewarm and weak, so that it has no strength to follow after virtue and to persevere therein. For as the strength of the desire, when it is divided, is less than if it were set wholly on one thing alone, and as, the more are the objects whereon it is set, the less of it there is for each one of them, for this cause philosophers say that virtue in union is stronger than if it be dispersed. Wherefore it is clear that, if the desire of the will be dispersed among other things than virtue, it must be weaker as regards virtue. And thus the soul whose will is divided among trifles is like water, which, having an outlet below wherein to empty itself, never rises; and such a soul has no profit. For this cause the patriarch Jacob compared his son Reuben to water poured out, because in a certain sin he had given rein to his desires. And he said: Thou art poured out like water; grow thou not.⁵ As though he had said: Since thou art poured out like water as to the desires, thou shalt not grow in virtue. And thus, as hot water, when uncovered, readily

¹ E.p.: 'of the impediment to this union.'

² E.p. shortens: 'and its great diversity, we should never end.'

³ E.p. omits: 'stains . . . soul,' leaving the sentence incomplete.

⁴ E.p. adds: 'This is proved by comparisons and quotations from the Sacred Scripture.'

⁵ Genesis xlix, 4.

loses heat, and as aromatic spices, when they are unwrapped,¹ gradually lose the fragrance and strength of their perfume, even so the soul that is not recollected in one single desire for God loses heat and vigour in its virtue. This was well understood by David, when he said, speaking with God : I will keep my strength for Thee.² That is, concentrating the strength of my desires³ upon Thee alone.

2. And the desires weaken the virtue of the soul, because they are to it like the shoots⁴ that grow about a tree, and take away its virtue so that it cannot bring forth so much fruit. And of such souls as these says the Lord : *Vae pręnantibus, et nutrientibus in illis diebus.*⁵ That is : Woe to them that in those days are with child and to them that give suck. This being with child and giving suck is understood with respect to the desires ; which, if they be not pruned, will ever be taking more virtue from the soul, and will grow to the harm of the soul, like the shoots upon the tree. Wherefore Our Lord counsels us, saying : Have your loins girt about⁶—the loins signifying here the desires. And indeed, they are also like leeches, which are ever sucking the blood from the veins, for thus the Preacher terms them when he says : The leeches are the daughters—that is, the desires—saying ever : *Daca, daca.*⁷

3. From this it is clear that the desires bring no good to the soul but rather take from it that which it has ; and if it mortify them not, they will not cease till they have wrought in it that which the children of the viper are said to work in their mother ; who, as they are growing within her womb, consume her and kill her while they themselves remain alive at her cost. Just so the desires that are not mortified grow to such a point that they kill the soul with respect to God because it has not first killed them. And they alone live in it. Wherefore the Preacher says : *Aufer a me Domine ventris concupiscentias.*⁸

4. And, even though they reach not this point, it is very piteous to consider how the desires that live in this poor soul treat it, how unhappy it is with regard to itself, how dry

¹ A, B : ' . . . spices, not being covered.'

² Psalm lviii, 10 [A.V., lix, 9].

⁴ A, B, e.p. : 'like the twigs and shoots.'

⁵ S. Matthew xxiv, 19.

³ E.p. : 'my affections.'

⁶ S. Luke xii, 35.

⁷ Proverbs xxx, 15. All the codices have this reading. E.p. reads : 'saying ever : "Give me, give me."'

⁸ Ecclesiasticus xxiii, 6. [In the original the last two sentences are transposed.]

with respect to its neighbours, and how weary and slothful with respect to the things of God. For there is no evil humour that makes it as difficult and wearisome for a sick man to walk, or gives him such distaste for eating, as the difficulty and distaste which desire for creatures gives to a soul for following virtue. And thus the reason why many souls have no diligence and eagerness to gain¹ virtue is, as a rule, that they have desires and affections which are not pure and are not fixed upon God.²

CHAPTER XI

Wherein it is proved necessary that the soul that would attain to Divine union should be free from desires, howsoever small.³

1. I expect that for a long time the reader has been wishing to ask whether it be necessary, in order to attain to this high estate of perfection, to undergo first of all total mortification in all the desires, great and small, or if it will suffice to mortify some of them and to leave others, those at least which seem of little moment. For it appears to be a severe and most difficult thing for the soul to be able to attain to such purity and detachment that it has no will and affection for anything.

2. To this I reply : first, that it is true that all the desires are not equally hurtful, nor do they all equally embarrass the soul⁴ (we are speaking of those that are voluntary), for the natural desires hinder the soul little, or not at all, from attaining to union, when they are not consented to nor pass beyond the first movements (that is,⁵ all those wherein the rational will has had no part, whether at first or afterward) ; and to take away these—that is, to mortify them wholly in this life—is impossible. And these hinder not the soul in such a way as to prevent attainment to Divine union, even though they be not, as I say, wholly mortified ; for the natural man may well have them, and yet the soul may be

¹ A, B : ' to work virtue.' E.p. : ' to work virtues.'

² [*Lit.*, ' not pure on God.'] E.p. : ' not pure on God our Lord.'

³ Alc. differs slightly here, chiefly by using a stronger word for ' small.' We might read : ' how very small soever.'

⁴ Alc. omits several lines here, but apparently only through the copyist's negligence.

⁵ [The original has no such explanatory phrase.] E.p., however, reads : ' And I mean by " natural " and " first movements " all those. . . etc.'

quite free from them according to the rational spirit. For it will sometimes come to pass that the soul will be in the full¹ union of the prayer of quiet in the will, while these desires are actually dwelling in the sensual part of the soul,² and the higher part, which is in prayer, will have nothing to do with them. Yet the other voluntary desires, whether they be of mortal sin, which are the gravest, or of venial sin, which are less grave, or whether they be only of imperfections, which are the least grave of all, must be driven away every one, and the soul must be free from them all, howsoever small they be, if it is to come to this complete union; and the reason is that the state of this Divine union consists in the soul's total transformation, according to the will, in the will of God, so that there may be naught in the soul that is contrary to the will of God, but that,³ in all and through all, its movement may be that of the will of God alone.

3. It is for this reason that we say of this state that it is the making of two wills into one—namely, into the will of God, which will⁴ of God is likewise the will of the soul. For if this soul desired any imperfection that God wills not, there would not be made one will of God, since the soul would have a will for that which God had not. It is clear, then, that for the soul to come to unite itself perfectly with God through love and will, it must first be free from all desire of the will, howsoever small. That is, that it must not intentionally and knowingly consent with the will to imperfections, and it must have power and liberty to be able not so to consent intentionally. I say knowingly, because, unintentionally and unknowingly, or without having⁵ the power to do otherwise, it may well fall into imperfections and venial sins, and into the natural desires whereof we have spoken; for of such sins as these which are not voluntary and surreptitious⁶ it is written that the just man shall fall seven times in the day and shall rise up again.⁷ But of the voluntary desires, which are intentional venial sins, though they be for very small things, as I have said, any one that is not

¹ [That is, enjoys all the union that the prayer of quiet gives.] B, e.p. have: 'in high union.'

² Thus A, B. The other authorities [and P. Silverio] read: 'of man.'

³ E.p.: '[and] so that.'

⁴ E.p.: 'the making into one will of God—that is, of my will and the will of God, so that the will,' etc.

⁵ E.p.: 'without wholly having.'

⁶ These last two words occur in Alc. alone.

⁷ Proverbs xxiv, 16.

conquered suffices to impede union.¹ I mean, if this habit be not mortified ; for sometimes certain acts of different desires have not as much power when the habits are mortified.² Still, the soul will attain to the stage of not having even these, for they likewise proceed from a habit of imperfection. But some habits of voluntary imperfections, which are never completely conquered, prevent not only the attainment of Divine union, but also progress in perfection. x 4

4. These habitual imperfections are, for example, a common custom of much speaking, or some attachment which we never wish entirely to conquer—such as that to a person, a garment, a book, a cell, a particular kind of food, tittle-tattle, fancies for tasting, knowing or hearing certain things, and suchlike. Any one of these imperfections, if the soul has become attached and habituated to it, is of as great harm to its growth and progress in virtue as though it were to fall daily into many other imperfections and casual venial sins³ which proceed not from a common indulgence in any common⁴ and harmful attachment, and will not hinder it so much as when it has attachment to anything. For while it has this there is no possibility that it will make progress in perfection, even though the imperfection⁵ be extremely small. For it is the same thing if a bird be held by a slender cord or by a stout one ; since, even if it be slender, the bird will be as well held as though it were stout, for so long as it breaks it not and flies not away. It is true that the slender one is the easier to break ; still, easy though it be, the bird will not fly away if it be not broken. And thus the soul that has attachment to anything, however much virtue it possess, will not attain to the liberty of Divine union. For the desire and the attachment of the soul have that power which the sucking-fish⁶ is said to have when it clings to a ship ; for, though but a very small fish, if it succeed in clinging to the ship, it makes it impossible for it to reach the port, or to sail onward. It is sad to see certain souls in this plight ; like rich vessels, x 5

¹ [The original omits 'union.'] Only Alc. reads : ' which are intentional venial sins.' E.p. reads : ' But of desires which are voluntary and quite intentional, though they be for very small things, as has been said, any one that is not conquered suffices to impede.'

² Alc. only has : ' when . . . mortified.' E.p. substitutes : ' since they have not become a definite habit.' A, B read similarly, but omit ' not.'

³ E.p. : ' many other and even greater imperfections.'

⁴ E.p. omits this second ' common.'

⁵ E.p. : ' that the soul will reach perfection, though the thing,' etc.

⁶ [Or 'remora']

they are laden with wealth and good works and spiritual exercises, and with the virtues and the favours that God grants them ; and yet, because they have not the courage to break with some whim or attachment or affection (which are all the same), they never make progress or reach the port of perfection,¹ though they would need to do no more than make one good flight and thus to snap that cord of desire right off, or to rid themselves of that sucking-fish of desire which clings to them.²

5. It is greatly to be lamented that, when God has granted them strength to break the other and stouter cords³ of affections for sins and vanities, they should fail to attain⁴ to such blessing because they have not shaken off some childish thing which God has bidden them conquer⁵ for love of Him, and which is nothing more than a thread or a hair.⁶ And, what is worse, not only do they make no progress, but because of this attachment they fall back,⁷ lose that⁸ which they have gained, and retrace that part of the road along which they have travelled⁹ at the cost of so much time and labour ; for we know that, on this road, not to go forward is to turn back, and not to be gaining is to be losing. This Our Lord desired to teach us when He said : He that is not with Me is against Me ; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth.¹⁰ He that takes not the trouble to repair the vessel, however slight be the crack in it, is likely to spill all the liquid that is within it. The Preacher taught us this clearly when he said : He that contemneth small things shall fall little by little.¹¹ For, as he himself says, the fire is increased by a single spark.¹² And thus one imperfection

¹ E.p. : ' neither can attain to the port of perfect union.'

² E.p. omits : ' which clings to them.'

³ [This is a stronger word than that used above, which, if the context would permit, might better be translated 'string'—its equivalent in modern speech. Below, this earlier word is translated 'thread.']

⁴ E.p. : ' fail to progress and to attain.'

⁵ A, B, e.p. : ' God left them to conquer.'

⁶ E.p. omits : ' or a hair.' [The word rendered 'thread,' as explained in n. 3, above, can also be taken in the stronger sense of 'cord.']

⁷ E.p. adds : ' in the matter of perfection.'

⁸ E.p. : ' losing something of that.'

⁹ E.p. omits : ' and retrace . . . travelled.'

¹⁰ S. Matthew xii, 30. E.p. reads : ' For we know that, on this spiritual road, not to go forward victoriously is to turn back ; and not to be gaining is to be losing. This Our Lord desired to teach us when He said : He that gathereth not with Me, scattereth.'

¹¹ Ecclesiasticus xix, 1. E.p. adds : ' in great things.'

¹² Ecclesiasticus xi, 34 [A.V., xi, 32].

is sufficient to lead to another; and these lead to yet more; wherefore you will hardly ever see a soul that is negligent in conquering one desire, and that has not many more arising from the same weakness and imperfection that this desire causes. In this way they are continually falling; we have seen many persons to whom God has been granting the favour of leading them a long way, into a state of great detachment and liberty, yet who, merely through beginning to indulge some small attachment, under the pretext of being good, or in the guise of conversation and friendship, often lose their spirituality and desire for God and holy solitude, fall from the joy and whole-hearted devotion which they had in their spiritual exercises, and cease not until they have lost everything; and this because they broke not with that beginning of sensual desire and pleasure and kept not themselves in solitude for God.

6. Upon this road we must ever journey in order to attain our goal; which means that we must ever be mortifying our desires and not indulging them; and if they are not all completely mortified we shall not completely attain. For even as a log of wood may fail to be transformed in the fire because a single degree of heat is wanting to it, even so the soul will not be transformed in God if it have but one imperfection, although it be something less than voluntary desire;¹ for, as we shall say hereafter concerning the night of faith, the soul has only one will, and that will, if it be embarrassed by aught and set upon aught, is not free,² solitary and pure, as is necessary for Divine transformation.

7. Of what has been said we have a figure in the Book of Judges, where it is related that the angel came to the children of Israel and said to them that, because they had not destroyed that froward people, but had leagued themselves with some of them, they would therefore be left among them as their enemies, that they might be to them an occasion of stumbling and perdition.³ And exactly so does God deal with certain souls: though He has taken them out of the world,⁴ and slain the giants of their sins, and destroyed the multitude of their enemies, which are the occasions of sin that they had in the world, solely that they may enter this Promised Land of Divine union with greater liberty, yet

¹ E.p. omits: 'although . . . desire.'

² A, B, e.p.: 'is not completely free.'

³ Judges ii, 3.

⁴ A, B: 'of the perils of the world.' E.p.: 'of the Egypt of the world.'

they harbour friendship and make alliance with the insignificant peoples¹—that is, with imperfections—and mortify them not completely ; therefore Our Lord is angry, and allows them² to fall into their desires and go from bad to worse.

8. In the Book of Joshua, again, we have a figure of what has just been said—where we read that God commanded Joshua, at the time that he had to enter into possession of the Promised Land, to destroy all that were in the city of Jericho, in such wise as to leave therein nothing alive, man or woman, young or old, and to slay all the beasts, and to take naught, neither to covet aught, of the spoils.³ This He said that we may understand how, if a man is to enter this Divine union, all that lives in his soul must die, both little and much, small and great, and that the soul must be without desire for all this, and detached from it, even as though it existed not for the soul, neither the soul for it. This S. Paul teaches us clearly in his epistle *ad Corinthios*, saying : This I say to you, brethren, that the time is short ; it remains, and it behoves you, that they that have wives should be as though they had none ; and they that weep for the things of this world, as though they wept not ; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ;⁴ and they that buy, as though they possessed not ; and they that use this world, as though they used it not.⁵ This the Apostle says to us in order to teach us how great must be the detachment of our soul from all things if it is to journey to God.

CHAPTER XII

Which treats of the answer to another question,⁶ explaining what the desires are that suffice to cause the evils aforementioned in the soul.

1. We might write at greater length upon this matter of the night of sense, saying all that there is to say concerning

¹ [The original phrase (*gente menuda*) means 'little folk.' It is used of children and sometimes also of insects and other small creatures. There is a marked antithesis between the 'giants,' or sins, and the 'little folk,' or imperfections.]

² E.p. : 'therefore, since they live negligently and slothfully, His Majesty is wroth and allows them,' etc.

⁴ E.p. omits this clause.

⁶ E.p. : 'Answers another question.'

³ Joshua vi, 21.

⁵ 1 Corinthians vii, 29-31.

the harm which is caused by the desires, not only in the ways aforementioned, but in many others. But for our purpose that which has been said suffices ; for we believe we have made it clear in what way the mortification of these desires is called night, and how it behoves us to enter this night in order to journey to God. The only thing that remains, before we treat of the manner of entrance therein, in order to end this part, is a question concerning what has been said which might occur to the reader.

2. It may first be asked if any desire suffices to work and produce in the soul the two evils aforementioned—namely, the privative, which consists in depriving the soul of the grace of God, and the positive, which consists in causing within it the five serious evils whereof we have spoken.¹ Secondly, it may be asked if any desire, however small it be and of whatever kind, suffices to cause all these together,² or if some desires cause some and others cause others. If, for example, some cause torment ; others, weariness ; others, darkness, etc.

3. Answering this, I say, first of all, that with respect to the privative evil—which consists in the soul's being deprived of God, this is wrought wholly,³ and can only be wrought, by the voluntary desires, which are of the matter of mortal sin ; for they deprive the soul of grace in this life, and of glory, which is the possession of God, in the next. In the second place, I say that both those desires which are of the matter of mortal sin, and the voluntary desires, which are of the matter of venial sin, and those that are of the matter of imperfection, are each sufficient to produce in the soul all these positive evils together ; the which evils, although in a certain way they are privative, we here call positive, since they correspond to a turning towards the creature, even as the privative evils correspond to a turning away from God.⁴ But there is this difference, that the desires of mortal sin cause total blindness, torment, impurity, weakness, etc. But those others, which are of the matter of venial sin or imperfection,⁵ produce not these evils in a complete and supreme degree, since they deprive not the soul of grace,

¹ E.p. abbreviates : ' . . . cause in the soul the two evils, positive and privative, already described.'

² So Alc. A, e.p. have : ' all these five evils together.' B : ' all these evils together.'

³ E.p. omits ' wholly.'

⁴ E.p. omits : ' the which . . . from God.'

⁵ E.p. : ' or known imperfection.'

whereon depends the possession of them ;¹ since the death of the soul is their life ; but they cause them in the soul remissly, proportionately to the remission of grace which these desires cause in the soul.² So that that desire which most weakens grace will cause the most abundant torment, blindness and defilement.³

4. But it is to be noted that, although each desire produces all these evils, which we here term positive, there are some which, principally and directly, produce some of them, and others which produce others, and the remainder are produced consequently upon these. For, although it is true that one sensual desire produces all these evils, yet its principal and proper effect is the defilement of the soul and body. And although one avaricious desire likewise produces them all, its principal and direct result is to cause misery. And although similarly one vainglorious desire produces them all, its principal and direct result is to cause darkness and blindness.⁴ And although one gluttonous desire produces them all, its principal result is to cause lukewarmness in virtue. And even so with the rest.

5. And the reason why any act of voluntary desire produces in the soul all these effects together lies in the direct contrariety which exists between them and all the acts of virtue which produce the contrary effects in the soul. For, even as an act of virtue produces and begets in the soul sweetness, peace, consolation, light, cleanliness and fortitude all together, even so an unruly desire causes torment, fatigue, weariness, blindness and weakness. All the virtues increase by the practice of any one of them, and all the vices increase by the practice of any one of them likewise, and the remnants⁵ of each increase in the soul. And although all these evils are not visible at the moment when the desire is indulged, since the resulting pleasure gives no occasion for them, yet their evil remnants are clearly perceived, whether before or afterwards. This is very well illustrated by that book which the angel commanded S. John to eat, in

¹ E.p. : ' . . . of grace, with the which privation goes together the possession of them.'

² E.p. : ' But they cause something of these evils, although remissly, proportionately to the lukewarmness and remission which they cause in the soul.'

³ E.p. : ' will cause more abundantly torment, blindness and non-purity.'

⁴ Alc. unintentionally omits this sentence.

⁵ E.p. : ' the effects.' [The word translated ' remnants ' also means ' after-taste. ']

the Apocalypse, the which book was sweetness to his mouth, and in his belly bitterness.¹ For the desire, when it is sated, is sweet and appears to be good, but its bitter effect is felt afterwards ; the truth of this can be clearly proved by anyone who allows himself to be led away by it. Yet I am not ignorant that there are some men so blind and insensible as not to feel this, for, as they do not walk in God, they are unable to perceive that which hinders them from approaching Him.

6. I am not writing here of the other natural desires which are not voluntary, and of thoughts that go not beyond the first movements, and other temptations to which the soul is not consenting ; for these produce in the soul none of the evils aforementioned. For, although a person who suffers them may believe that the passion and disturbance which they then cause him are defiling and blinding him, it is not so ; rather they are bringing him the opposite advantages.² For, in so far as he resists them, he gains fortitude, purity, light and consolation, and many blessings, even as Our Lord said to S. Paul : That virtue was made perfect in weakness.³ But the voluntary desires work all the evils aforementioned, and more. Wherefore the principal anxiety of spiritual masters is to mortify their disciples immediately of any desire soever, causing them to remain without the objects of their desires, in order to free them from such great misery.

CHAPTER XIII

*Wherein is described the way and manner which the soul must observe in order to enter this night of sense.*⁴

1. It now remains for me to give certain counsels whereby the soul may know how to enter this night of sense and may be able to enter therein. To this end it must be known that the soul habitually enters this night of sense in two ways : the one is active ; the other passive. The active way consists in what the soul can do of itself, and in what it does,⁵

¹ Revelation x, 9. This sentence is omitted by e.p.

² E.p. inserts the important modifying adverb 'occasionally.'

³ 2 Corinthians xii, 9. ['Virtue' had often, in the author's day, much of the meaning of the modern word 'strength.']

⁴ The title in e.p. is : 'Of the way and manner which the soul must observe in order to enter this night of sense through faith.'

⁵ The earlier editions add : 'aided by grace.'

in order to enter therein, whereof we shall now treat in the counsels which follow. The passive way is that wherein the soul does nothing,¹ and God works in the soul, and it remains, as it were, patient.² Of this we shall treat in the fourth book,³ where we have to treat of beginners. And because we shall there, with the Divine favour, give many counsels to beginners, according to the many imperfections which they are liable to have on this road, I shall not spend time in giving many here. And this, too, because it belongs not to this place to give them, as at present we are treating only of the reasons for which this journey is called a night, and of what kind it is, and how many parts it has. But, as it seems that it would be incomplete, and less profitable than it should be, if we gave no help or counsel here for walking in this night of the desires, I have thought well to set down briefly here the way which is to be followed: and I shall do the same at the end of each of the next two parts, or causes, of this night, whereof, with the help of the Lord, I have to treat.

2. These counsels for the conquering of the desires, which now follow, albeit brief and few, I believe to be as profitable and efficacious as they are concise; so that one who sincerely desires to practise them will need no others, but will find them all included in these.

3. First, let him have an habitual desire⁴ to imitate Christ in everything that he does, conforming himself to His life; upon which life he must meditate so that he may know how to imitate it, and to behave in all things as Christ would behave.

4. Secondly, in order that he may be able to do this well, every pleasure that presents itself to the senses, if it be not purely for the honour and glory of God, must be renounced and completely rejected for the love of Jesus Christ, Who in this life had no other pleasure, neither desired such, than to do the will of His Father, which He called His meat and food.⁵ I take this example. If there present itself to a man the pleasure of listening to things that tend not to the service

¹ The earlier editions add: 'as of itself or by its own effort.'

² The earlier editions have: 'but God works it in the soul with more special aids, and the soul is, as it were, patient, consenting thereto freely.'

³ The earlier editions have: 'in the *Dark Night*': it is, of course, that treatise that is referred to.

⁴ E.p. has 'care and affection' for 'desire.' [The word used for desire is *apetito*, which has been used in the past chapters for desires of sense (cf. p. 17, n. 5, above).]

⁵ [S. John iv, 34.]

and honour of God, let him not desire that pleasure, neither let him desire to hear them ; and if there present itself the pleasure of looking at things that help him not Godward,¹ let him not desire the pleasure or look at these things ; and if in conversation or in aught else soever it present itself, let him do the same. And similarly with respect to all the senses, in so far as he can fairly avoid the pleasure in question ; if he cannot, it suffices that although these things may be present to his senses, he desire not to have this pleasure. And in this wise he will be able to mortify and void his senses of such pleasure, and leave them, as it were, in darkness. And having this care he will soon profit greatly.

5. For the mortifying and calming of the four natural passions, which are joy, hope, fear and grief, from the concord and pacification of which come these blessings, and others likewise, the counsels which follow are of the greatest help, and of great merit, and the source of great virtues.

6. Strive always to choose, not that which is easiest, but that which is most difficult ;

Not that which is most delectable, but that which is most unpleasing ;

Not that which gives most pleasure, but rather that which gives least ;²

Not that which is restful, but that which is wearisome ;

Not that which gives consolation, but rather that which makes disconsolate ;

Not that which is greatest, but that which is least ;

Not that which is loftiest, and most precious, but that which is lowest and most despised ;

Not that which is³ a desire for anything, but that which is a desire for nothing ;

Strive not to go about seeking the best of temporal things, but the worst.

Strive thus to desire to enter into complete detachment and emptiness and poverty, with respect to that which is in the world, for Christ's sake.

7. And it is meet that the soul embrace these acts with all its heart and strive to subject its will thereto. For, if it perform them with its heart, it will very quickly come to

¹ E.p. : ' that lead him not Godward.'

² B, e.p. : ' that which gives none.' E.p. omits ' rather.'

³ [Lit., ' Not that which is to desire anything, etc.']

find in them great delight and consolation, and to act with order and discretion.

8. These things that have been said, if they be faithfully put into practice, are quite sufficient for entrance into the night of sense ; but, for greater completeness, we shall describe another kind of exercise which teaches us to mortify the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which, says S. John,¹ are the things that reign in the world, from which all the other desires proceed.²

9. First, let the soul strive to work in its own despite, and desire all to do so.³ Secondly, let it strive to speak in its own despite and desire all to do so.⁴ Third, let it strive to think humbly of itself, in its own despite, and desire all to do so.⁵

10. In concluding these counsels and rules, it is well to set down here those lines which are written in the Ascent of the Mount,⁶ which is the figure that is at the beginning of this book ; the which lines are instructions for mounting it, and thus reaching the summit of union. For, although it is true that that which is there spoken of is spiritual and interior, there is reference likewise to the spirit of imperfection according to sensual and exterior things, as may be seen by the two roads which are on either side of the path of perfection. It is in this way and according to this sense that we shall understand them here ; that is to say, according to that which is sensual. Afterwards, in the second part of this night, they will be understood according to that which is spiritual.⁷

11. The lines are these :

In order to arrive at having⁸ pleasure in everything,
Desire to have pleasure in nothing.

¹ [1 S. John ii, 16.]

² E.p. abbreviates : ' which teaches us to mortify truly the desire for honour, whence originate many other [desires]. '

³ A, B, e.p. : ' others to do so. ' A, B add : ' and this is against the concupiscence of the flesh. '

⁴ A, B add : ' and this is against the concupiscence of the eyes. '

⁵ A, B add : ' likewise against it ; and this is against the pride of life. '

⁶ A, B, C, D, e.p. have ' figure ' for ' ascent. ' The reference is to the diagram which is reproduced as the frontispiece to this volume. Cf. also p. xxxiv, above.

⁷ The Saint does not, however, allude to these lines again. The order followed below is that of Alc., which differs somewhat from that followed in the diagram.

⁸ E.p. : ' to have. '

In order to arrive at possessing everything,
Desire to possess nothing.¹

In order to arrive at being everything,
Desire to be nothing.

In order to arrive at knowing everything,
Desire to know nothing.

In order to arrive at that wherein thou hast no pleasure,
Thou must go by a way wherein thou hast no pleasure.

In order to arrive at that which thou knowest not,
Thou must go by a way that thou knowest not.

In order to arrive at that which thou possessest not,
Thou must go by a way that thou possessest not.

In order to arrive at that which thou art not,
Thou must go through that which thou art not.

THE WAY NOT TO IMPEDE THE ALL

12. When thou thinkest upon anything,
Thou ceasest to cast thyself upon the All.

For, in order to pass from the all to the All,
Thou hast to deny thyself² wholly³ in all.

And, when thou comest to possess it wholly,
Thou must possess it without desiring anything.

For, if thou wilt have anything in all,
Thou hast not thy treasure purely in God.

13. In this detachment the spiritual soul finds its quiet and repose ; for, since it covets nothing, nothing wearies it when it is lifted up, and nothing oppresses it when it is cast down, for it is in the centre of its humility ; since, when it covets anything, at that very moment it becomes wearied.⁴

CHAPTER XIV

*Wherein is expounded the second line of the stanza.*⁵

Kindled in love with yearnings.

1. Now that we have expounded the first line of this stanza, which treats of the night of sense, explaining what

¹ [This line, like ll. 6, 8 of the paragraph, reads more literally : ' Desire not to possess (be, know) anything in anything.' It is more emphatic than l. 2.]

² Thus Alc., A, B, C, D. E.p. repeats : ' cast thyself.'

³ [There is a repetition here which could only be indicated by translating ' all-ly.' So, too, in the next couplet.]

⁴ A, B add : ' and tormented.'

⁵ E.p. : ' of the above-mentioned stanza.'

this night of sense is, and why it is called night ; and now that we have likewise described the order and manner which are to be followed for a soul to enter therein actively, the next thing to be treated in due sequence is its properties and effects, which are wonderful, and are described in the next lines of the stanza aforementioned, upon which I will briefly touch for the sake of expounding the said lines,¹ as I promised in the Prologue ;² and I will then pass on at once to the second book, treating of the other part of this night, which is the spiritual.

2. The soul, then, says that, ' kindled in love with yearnings,' it passed through this dark night of sense and came out thence to the union of the Beloved. For, in order to conquer all the desires and to deny itself the pleasures which it has in everything, and for which its love and affection are wont to enkindle the will that it may enjoy them, it would be necessary to experience another and a greater enkindling by another and a better love, which is that of its Spouse ; to the end that, having its pleasure set upon Him and deriving from Him its strength, it should have courage and constancy to deny itself all other things with ease. And not only would it be needful, in order to conquer the strength of the desires of sense, to have love for its Spouse but also to be enkindled by love and to have yearnings. For it comes to pass, and so it is, that with such yearnings of desire the sensual nature is moved and attracted to sensual things, so that, if the spiritual part is not enkindled with other and greater yearnings for that which is spiritual, it will be unable to throw off the yoke of nature³ or to enter this night of sense, neither will it have courage to remain in darkness as to all things, depriving itself of desire for them all.

3. And the nature and different varieties of these yearnings of love which souls have in the early stages of this road to union ; and the diligent means and contrivances which they employ in order to leave their house, which is self-will, during the night of the mortification of their senses ; and how easy, and even sweet and delectable,⁴ these yearnings for the Spouse make all the trials and perils of this night to

¹ E.p. omits : ' for . . . lines.'

² This confirms our point (p. 19, n. 4, above) that the Saint considers the Argument as part of the Prologue. A and B omit the rest of this paragraph.

³ [*Lit.*, ' to conquer the natural yoke. '] E.p. has : ' the sensual and material yoke.'

⁴ E.p. omits : ' and delectable.'

BOOK THE SECOND

OF THE 'ASCENT OF MOUNT CARMEL'¹

*Wherein is treated the proximate means of ascending to union with God, which is faith; and wherein is therefore described the second part of this night, which, as we said, belongs to the spirit, and is contained in the second stanza, which is as follows.*²

STANZA THE SECOND

CHAPTER I³

In darkness and secure, By the secret ladder, disguised—oh, happy chance!—

In darkness and in concealment, My house being now at rest.

1. In this second stanza the soul sings of the happy chance which it experienced in stripping the spirit of all spiritual imperfections and desires for the possession of spiritual things. This was a much greater happiness to it, by reason of the greater difficulty that there is in putting to rest this house of the spiritual part, and of being able to enter this interior darkness, which is spiritual detachment from all things, whether sensual or spiritual, and a leaning on pure faith⁴ alone⁵ and an ascent thereby to God. The soul here calls this a 'ladder,' and 'secret,' because all the rungs and parts of it⁶ are secret and hidden from all sense and understanding. And thus the soul has remained in darkness as to all light⁷ of sense and understanding, going forth beyond all limits of

¹ So both codices and e.p.

² E.p. abbreviates: 'Treats of the proximate means of attaining to union with God, which is faith, and of the second night of the spirit, contained in the second stanza.' It should be observed that the Saint calls this Second Book 'the second (spiritual) night' (e.g., on p. 78 below, and elsewhere).

³ The chapter-headings vary considerably in the codices and editions. B. treats this chapter as an exposition and numbers from the next onward.

⁴ E.p.: 'on living faith.'

⁵ In parenthesis e.p. adds: 'and of this I am ordinarily speaking because I treat with persons who journey to perfection.'

⁶ [*Lit.*, 'all the steps and articles that it has.']

⁷ E.p.: 'all natural light.'

nature and reason in order to ascend by this Divine ladder of faith, which attains¹ and penetrates even to the heights² of God. The soul says that it was travelling 'disguised,' because it wears its garments and vesture³ and natural condition changed into the Divine, as it ascends by faith. And this disguise was the cause of its not being recognized or impeded, either by time or by reason or by the devil; for none of these things can harm one that journeys in faith. And not only so, but the soul travels in such wise concealed and hidden and is so far from all the deceits of the devil that in truth it journeys (as it also says here) 'in darkness and in concealment'—that is to say, hidden from the devil, to whom the light of faith is more than darkness.

2. And thus the soul that journeys through this night, we may say, journeys in concealment and in hiding from the devil, as will be more clearly seen hereafter. Wherefore the soul says that it went forth 'in darkness and secure'; for one that has such happiness as to be able to journey through the darkness of faith, taking faith for his guide, like to one that is blind,⁴ and going forth from all phantasms of nature and reasonings of the spirit, journeys very securely, as we have said. And so the soul says furthermore that it went forth through this spiritual night, its 'house being now at rest'—that is to say, its spiritual and rational part. When, therefore, the soul attains to union with God, it has both its natural faculties at rest, and likewise its impulses and yearnings of the senses,⁵ as to the spiritual part. For this cause the soul says not here that it went forth with yearnings, as in the first night of sense. For, in order to journey in the night of sense, and to strip itself of that which is of sense, it needed yearnings of sense-love so that it might go forth perfectly; but, in order to put to rest the house of its spirit, it needs no more than denial⁶ of all faculties and pleasures

¹ [*Lit.*, 'climbs': the verb (*escala*) is identical with the noun 'ladder' (*escala*).] ² [*Lit.*, 'to the depths.']

³ Only Alc. has: 'vesture.'

⁴ [The literal translation is shorter, *viz.* 'taking faith for a blind man's guide.'] ⁵ Alc. omits: 'of the senses.'

⁶ [*Lit.*, negation.] This is the reading of Alc. 'Affirmation' is found in A, B, C, D, e.p. Though the two words are antithetical, they express the same underlying concept. [The affirmation, or establishment, of all the powers and desires of the spirit upon pure faith, so that they may be ruled by pure faith alone, is equivalent to the denial, or negation, of those powers and desires in so far as they are not ruled by pure faith.]

3. We have now to prove how this second part, which is faith, is night to the spirit, even as the first part is night to sense. And we shall then describe also the things that are contrary to it, and how the soul must prepare itself actively to enter therein. For, concerning the passive part, which is that which God works in it, when He brings it into that night, we shall speak in its place, which I intend shall be the third book.¹

CHAPTER III

*How faith is dark night to the soul. This is proved with arguments and quotations and figures from Scripture.*²

1. Faith, say the theologians, is a habit of the soul, certain and obscure. And the reason for its being an obscure habit is that it makes us believe truths revealed by God Himself, which transcend all natural light, and exceed all human understanding, beyond all proportion.³ Hence it follows that, for the soul, this excessive light of faith which is given to it is thick darkness, for it overwhelms that which is great and does away with that which is little, even as the light of the sun overwhelms all other lights whatsoever, so that when it shines and disables our powers of vision they appear not to be lights at all. So that it blinds it and deprives it of the sight that has been given to it, inasmuch as its light is great beyond all proportion and surpasses the powers of vision. Even so the light of faith, by its excessive greatness, oppresses and disables that of the understanding;⁴ for the latter, of its own power, extends only to natural knowledge, although it has a faculty⁵ for the supernatural, when Our

¹ Here end Alc. and e.p. A, B add: 'as we have already spoken and promised to speak of the passive [part] of the first [night] in the second [book].'

² A, B omit this sentence.

³ E.p. omits: 'beyond all proportion.'

⁴ E.p.: 'by its excessive greatness and by the way wherein God communicates it, transcends that of our understanding.'

⁵ E.p.: 'an obediencial faculty' [*potencia obediencial*]: this phrase is borrowed from the Schoolmen. Among the various divisions of the faculty are two, natural and obediencial. The first is that which is directed towards an act within the power of nature; the second is directed towards an act which exceeds these powers, by God, Who is outside the laws of nature and can therefore work outside the natural domain. This obediencial faculty (called also 'receptive' or 'passive') frequently figures in mystical theology, since it is this that disposes the faculties of the soul for the supernatural reception of the gifts of grace, all of which exceed natural capacity.

Lord may be pleased to bring it to a supernatural action.

2. Wherefore a man can know nothing by himself, save after a natural manner,¹ which is only that which he attains by means of the senses. For this cause he must have the phantasms and the figures² of objects present in themselves and in their resemblances;³ otherwise it cannot be, for, as philosophers say : *Ab objeto et potentia paritur notitia*. That is : From the object that is present and from the faculty, knowledge is born in the soul. Wherefore, if one should speak to a man of things which he has never been able to understand, and whose likeness he has never seen, he would have no more illumination from them whatever than if naught had been said of them to him. I take an example. If one should say to a man that on a certain island there is an animal which he has never seen, and give him no idea of the appearance of that animal, that he may compare it with others that he has seen, he will have no more knowledge or imagination of it than he had before, however much is being said to him about it. And this will be better understood by another and a clearer example. If they should describe to a man that was born blind, and has never seen any colour, what is meant by a white colour or by a yellow, he would understand it but indifferently, however much they might describe it to him ; for, as he has never seen such colours or anything like them by which he may judge them, only their names would remain with him ; for these he would be able to comprehend through his hearing, but not their forms or figures, since he has never seen them.

3. Even so⁴ is faith with respect to the soul ; it tells us of things which we have never seen or understood, either in themselves, or in aught that resembles them, since they resemble naught at all.⁵ And thus we have no light of natural

¹ E.p. : ' a natural manner which has its beginning in the senses.' Here the Saint expounds a principle of scholastic philosophy summarized in the axiom : *Nihil est in intellectu quin prius non fuerit in sensu*. This principle, like many other great philosophical questions, has continually been debated. S. John of the Cross will be found as a rule to follow the philosophy most favoured by the Church and is always rigidly orthodox.

² E.p. : ' the phantasms and senses.'

³ E.p. uses *semejanzas*, the abstract noun ; the codices have *semejantes* [a word which can be either abstract or concrete, in the latter case with the sense of ' fellow-creatures '].

⁴ E.p. adds in parenthesis : ' though not equivalent in every way.'

⁵ E.p. : ' or in aught that resembles them, which might bring us to a knowledge of them without revelation.'

knowledge concerning them, since that which we are told of them has no relation to any sense of ours ; we know it by the ear alone, believing that which we are taught, bringing our natural light into subjection and treating it as if it were not.¹ For, as S. Paul says, *Fides ex auditu*.² As though he were to say : Faith is not knowledge which enters by any of the senses, but is only the consent given by the soul to that which enters³ through the hearing.

4. And faith greatly surpasses even that which is suggested by the examples given above. For not only does it give no knowledge and science,⁴ but, as we have said, it deprives us of all other knowledge and science, and blinds us to them, so that they cannot judge it well.⁵ For other sciences can be acquired by the light of the understanding ; but the science that is of faith is acquired without the illumination of the understanding, which is rejected for faith ; and in its own light it is lost, if that light be not darkened. Wherefore Isaiah said : *Si non credideritis, non intelligetis*.⁶ That is : If ye believe not, ye shall not understand. It is clear, then, that faith is dark night for the soul, and it is in this way that it gives it light ; and the more it is darkened, the greater light comes to it. For it is by blinding that it gives light, according to this saying of Isaiah : For if ye believe not, ye shall not (he says) have light.⁷ And thus faith was foreshadowed by that cloud which divided the children of Israel and the Egyptians when the former were about to enter the Red Sea, whereof Scripture says that : *Erat nubes tenebrosa, et illuminans noctem*.⁸ This is to say that that cloud was full of darkness and gave light by night.

5. A wondrous thing it is that, though it was dark, it should give light by night. This was in order that faith, which is a black and dark cloud to the soul (and likewise is night, since in the presence of faith the soul is deprived of its

¹ [*Lit.*, 'submitting and blinding our natural light.']

² Romans x, 17.

³ E.p. : 'but is superior light which enters.'

⁴ E.p. : 'no evidence or science.'

⁵ E.p. : 'but, as we have said, it surpasses and transcends any other knowledge and science, so that we may only judge of it in perfect contemplation.'

⁶ Isaiah vii, 9. So Alc. The passage seems to be taken from the Septuagint.

⁷ [*Lit.*, 'If ye believe not, that is, ye shall not have light.'] E.p. evidently found this not clear, for it expands the sentence thus : For if ye believe not—that is, if ye blind not yourselves—ye shall not understand—that is, ye shall not have light and knowledge both lofty and supernatural.

⁸ Exodus xiv, 20.

natural light and is blinded), should with its darkness give light and illumination to the darkness of the soul, for thus it was fitting that the disciple should be like the master. For man, who is in darkness, could not fittingly be enlightened save by other darkness, even as David teaches us, saying : *Dies diei eructat verbum et nox nocti indicat scientiam*.¹ Which signifies : Day unto day uttereth and aboundeth in speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. Which, speaking more clearly, signifies : The day, which is God in bliss, where it is day to the blessed angels and souls which are now day, communicates and reveals² the Word, which is His Son, that they may know Him and rejoice in Him. And the night, which is faith in the Church Militant, where it is still night, shows knowledge to the Church, and consequently to every soul, which knowledge is night to it, since it is deprived of³ clear beatific wisdom ; and, in the presence of faith, it is blind as to this natural light.

6. So that which is to be inferred from this is that faith, because it is dark night, gives light to the soul, which is in darkness, that there may come to be fulfilled⁴ that which David likewise says to this purpose, in these words : *Et nox illuminatio mea in deliciis meis*.⁵ Which signifies : The night will be my illumination in my delights. Which is as much as to say : In the delights of my pure contemplation and union with God, the night of faith shall be my guide. Wherein he gives it clearly to be understood⁶ that the soul must be in darkness in order to have light for this road.⁷

CHAPTER IV

Treats in general of how the soul likewise must be in darkness, in so far as this rests with itself, to the end that it may be effectively guided by faith to the highest contemplation.

1. It is now, I think, becoming clear how faith is dark night to the soul, and how the soul likewise must be dark,

¹ Psalm xviii, 3 [A.V., xix, 2].

² Thus e.p. modifies the reading of the codices : 'and pronounces the Word.'

³ E.p. : 'since it does not yet enjoy.'

⁴ E.p. : 'that there may come and may be fulfilled.'

⁵ Psalm cxxxviii, 11 [A.V., cxxxix, 11].

⁶ E.p. abbreviates : 'Giving it to be understood.'

⁷ E.p. : 'in order to have light and to be able to walk on this road.'

or in darkness as to its own light,¹ so that it may allow itself to be guided by faith to this high goal of union. But, in order that the soul may be able to do this, it will now be well to continue describing, in somewhat greater detail, this darkness which the soul must have, in order that it may enter into this abyss of faith. And thus in this chapter I shall speak of it in a general way ; and hereafter, with the Divine favour, I shall continue to describe more minutely the way in which the soul is to conduct itself that it may neither stray therein nor impede this guide.

2. I say, then, that the soul, in order to be effectively guided to this state by faith, must not only be in darkness with respect to that part that concerns the creatures and temporal things, which is the sensual and the lower part (whereof we have already treated), but that likewise it must be blinded and darkened according to the part which has respect to God and to spiritual things, which is the rational and higher part,² whereof we are now treating. For, in order that one may attain supernatural transformation, it is clear that he must be set in darkness and carried far away from all that is contained in his nature,³ which is sensual and rational. For the word supernatural means that which soars above the natural ; so that the natural self remains beneath. For, although this transformation and union is something that cannot be comprehended by human ability and sense, it must completely and voluntarily void itself of all that can enter into it,⁴ whether from above or from below,—I mean according to the affection and will—so far as this rests with itself. For who shall prevent God from doing that which He will in the soul that is resigned, annihilated and detached ? But the soul must be voided of all such things as can enter⁵ its capacity, so that,⁶ however many supernatural things it may have, it will ever remain as it were detached from them and in darkness. It must be like to a blind man, leaning upon dark faith, taking it for guide and light, and leaning upon none of the things that he understands, experiences, feels and imagines. For all these

¹ A, e.p. : ' its own natural light.'

² Alc. alone reads : ' the reason and the higher part.'

³ E.p. : ' all that belongs to his nature.'

⁴ So Alc. The other authorities have : ' that can be contained in it.'

[The difference is slight : *caer* for *caber*.]

⁵ The variant of the preceding note is repeated here.

⁶ E.p. abbreviates ; ' But the soul must be voided of all things, so that.'

are darkness, which will cause him to stray ; and faith is above all that he understands and experiences and feels and imagines. And if he be not blinded as to this, and remain not in total darkness,¹ he attains not to that which is greater —namely, that which is taught by faith.

3. A blind man, if he be not quite blind, refuses to be led by a guide ; and, since he sees a little, he thinks it better to go in whatever happens to be the direction which he can distinguish, because he sees none better ; and thus he can lead astray a guide who sees more than he, for after all it is for him to say where he shall go rather than for the guide.² In the same way a soul may lean upon any knowledge of its own, or any feeling or experience of God, yet, however great this may be, it is very little and far different from what God is ; and, in going along this road, a soul is easily led astray or forced to halt, because it will not remain in faith like one that is blind, and faith is its true guide.

4. It is this that was meant by S. Paul when he said : *Accedentem ad Deum oportet credere quod est.*³ Which signifies : He that would journey towards union with God must needs believe in His being. As though he had said : He that would attain to being joined in one union with God must not walk by understanding, neither lean upon experience or feeling or imagination, but he must believe in His Being,⁴ which is not perceptible to the understanding, neither to the desire nor to the imagination nor to any other sense, neither can it be known⁵ in this life at all. Yea, in this life, the highest thing that can be felt and experienced concerning God is infinitely remote from God and from the pure possession of Him. Isaiah and S. Paul say : *Nec oculus vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascendit, quæ præparavit Deus iis, qui diligunt illum.*⁶ Which signifies : That which God hath prepared for them that love Him neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart or thought of man. So, however greatly the soul aspires to be perfectly united through grace in this life with that to which it will be united through glory in the next (which, as S. Paul here

¹ A, B, e.p. add : ' with respect to it.'

² E.p. : ' . . . lead astray his guide, because he acts as if he saw and it is for him to say where he shall go rather than for the guide.'

³ Hebrews xi, 6.

⁴ E.p. : ' but he must believe in the perfection of the Divine Being.'

⁵ E.p. : ' known as it is.'

⁶ Isaiah lxiv, 4 ; 1 Corinthians ii, 9.

says, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man in the flesh¹) it is clear that, in order perfectly to attain to union in this life through grace and through love, a soul must be in darkness with respect to all that can enter through the eye, and to all that can be received through the ear, and can be imagined with the fancy, and understood with the heart, which here signifies the soul. And thus a soul is greatly impeded from reaching this high estate of union with God when it clings to any understanding or feeling or imagination or appearance or will or manner of its own, or to any other act or to anything of its own, and cannot detach and strip itself of all these. For, as we say, the goal which it seeks is beyond all this, yea, beyond even the highest thing that can be known or experienced; and thus a soul must pass beyond everything to unknowing.

5. Wherefore, upon this road, to enter upon the road is to leave the road; or, to express it better, it is to pass on to the goal and to leave one's own way,² and to enter upon that which³ has no way, which is God. For the soul that attains to this state has no longer any ways or methods, still less is it attached to such things or can be attached to them. I mean ways of understanding, or of experience, or of feeling; although it has within itself all ways, after the way of one that possesses nothing, yet possesses all things. For, if it have courage to pass beyond its natural limitations, both interiorly and exteriorly, it enters within the limits of the supernatural,⁴ which has no way, yet in substance⁵ has all ways. Hence for the soul to arrive at these limits is for it to leave these limits, in each case going forth out of itself a great way, from this lowly state to that which is high above all others.

6. Wherefore, passing beyond all that can be known and understood, both spiritually and naturally,⁶ the soul will desire with all desire to come to that which in this life cannot be known, neither can enter into its heart. And, leaving behind all that it experiences and feels, both temporally and

¹ A, B: 'heart of the flesh.'

² [The word translated 'way' is *modo*, which, in the language of scholastic philosophy, would rather be translated 'mode.']

³ A, B: 'to enter upon the goal which . . .'

⁴ E.p.: 'it enters, without any limit, into the supernatural.'

⁵ E.p. has 'eminently' for 'in substance.'

⁶ E.p.: 'and temporally.'

spiritually,¹ and all that it is able to experience and feel in this life, it will desire with all desire to come to that which surpasses all feeling and experience. And, in order to be free and void to that end, it must in no wise lay hold upon that which it receives, either spiritually or sensually, within itself² (as we shall explain presently, when we treat this in detail), considering it all to be of much less account. For the more emphasis the soul lays upon what it understands, experiences and imagines, and the more it esteems this, whether it be spiritual or no, the more it loses of the supreme good, and the more it is hindered from attaining thereto. And the less it thinks of what it may have, however much this be, in comparison with the highest good, the more it dwells upon that good and esteems it, and, consequently, the more nearly it approaches it. And in this wise the soul approaches a great way towards union, in darkness, by means of faith, which is likewise dark, and in this wise faith wondrously illumines it. It is certain that, if the soul should desire to see, it would be in darkness much more quickly,³ with respect to God, than would one who opens his eyes to look upon the great brightness of the sun.

7. Wherefore, by being blind in its faculties upon this road, the soul will see the light, even as the Saviour says in the Gospel, in this wise : *In iudicium veni in hunc mundum : ut qui non vident, videant, et qui vident, cæci fiant.*⁴ That is : I am come into this world for judgement ; that they which see not may see, and that they which see may become blind. This, as it will be supposed, is to be understood of this spiritual road, where the soul that is in darkness,⁵ and is blinded as to all its natural and proper lights, will see supernaturally ; and the soul that would depend upon any light of its own will become the blinder and will halt upon the road to union.

8. And, that we may proceed with less confusion, I think it will be necessary to describe, in the following chapter, the nature of this that we call union of the soul with God ; for, when this is understood, that which we shall say hereafter

¹ Thus Alc. A, B have 'spiritually' only ; e.p. : 'both spiritually and sensually.'

² [Lit., 'either spiritually or sensually, in its soul.']

³ A, B : 'it would be in much greater darkness.'

⁴ S. John ix, 39.

⁵ E.p. omits the quotation and its exposition, abbreviating thus : 'the soul will see the light, so that the soul that is in darkness . . .'

union¹ is ever wrought between God and all the creatures, for in it He is preserving their being ; so that if union of this kind were to fail them, they would at once become annihilated and would cease to be. And so, when we speak of union of the soul with God, we speak not of this substantial union which is continually being wrought,² but of the union and transformation of the soul with God,³ which is not being wrought continually, but only when there exists that likeness that comes from love ; we shall therefore term this the union of likeness, even as that other union is called substantial or essential. The former is natural ; the latter supernatural. And the latter comes to pass when the two wills—namely that of the soul and that of God—are conformed together in one, and there is naught in the one that is repugnant to the other. And thus, when the soul rids itself totally of that which is repugnant to the Divine will and conforms not with it, it is transformed in God through love.

4. This is to be understood of that which is repugnant, not only in action, but likewise in habit, so that not only do the voluntary acts of imperfection cease, but the habits of those imperfections, whatever they be, are annihilated.⁴ And since no creature whatsoever, or any of its actions or abilities, can conform or can attain to that which is God, therefore must the soul be stripped of all things created, and of its own actions and abilities—namely, of its understanding, liking and feeling—so that, when all that is unlike God and unconformed to Him is cast out, the soul may receive the likeness of God ; and nothing will then remain in it that is not the will of God and it will thus be transformed in God. Wherefore, although it is true that, as we have said, God is ever in the soul, giving it, and through His presence preserving within it its natural being, yet He does not always communicate supernatural being to it. For this is communicated only by love and grace, which not all souls possess ; and all those that possess it have it not in the same degree ; for some have attained more degrees of love and others fewer. Wherefore God communicates Himself most to that soul that has progressed farthest in love ; namely, that has its will in closest conformity with

¹ E.p. adds : ' or presence (which we may call that of the order of nature).'

² E.p. : ' we speak not of this presence of God which ever exists in all the creatures.'

³ E.p. adds : ' through love.'

⁴ E.p. abbreviates : ' but also the habits.'

the will of God. And the soul that has attained complete conformity and likeness of will is totally united and transformed in God supernaturally. Wherefore, as has already been explained, the more completely a soul is wrapped up in¹ the creatures and in its own abilities, by habit and affection, the less preparation it has for such union; for it gives not God a complete opportunity to transform it supernaturally. The soul, then, needs only to strip itself of these natural dissimilarities and contrarieties, so that God, Who is communicating Himself naturally to it, according to the course of nature, may communicate Himself to it supernaturally, by means of grace.²

5. And it is this that S. John desired to explain, when he said : *Qui non ex sanguinibus, neque ex voluntate carnis, neque ex voluntate viri, sed ex Deo nati sunt.*³ As though he had said : He gave power to be sons of God—that is, to be transformed in God—only to those who are born, not of blood—that is, not of natural constitution and temperament—neither of the will of the flesh—that is, of the free will of natural capacity and ability—still less of the will of man—wherein is included every way and manner of judging and comprehending with the understanding. He gave power to none of these to become sons of God, but only to those that are born of God—that is, to those who being born again through grace, and dying first of all to everything that is of the old man, are raised above themselves to the supernatural, and receive from God this rebirth and adoption, which transcends all that can be imagined. For, as S. John himself says elsewhere : *Nisi quis renatus fuerit ex aqua, et Spiritu Sancto, non potest videre regnum Dei.*⁴ This signifies : He that is not born again in the Holy Spirit will not be able to see this kingdom of God, which is the state of perfection; and to be born again in the Holy Spirit⁵ in this life⁶ is to have a soul most like to God in purity, having in itself no admixture of imperfection, so that pure transformation can be wrought in it through participation of union, albeit not essentially.

¹ [*Lit.*, 'is clothed with.']

² E.p. reads : 'The soul, then, needs to strip itself of these natural dissimilarities and contrarieties, so that God, Who is naturally present in it by means of essence, may communicate Himself supernaturally to it by means of grace, in the transformation of union.'

³ S. John i, 13.

⁴ S. John iii, 5.

⁵ E.p. omits the whole of the first part of this paragraph, beginning thus : 'For the estate of perfection and re-birth in the Holy Spirit . . .'

⁶ A, B : 'in this life perfectly.'

6. In order that both these things may be the better understood, let us make a comparison. A ray of sunlight is striking a window. If the window is in any way stained or misty, the sun's ray will be unable to illumine it and transform it into its own light, totally, as it would if it were clean of all these things, and pure; but it will illumine it to a lesser degree, in proportion as it is less free from those mists and stains; and will do so to a greater degree, according as it is cleaner from them,¹ and this will not be because of the sun's ray, but because of itself; so much so that, if it be wholly pure and clean, the ray of sunlight will transform it and illumine it in such wise that it will itself seem to be a ray and will give the same light as the ray. Although in reality the window has a nature distinct from that of the ray itself, however much it may resemble it, yet we may say that that window is a ray of the sun or is light by participation. And the soul is like this window, whereupon is ever beating (or, to express it better, wherein is ever dwelling) this Divine light of the Being of God according to nature, which we have described.

7. In thus allowing God to work in it, the soul (having rid itself of every mist and stain of the creatures, which consists in having its will perfectly united with that of God, for to love is to labour to detach and strip itself for God's sake of all that is not God) is at once illumined and transformed in God, and God communicates to it His supernatural Being, in such wise that it appears to be God Himself, and has all that God Himself has. And this union comes to pass when God grants the soul this supernatural favour,² that all the things of God and the soul are one in participant transformation; and the soul seems to be God rather than a soul, and is indeed God by participation; although it is true that its natural being, though thus transformed, is as distinct from the Being of God as it was before, even as the window has likewise a nature distinct from that of the ray, though it is illumined by it.

8. This makes it clearer that the preparation of the soul for this union, as we said, is not that it should understand or experience or feel or imagine anything, concerning either God or aught else, but that it should have purity and love—that is, perfect resignation and detachment from everything

¹ E.p. omits: 'and will . . . from them.'

² A, B, C, e.p. have: 'this sovereign favour.'

for God's sake alone ;¹ and, as there can be no perfect transformation if there be not perfect purity, and as the enlightenment, illumination and union of the soul with God will be according to the proportion of its purity, in greater or in less degree ; yet the soul will not be perfect, as I say, if it be not wholly and perfectly² bright and clean.

9. This will likewise be understood by the following comparison. A picture is most perfect, with many and most sublime beauties and delicate and subtle brilliance, and some of its beauties are so fine and subtle that they cannot be completely realized because of their delicacy and excellence. Less beauty and delicacy will be seen in this picture by one whose vision is less clear and refined ; and he whose vision is somewhat more refined will be able to see in it greater beauties and perfections ; and, if another person has a vision still more refined, he will see still greater perfection ;³ and finally, he who has the clearest and purest faculties will see⁴ the greatest beauties and perfections of all ; for there is so much to see in the image that, however far one may attain, there will ever remain higher degrees of attainment.

10. After the same manner we may describe the condition of the soul with respect to God in this enlightenment or transformation. For, although it is true that a soul, according to its greater or smaller capacity, may have attained to union, yet not all do so in the same degree, for this depends upon what the Lord desires to grant to each one. It is in this way that souls see God in Heaven ; some more, some less ;⁵ but all see Him, and all are content,⁶ for their capacity is satisfied.

11. Wherefore, although in this life here below we find certain souls enjoying equal peace and tranquillity in the state of perfection, and each one of them satisfied, yet some of them may be many degrees higher than others. All, however, will be equally satisfied, because the capacity of each

¹ E.p. modifies : ' that the preparation for this union is purity and love—that is, perfect resignation and total detachment, for God's sake alone.'

² [*Lit.*, ' wholly perfect and . . .']

³ E.p. : ' and he whose vision is more refined will be able to see greater beauties ; and, if another person has a vision still more refined, he will be able to see still greater perfection.'

⁴ E.p. : ' will be able to see.'

⁵ E.p. : ' some more perfectly, some less so.'

⁶ E.p. : ' content and satisfied.'

one is satisfied.¹ But the soul that attains not to such a measure of purity as is in conformity with its capacity² never attains true peace and satisfaction, since it has not attained to the possession of that detachment and emptiness in its faculties which is required for simple union.³

CHAPTER VI

*Wherein is described how it is the three theological virtues that perfect the three faculties of the soul, and how the said virtues produce emptiness and darkness within them.*⁴

1. Having now to endeavour to show how the three faculties of the soul—understanding, memory and will—are brought into this spiritual night, which is the means to Divine union, it is necessary first of all to explain in this chapter how the three theological virtues—faith, hope and charity—which have respect to the three faculties aforesaid as to their proper supernatural objects, and⁵ by means whereof the soul is united with God according to its faculties, produce the same emptiness and darkness, each one with regard to its faculty. Faith, in the understanding; hope, in the memory; and charity, in the will. And afterwards we shall go on to describe how the understanding is perfected in the darkness of faith; and the memory in the emptiness of hope; and likewise how the will must be buried in⁶ the withdrawal and detachment of the affection that the soul may journey to God. This done, it will be clearly seen how necessary it is for the soul, if it is to walk securely on this spiritual road, to travel through this dark night, leaning upon these three virtues, which empty it of all things and make it dark with respect to them. For, as we have said, the soul is not united with God in this life through understanding, nor through enjoyment, nor through the imagination, nor through any sense whatsoever; but only through

¹ E.p.: 'equally satisfied, each one according to his preparation and the knowledge that he has of God.'

² E.p.: 'to such a measure of purity as seems to be demanded by the enlightenment and vocation [that have been granted it] from God.'

³ A, B: 'simple union with God.'

⁴ E.p. adds: 'To this purpose are quoted two passages, one from S. Luke and the other from Isaiah.'

⁵ E.p. omits: 'which have . . . objects, and'.

⁶ So Alc., B ['enterrar']. A, e.p. have ['entrar,' which changes the reading to] 'must enter into.'

way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it ! In this passage we must carefully note the emphasis and insistence which are contained in that word *Quam*. For it is as if He had said : In truth the way is very strait, more so than you think. And likewise it is to be noted that He says first that the gate is strait, to make it clear that, in order for the soul to enter this gate, which is Christ, and which comes at the beginning of the road, the will must first be straitened and detached in all things sensual and temporal, and God must be loved above them all ; which belongs to the night of sense, as we have said.

3. He next says that the road is narrow—that is to say, the road of perfection—in order to make it clear that, to travel upon the road of perfection, the soul has not only to enter by the strait gate,¹ emptying itself of things of sense, but that it has also to constrain² itself, freeing and disencumbering itself completely in that which pertains to the spirit. And thus we can apply what He says of the strait gate to the sensual part of man ; and what He says of the narrow road we can understand of the spiritual or the rational part ; and, when He says ‘ Few there be that find it,’ the reason of this must be noted, which is that there are few who can enter, and desire to enter, into this complete detachment and emptiness of spirit. For this path ascending the high mountain of perfection leads upward, and is narrow, and therefore requires such travellers as have no burden weighing upon them with respect to lower things, neither aught that embarrasses them with respect to higher things : and as this is a matter wherein we must seek after and attain to God alone, God alone must be the object of our search and attainment.

4. Hence it is clearly seen that the soul must not only be disencumbered from that which belongs to the creatures, but likewise, as it travels, must be annihilated and detached from all that belongs to its spirit. Wherefore Our Lord, instructing us and leading us into this road, gave, in the eighth chapter of S. Mark, that wonderful teaching of which I think it may almost be said that, the more necessary it is for spiritual persons, the less it is practised by them.³ As this teaching is so important and so much to our purpose, I

¹ A alone reads : ‘ by the road of perfection, that is, by the strait gate.’

² [*Lit.*, ‘ to straiten ’ : the Spanish verb is derived from the adjective.]

³ From this point to the Latin text is omitted by A and B.

shall reproduce it here in full, and expound it according to its real and spiritual sense. He says, then, thus : *Si quis vult me sequi, deneget semetipsum : et tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me. Qui enim voluerit animam suam salvam facere, perdet eam : qui autem perdiderit animam suam propter me . . . salvam faciet eam.*¹ This signifies : If any man will follow My road, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For he that will save his soul shall lose it ; but he that loses it for My sake, shall gain it.

5. Oh, that one might show us how to understand, practise and experience what this counsel is which² our Saviour here gives us concerning the denial of ourselves, so that spiritual persons might see in how different a way they should³ conduct themselves upon this road from that which many of them think proper ! For they believe that any kind of retirement and reformation of life suffices ; and others are content with practising the virtues and continuing in prayer and pursuing mortification ; but they attain not to detachment and poverty or denial or spiritual purity (which are all one), which the Lord here commends to us ; for they prefer feeding and clothing their natural selves with spiritual feelings and consolations,⁴ to stripping themselves of all things, and denying themselves all things, for God's sake. For they think that it suffices to deny themselves worldly things without annihilating and purifying themselves of spiritual attachment. Wherefore it comes to pass that, when there presents itself to them any of this solid and perfect⁵ spirituality, consisting in the annihilation of all sweetness in God, in aridity, distaste and trial, which is the true spiritual cross, and the detachment of the spiritual poverty of Christ, they flee from it as from death, and seek only sweetness and delectable communion with God. This is not self-denial and detachment of spirit, but spiritual gluttony. Herein they become spiritually enemies of the cross of Christ ; for true spirituality seeks for God's sake that which is distasteful rather than that which is delectable ; and inclines itself rather to suffering than to consolation ; and desires to go without all blessings for God's sake rather than to possess them ; and to endure aridities and afflictions rather than to enjoy sweet communications, knowing that

¹ S. Mark viii, 34-5.

² E.p. : ' what is contained in this so lofty instruction which . . . '

³ A, B, e.p. have ' it behoves them to ' for ' they should.'

⁴ E.p. : ' with consolations.'

⁵ E.p. omits : ' and perfect

this is to follow Christ and to deny oneself, and that the other is perchance to seek oneself in God, which is clean contrary to love.¹ For to seek oneself in God is to seek the favours and refreshments of God ; but to seek God in oneself is not only to desire to be without both of these for God's sake, but to incline oneself to choose, for Christ's sake, all that is most distasteful, whether as to God or as to the world ; and this is love of God.

6. Oh that someone could tell us how far Our Lord desires this self-denial to be carried ! It must certainly be like to death and annihilation, temporal, natural and spiritual, in all things that the will esteems, wherein consists all self-denial.² And it is this that Our Lord meant when He said : He that will save his life, the same shall lose it. That is to say : He that will possess anything or seek anything for himself, the same shall lose it ; and he that loses his soul for My sake, the same shall gain it. That is to say : He that for Christ's sake renounces all that his will can desire and enjoy, and chooses that which is most like to the Cross (which the Lord Himself, through S. John, describes as hating his soul),³ the same shall gain it. And this His Majesty taught to those two disciples who went and begged Him for a place on His right hand and on His left ; when, giving them no reply to their request for such glory, He offered them the cup which He had to drink, as a thing more precious and more secure upon this earth than is fruition.⁴

7. This cup is the death of the natural self, which is attained through the soul's detachment and annihilation, in order that the soul may travel by this narrow path, with respect to all that can belong to it according to sense, as we have said ; and according to the spirit,⁵ as we shall now say ; that is, in its understanding and in its enjoyment and in its feeling. And, as a result, not only is the soul detached as to all this, but, having this spiritual help, it is not hindered upon the narrow road, since there remains to it naught else than self-denial (as the Saviour explains), and the Cross, which is the staff whereby one may reach Him,⁶ and whereby

¹ A, B omit this last clause.

² So Alc., A, B, C, D. E.p. has : ' all gain.' The gain, however [says P. Silverio], is rather a result of the complete self-denial of which the Saint is here speaking.

³ S. John xii, 25.

⁴ S. Matthew xx, 22.

⁵ Thus e.p. Alc., A, B [and P. Silverio] read ' soul ' for ' spirit.'

⁶ E.p. : ' the staff whereon to lean.'

the road is greatly lightened and made easy. Wherefore Our Lord said through S. Matthew : My yoke is easy and My burden is light ;¹ which burden is the cross. For if a man resolve to submit himself to carrying this cross—that is to say, if he resolve to desire in truth to meet trials and to bear them in all things for God's sake, he will find in them all great relief and sweetness wherewith he may travel upon this road, detached from all things and desiring nothing. Yet, if he desire to possess anything—whether it come from God or from any other source,—with any feeling of attachment, he is not detached and has not denied himself in all things ; and thus he will be unable to walk along this narrow path or to climb upward by it.²

8. I would, then, that I could convince spiritual persons that this road to God consists not in a multiplicity of meditations nor in ways or methods of such, nor in consolations, although these things may in their own way be necessary to beginners ; but that it consists only in the one thing that is needful, which is the ability to deny oneself truly, according to that which is without and to that which is within, giving oneself up to suffering for Christ's sake, and to total annihilation. For the soul that thus denies itself will achieve this suffering and annihilation, and more also, and will likewise find more than suffering and annihilation therein. And if a soul be found wanting in this exercise, which is the sum and root of the virtues, all its other methods are so much wandering about in a maze, and profiting not at all, although its meditations and communications may be as lofty as those of the angels.³ For progress comes not save through the imitation of Christ, Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and no man comes to the Father but by Him, even as He Himself says through S. John.⁴ And elsewhere He says : I am the door ; by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved.⁵ Wherefore, as it seems to me, any spirituality that would fain walk in sweetness and with ease, and flees from the imitation of Christ, is worthless.

9. And, as I have said that Christ is the Way, and that this Way is death to our natural selves, in things both of sense and of spirit, I will now explain how we are to die, following the example of Christ, for He is our example and light.

¹ S. Matthew xi, 30.

² E.p. omits 'upward.'

³ E.p. has 'very lofty' and omits 'as those of the angels,' which is found, however, in all the codices.

⁴ S. John xiv, 6.

⁵ S. John x, 9.

such knowledge belongs not to this state, and we must either die or remain without receiving it. Wherefore Moses, when he entreated God for this clear knowledge, was told that he could not see Him, in these words¹: No man shall see Me and remain alive.² Wherefore S. John says: No man hath seen God at any time,³ neither aught that is like to Him. And S. Paul says, with Isaiah: Eye hath not seen Him, nor hath ear heard Him, neither hath it entered into the heart of man.⁴ And it is for this reason that Moses, in the bush, as is said in the Acts of the Apostles,⁵ ventured not to consider while God was present; for he knew that his understanding could make no such consideration as was fitting concerning God, corresponding to the sense which he had of God's presence.⁶ And of Elijah, our father,⁷ it is said that he covered his face in the Mount in the presence of God,⁸ which signifies the blinding of his understanding, which he wrought there, daring not to lay so base a hand upon that which was so high; seeing clearly that whatsoever he might consider, or understand with any precision, would be very far from God and most unlike Him.

5. Wherefore no supernatural apprehension or knowledge in this mortal life can serve as a proximate means to the high union of love with God. For all that can be understood by the understanding, that can please the will, and that can be invented by the imagination is most unlike to God and bears no proportion to Him, as we have said. All this Isaiah admirably explained in that most noteworthy passage,⁹ where he says: To what thing have ye been able to liken God? Or what image will ye make that is like to Him? Will the workman in iron perchance be able to make a graven image? Or will he that works gold be able to imitate Him¹⁰ with gold, or the silversmith with plates of silver?¹¹ By the workman in iron is signified the understanding, the office of which is to form intelligences and strip

¹ E.p. abbreviates: '... receiving it. Wherefore God said to Moses: No man ...' ² Exodus xxxiii, 20.

³ S. John i, 18. E.p. omits 'neither ... Him,' which is found in all the codices.

⁴ 1 Corinthians ii, 9; Isaiah lxiv, 4.

⁵ Acts vii, 32.

⁶ E.p.: '... concerning God, though this sprang from the profound sense which he had of God['s presence].'

⁷ Only Alc., C read: 'our father.'

⁸ 3 Kings [A.V., 1 Kings] xix, 13.

⁹ Alc. alone has: 'in that most noteworthy passage.'

¹⁰ E.p.: 'to figure Him' [or 'to form Him']. A, B: 'to make Him.'

¹¹ Isaiah xl, 18-19.

them of the iron of species and images. By the workman in gold is understood the will, which is able to receive the figure and the form of pleasure, caused by the gold of love.¹ By the silversmith, who is spoken of as being unable to form² Him with plates of silver, is understood the memory, with the imagination, whereof it may be said with great propriety that its knowledge and the imaginings that it can invent³ and make are like plates of silver. And thus it is as though he had said : Neither the understanding with its intelligence will be able to understand aught that is like Him, nor can the will taste pleasure and sweetness that bears any resemblance to that which is God, neither can the memory set in the imagination ideas and images that represent Him. It is clear, then, that none of these kinds of knowledge can lead the understanding direct to God ; and that, in order to reach Him, a soul must rather proceed by not understanding than by desiring to understand ; and by blinding itself and setting itself in darkness rather than by opening its eyes in order the more nearly to approach the ray Divine.

6. And thus it is that contemplation, whereby the understanding has the loftiest knowledge of God,⁴ is called mystical theology, which signifies secret wisdom of God ; for it is secret to the very understanding that receives it. For this reason S. Dionysius calls it a ray of darkness. Of this the prophet Baruch says : There is none that knoweth its way, nor any that can think of its paths.⁵ It is clear, then, that the understanding must be blind to all the paths to which it may attain, in order to be united with God. Aristotle says that, even as are the eyes of the bat with regard to the sun, which is total darkness to it, even so is our understanding to that which is greater light in God, which is total darkness to us. And he says further that, the more profound and clear are the things of God in themselves, the more completely unknown and obscure are they to us. This likewise the Apostle affirms, saying : The deepest things of God are the least known unto men.

7. But we should never end if we continued at this rate to quote authorities and arguments to prove and make clear

¹ A, B, e.p. : ' . . . gold of the love wherewith it loves.'

² [All authorities read 'form' (or 'figure') here. Cf. p. 96, n. 10, above.]

³ [This is the word (*fingir*, 'feign'), translated above as 'imitate.' Cf. p. 96, n. 10.]

⁴ So Alc. All other authorities read : ' . . . the understanding is enlightened by God.'

⁵ Baruch iii, 23.

that among all created things, and things that belong to the understanding, there is no ladder whereby the understanding can attain to this high Lord. Rather it is necessary to know that, if the understanding should seek to profit by all of these things, or by any of them, as a proximate means to such union, they would be not only a hindrance, but even an occasion of numerous errors and delusions in the ascent of this mount.

CHAPTER IX

*How faith is the proximate and proportionate means to the understanding whereby the soul may attain to the Divine union of love. This is proved by passages and figures from Divine Scripture.*¹

1. From what has been said it is to be inferred that, in order for the understanding to be prepared for this Divine union, it must be pure and void of all that pertains to sense, and detached² and freed from all that can clearly be perceived by the understanding, profoundly hushed and put to silence, and leaning upon faith, which alone is the proximate and proportionate means whereby the soul is united with God ; for such is the likeness between itself and God that³ there is no other difference, save that which exists between seeing God and believing in Him. For, as God is infinite, so faith sets Him before us as infinite ; and as He is Three and One, it sets Him before us as Three and One ; and as God is darkness to our understanding, even so does faith likewise blind and dazzle our understanding.⁴ And thus, by this means alone, God manifests Himself to the soul in Divine light, which passes all understanding. And therefore, the greater is the faith of the soul, the more completely is it united with God. It is this that S. Paul meant in the passage which we quoted above, where he says : He that will be united with God must believe.⁵ That is, he must walk by faith in his journey to Him, the understanding being blind and in darkness, walking in faith alone ;⁶

¹ This last sentence is found only in Alc. and in e.p.

² E.p. omits : ' and detached.'

³ E.p. omits : ' such is . . . God that,' which is found in all the Codices.

⁴ This clause (' and as God . . . our understanding ') is omitted from e.p.

⁵ Hebrews xi, 6.

⁶ E.p. omits : ' It is this that S. Paul . . . in faith alone.'

is so much to say on this part of my subject that I could go on and never end. I believe, however, that I am summarizing it sufficiently by merely saying that the soul must take care never to receive these apprehensions, save occasionally on another person's advice, which should very rarely be given, and even then it must have no desire for them. I think that on this part of my subject what I have said is sufficient.¹

CHAPTER XII

*Which treats of natural imaginary apprehensions. Describes their nature and proves that they cannot be a proportionate means of attainment to union with God. Shows the harm which results from inability to detach oneself from them.*²

1. Before we treat of the imaginary visions which are wont to occur supernaturally to the interior sense, which is the imagination and the fancy, it is fitting here, so that we may proceed in order, to treat of the natural apprehensions of this same interior bodily sense, in order that we may proceed from the lesser to the greater, and from the more exterior to the more interior, until we reach the most interior³ recollection wherein the soul is united with God;⁴ this same order we have followed up to this point. For we treated first of all the detachment of the exterior senses⁵ from the natural apprehensions of objects,⁶ and, in consequence, from the natural power of the desires—this was contained in the first book, wherein we spoke of the night of sense. We then began to detach these same senses from⁷ supernatural exterior apprehensions (which, as we have just shown in the last chapter, affect the exterior senses), in order to lead the soul into the night of the spirit.

2. In this second book, the first thing that has now to be treated is the interior bodily sense—namely, the imagination

¹ E.p. has: ' . . . never to receive them, save in some rare case and after close examination by a learned, spiritual and experienced person, and even then [the soul must receive them] without any desire to do so.' This is clearly an editorial attempt to clarify [and improve upon] the Saint's directions.

² E.p. adds: 'in time.'

³ [Or 'the intimate'; but the superlative idea is clearly present.] Alc. has: 'the last'—probably a copyist's error ['último' for 'íntimo'].

⁴ A, B omit the rest of this paragraph and the whole of the next.

⁵ E.p.: 'the detachment of the soul.'

⁶ E.p.: 'of exterior objects.'

⁷ E.p.: ' . . . began the detachment in particular from . . . '

and the fancy ; this we must likewise void of all the imaginary apprehensions and forms that may belong to it by nature, and we must prove how impossible it is that the soul should attain to union with God until its operation cease in them, since they cannot be the proper and proximate means of this union.

3. It is to be known, then, that the senses whereof we are here particularly speaking are two interior bodily senses which are called imagination and fancy, which subserve each other in due order. For the one sense reasons, as it were, by imagining, and the other forms the imagination, or that which is imagined, by making use of the fancy.¹ For our purpose the discussion of the one is equivalent to that of the other, and, for this reason, when we name them not both, we are to be understood as speaking of either, as we have here explained.² All the things, then, that these senses can receive and fashion are known as imaginations and fancies, which are forms that are represented to these senses by bodily figures and images. This can happen in two ways. The one way is supernatural, wherein representation can be made, and is made, to these senses passively, without any effort of their own ; these we call imaginary visions, wrought after a supernatural manner, and of these we shall speak hereafter. The other way is natural, wherein, through the ability of the soul, these things can be actively produced in it through its operation,³ beneath forms, figures and images. And thus to these two faculties belongs meditation, which is a discursive action wrought by means of images, forms and figures that are produced and imagined by the said senses, as when we imagine Christ crucified, or bound to the column, or at another of the stations ; or when we imagine God seated upon a throne with great majesty ; or when we consider and imagine glory to be like a most beauteous light, etc. ; or when we imagine all kinds of other things, whether Divine or human, that can belong to the imagination. All these imaginings⁴ must be cast out from the soul, which will remain in darkness as far as this sense is concerned,

¹ [*Lit.*, 'by fancying.'] E.p. : 'For in the one there is something of reasoning, though it is imperfect and is [wrought] imperfectly, and the other forms the image, which is the imagination.'

² E.p. adds : 'that what we say of the one is understood likewise of the other and that we are speaking of both indifferently.'

³ E.p. : 'The other way is natural, when through its operation these things can be actively produced.'

⁴ A, B : 'All these apprehensions.'

that it may attain to Divine union ; for they can bear no proportion to proximate means of union with God, any more than can the bodily imaginings, which serve as object to the five exterior senses.

4. The reason of this is that the imagination cannot fashion or imagine anything whatsoever beyond that which it has experienced through its exterior senses—namely, that which it has seen with the eyes, or heard with the ears, etc. At most it can only compose likenesses of those things that it has seen or heard or felt, which are of no more consequence than¹ those which have been received by the senses aforementioned, nor are they even of as much consequence. For, although one imagines palaces of pearls and mountains of gold, through having seen gold and pearls, all this is in truth less² than the essence of a little gold or of a single pearl, although in the imagination it be greater in quantity and beauty.³ And since no created things, as has already been said, can bear any proportion to the Being of God, it follows that nothing that is imagined in their likeness can serve as proximate means to union with Him, but, as we say, quite the contrary.⁴

5. Wherefore those that imagine God beneath any of these figures, or as a great fire or brightness, or in any other such form, and think that anything like this will be like to Him, are very far from approaching Him. For, although these considerations and forms and manners of meditation are necessary to beginners, in order that they may gradually feed and enkindle their souls with love by means of sense, as we shall say hereafter, and although they thus serve them as remote means to union with God, through which a soul has commonly to pass in order to reach the goal and abode of spiritual repose, yet they must merely pass through them, and not remain ever in them, for in such a manner they would never reach their goal, which does not resemble these remote means, neither has aught to do with them. The stairs of a staircase have naught to do with the top of it and the room to which it leads, yet are means to the reaching of both ; and if the climber left not behind the stairs below him until there were no more to climb, but desired to

¹ E.p. : ' which are of no greater excellence than . . . '

² E.p. has ' no more ' for ' less. '

³ E.p. : ' although in the imagination it may have the order and trace of beauty. '

⁴ E.p. omits : ' but . . . contrary. '

remain upon any one of them, he would never reach the top of them nor would he mount to the pleasant¹ and peaceful room which is the goal. And just so the soul that is to attain in this life to the union of that supreme repose and blessing, by means of all these stairs of meditations, forms and ideas, must pass through them and have done with them,² since they have no resemblance and bear no proportion to the goal to which they lead, which is God. Wherefore S. Paul says in the Acts of the Apostles : *Non debemus aestimare, auro, vel argento, aut lapidi sculpture artis, et cogitationis hominis, divinum esse similem.*³ Which signifies : We ought not to think of the Godhead by likening Him to gold or to silver, neither to stone that is formed by art, nor to aught that a man can form with his imagination.

6. Great, therefore, is the error of many⁴ spiritual persons who have practised approaching God by means of images and forms and meditations, as befits beginners. God would now lead them on to⁵ further spiritual blessings, which are interior and invisible, by taking from them the pleasure and sweetness of discursive meditation ; but they cannot, or dare not, or know not how to detach themselves from those palpable methods to which they have grown accustomed. They continually labour to retain them, desiring to proceed, as before, by the way of consideration and meditation upon forms, for they think that it must be so with them always. They labour greatly to this end and find little sweetness or none ; rather the aridity and weariness and disquiet of their souls are increased and grow, in proportion as they labour for that earlier sweetness. They cannot find this in that earlier manner, for the soul no longer enjoys that food of sense, as we have said ; it needs not this but another food, which is more delicate, more interior and partaking less of the nature of sense ; it consists not in labouring with the imagination, but in setting the soul at rest, and allowing it to remain in its quiet and repose, which is more spiritual. For, the farther the soul progresses in spirituality, the more it ceases from the operation of the faculties in particular acts, for it becomes more and more occupied in one act that is general and pure ; and thus the faculties

¹ [*Lit.*, 'the level'—i.e., by contrast with the steep stairs.]

² E.p. omits : 'and have done with them.'

³ Acts xvii, 29.

⁴ E.p. : 'of certain.'

⁵ [The verb, *recoger*, of which the derived noun is translated 'recollection,' has more accurately the meaning of 'gather,' 'take inwards.']

that were journeying to a place whither the soul has arrived cease to work, even as the feet stop and cease to move when their journey is over. For if all were motion, one would never arrive, and if all were means, where or when would come the fruition of the end and goal?

7. It is piteous, then, to see many a one who,¹ though his soul would fain tarry in this peace and rest of interior quiet, where it is filled with the peace and refreshment of God, takes from it its tranquillity, and leads it away to the most exterior things, and would make it return and retrace the ground it has already traversed, to no purpose,² and abandon the end and goal wherein it is already reposing for the means which led it to that repose,³ which are meditations. This comes not to pass without great reluctance and repugnance of the soul, which would fain be in that peace that it understands not,⁴ as in its proper place; even as one who has arrived, with great labour, and is now resting, suffers pain if they make him return to his labour. And, as such souls know not the mystery of this new experience, the idea comes to them that they are being idle and doing nothing; and thus they allow not themselves to be quiet, but endeavour to meditate and reason. Hence they are filled⁵ with aridity and affliction, because they seek to find sweetness where it is no longer to be found; we may even say of them that the more they strive the less they profit,⁶ for, the more they persist after this manner, the worse is the state wherein they find themselves, because their soul is drawn farther away from spiritual peace; and this is to leave the greater for the less, and to retrace the road already traversed, and to seek to do that which has been done.⁷

8. To such as these the advice must be given to learn to abide attentively and wait lovingly upon God in that state of quiet, and to pay no heed either to imagination or to its working; for here, as we say, the faculties are at rest, and are working, not actively, but passively, by receiving that

¹ [*Lit.*, 'to see that there are many who.'] E.p. omits 'many who,' making the subject of the sentence an unspecified 'they.'

² E.p. omits: 'to no purpose.'

³ [P. Silverio prints 'a Él'—'to Him'; but he now agrees with me that 'a él'—'to it,' i.e., the repose just mentioned—is the correct reading.]

⁴ E.p. omits: 'that it understands not.'

⁵ A, B: 'Hence comes it that they are filled' [using a stronger word for 'filled' with the sense of 'stuffed,' 'swollen'].

⁶ E.p.: 'the more they freeze, the more they bind' [a popular saying].

⁷ Alc. omits: 'and to . . . been done,' probably only by an oversight.

which God works in them ; and, if they work at times, it is not with violence¹ or with carefully elaborated meditation, but with sweetness of love, moved less by the ability of the soul itself than by God, as will be explained hereafter. But let this now suffice to show how fitting and necessary it is for those who aim at making further progress to be able to detach themselves from all these methods and manners and works of the imagination at the time and season when the profit of the state which they have reached demands and requires it.

9. And, that it may be understood how this is to be, and at what season, we shall give in the chapter following² certain signs which the spiritual person will see in himself and whereby he may know at what time and season he may freely avail himself of the goal mentioned above, and may cease from journeying by means of meditation and the work of the imagination.

CHAPTER XIII

*Wherein are set down the signs which the spiritual person will find in himself and whereby he may know at what season it behoves him to leave meditation and reasoning and pass to the state of contemplation.*³

1. In order that there may be no confusion in this instruction it will be meet in this chapter to explain at what time and season it behoves the spiritual person to lay aside the task of discursive meditation as carried on through the imaginations and forms and figures above mentioned, in order that he may lay them aside neither sooner nor later than when the Spirit⁴ bids him ; for, although it is meet for him to lay them aside at the proper time in order that he may journey to God and not be hindered by them, it is no less needful for him not to lay aside the said imaginative meditation before the proper time lest he should turn

¹ E.p. : ' . . . and work not, save in that simple and sweet loving attentiveness ; and if at times they work more [than this] it is not with violence . . . ' The reading in the text is that of Alc.

² Only Alc. and e.p. have : ' in the chapter following. '

³ E.p. : ' Sets down the signs which the spiritual person may recognize in himself, in order that he may begin to strip the understanding of the imaginary forms and reasonings of meditation. '

⁴ [The MSS. and editions, including P. Silverio, have ' spirit, ' but P. Silverio agrees with me that the correct reading is ' Spirit. ']

are becoming lost to their own senses and to their first manner of perception;¹ and this means the gain of that spirituality which is being given them. The less they understand, however, the farther they penetrate into the night of the spirit, whereof we are treating in this book, through the which night they must pass in order to be united with God, in a union that transcends all knowledge.

5. With respect to the second sign, there is little to say, for it is clear that at this season the soul cannot possibly take pleasure in other and different objects of the imagination, which are of the world, since, as we have said, and for the reasons already mentioned, it has no pleasure in those which are most like to it—namely, those of God. Only, as has been noted above, the imaginative faculty in this state of recollection is in the habit of coming and going and varying of its own accord; but neither according to the pleasure nor at the will of the soul, which is troubled thereby, because its peace and joy are disturbed.

6. Nor do I think it necessary to say anything here concerning the fitness and necessity of the third sign whereby the soul may know if it is to leave the meditation aforementioned, which is a knowledge of God or an attentiveness to Him, both general and loving. For something has been said of this in treating of the first sign, and we shall treat of it again hereafter, when we speak in its proper place of this confused and general knowledge, which will come after our discussion of all the particular apprehensions of the understanding. But we will speak² of one reason alone by which it may clearly be seen how, when the contemplative has to turn aside from the way of meditation and reasoning, he needs this general and loving attentiveness or knowledge of God. The reason is that, if the soul at that time had not this knowledge of God or this realization of His presence, the result would be that it would do nothing and have nothing; for, having turned aside from meditation (by means whereof the soul has been reasoning with its faculties of sense), and being still without contemplation, which is the general knowledge whereof we are speaking,³ wherein the soul has exerted its spiritual faculties⁴—namely, memory, under-

¹ A, B, e.p. add: 'and understanding.'

² E.p.: '... now speak.'

³ B: 'whereof we were speaking.'

⁴ B: '... the soul has present spiritual faculties.' [The difference in the Spanish between this reading and that of the text is very slight and might be due to a careless copyist.]

standing and will—these being united in this knowledge which is already wrought and received in them, the soul¹ would of necessity be without any exercise in the things of God, since the soul can neither work nor receive² that which has been worked in it, save only by way of these two kinds of faculty,³ that of sense and that of spirit. For, as we have said, by means of the faculties of sense it can reason and search out and gain knowledge of things and by means of the spiritual faculties it can have fruition of the knowledge⁴ which it has already received in these faculties aforementioned, though the faculties themselves take no part herein.⁵

7. And thus the difference between the operation of these two faculties in the soul is like the difference between working and enjoying the fruit of work which has been done ; or like that between the labour of journeying and the rest and quiet which comes from arrival at the goal ; or, again, like that between preparing a meal and partaking and tasting of it, when it has been both prepared and masticated, without having any of the labour of cooking it or it is like the difference between receiving something and profiting by that which has been received.⁶ Now if the soul be occupied neither with respect to the operation⁷ of the faculties of sense, which is meditation and reasoning, nor with respect to that which has already been received and effected in the spiritual faculties, which is⁸ the contemplation and knowledge whereof we have spoken, it will have no occupation, but will be wholly idle, and there would be no way in which it could be said to be employed. This knowledge, then, is needful for the abandonment of the way of meditation and reasoning.

8. But here it must be made clear that this general knowledge whereof we are speaking is at times so subtle and delicate, particularly when it is most pure and simple and perfect, most spiritual and most interior, that, although the

¹ E.p. omits : ' the soul ' ; [as a result, the clause may be interpreted impersonally, but the general sense is the same].

² E.p. : ' nor continue in.' ³ A, B : ' of these two faculties.'

⁴ E.p. : ' the object of the knowledge.'

⁵ E.p. adds : ' with labour, search or reasoning.'

⁶ So Alc., but the other codices and e.p. place this last clause after ' has been done ' above.

⁷ E.p. omits ' and masticated ' and the following clauses, continuing thus : ' . . . [been prepared]. And if it be not occupied in any kind of exercise, whether it have respect to the operation . . . '

⁸ E.p. omits : ' in the spiritual faculties, which is.'

soul be occupied therein, it can neither realize it nor perceive it. This is most frequently the case when we can say that it is in itself most clear, perfect and simple ; and this comes to pass when it penetrates a soul that is unusually pure and far removed from other particular kinds of knowledge and intelligence, which the understanding or the senses might fasten upon. Such a soul, since it no longer has those things wherein the understanding and the senses have the habit and custom of occupying themselves, is not conscious of them, inasmuch as it has not its accustomed powers of sense. And it is for this reason that, when this knowledge is purest and simplest and most perfect, the understanding is least conscious of it and thinks of it as most obscure. And similarly, in the understanding, it seems to the understanding to be clearest and of the greatest importance, since it is clothed in, mingled with or involved in certain intelligible forms which the understanding or the senses² may seize upon.

9. This will be clearly understood by the following comparison. If we consider a ray of sunlight which enters through a window, we see that, the more the said ray is charged with atoms and particles of matter, the more palpable, visible and bright it appears to the eye of sense ;³ yet it is clear that the ray is in itself least pure, clear, simple and perfect at that time, since it is full of so many particles and atoms. And we see likewise that, when it is purest and freest from those particles and atoms, the least palpable and the darkest⁴ does it appear to the material eye ; and the purer it is, the darker and less apprehensible it appears to it. And if the ray were completely pure and free from all these atoms and particles, even from the minutest specks of dust, it would appear completely dark and invisible⁵ to the eye, since everything that could be seen would be lacking to it—namely, the objects of sight. For the eye would find no objects whereon to rest, since light is no proper⁶ object of vision, but the means whereby that which is visible is seen ; so that, if there be no visible objects wherein the sun's ray or any light can

¹ E.p. : 'when this knowledge.'

² E.p. omits : 'or the senses.'

³ [*Lit.*, 'to the sight of sense.'] E.p. has : 'to the sense of sight.'

⁴ E.p. : 'and the least pure.'

⁵ All the MSS. have 'incomprehensible.' E.p. reads 'imperceptible' and [says P. Silverio] rightly so.

⁶ A, B : 'no visible.' E.p. : 'since simple and pure light is not as properly an object of sight as a means whereby,' etc.

be reflected, nothing will be seen. Wherefore, if the ray of light entered by one window and went out by another, without meeting anything that has material form, it would not¹ be seen at all ; yet, notwithstanding, that ray of light would be purer and clearer in itself than when it was more clearly seen and perceived through being full of visible objects.

10. The same thing happens in the realm of spiritual light with respect to the sight of the soul, which is the understanding, and which this general² and supernatural knowledge and light whereof we are speaking strikes so purely and simply. So completely is it detached and removed from all intelligible forms, which are objects³ of the understanding, that it is neither perceived nor observed. Rather, at times (that is, when it is purest), it becomes darkness, because it withdraws the understanding from its accustomed lights, from forms and from fancies, and then the darkness is more clearly perceived and realized. But, when this Divine light strikes the soul with less force, it neither perceives darkness nor observes light, nor apprehends aught that it knows,⁴ from whatever source ; hence at times the soul remains as it were in a great forgetfulness, so that it knows not where it has been⁵ or what it has done, nor is it aware of the passage of time. Wherefore it may happen, and does happen, that many hours are spent in this forgetfulness, and, when the soul returns to itself, it believes that less than a moment has passed, or no time at all.⁶

11. The cause of this forgetfulness is the purity and simplicity of this knowledge which occupies the soul⁷ and simplifies, purifies and cleanses it from all apprehensions and forms of the senses and of the memory, through which it acted when it was conscious of time,⁸ and thus leaves it in forgetfulness and without consciousness of time.⁹ This prayer, therefore, seems to the soul extremely brief, although, as we say,¹⁰ it may last for a long period ; for the soul has

¹ E.p. : ' it seems that it would not.'

² E.p. omits : ' general and.'

³ E.p. : ' which are proportionate objects.'

⁴ E.p. begins this sentence thus : ' At other times, too, this Divine light strikes the soul with such force that it neither perceives darkness, nor observes light, neither does it seem to apprehend aught that it knows.'

⁵ A, B : ' has entered.'

⁶ E.p. omits : ' or no time at all.'

⁷ E.p. adds : ' being itself clear and pure.'

⁸ [Lit., ' acted in time.']

⁹ [Lit., ' without time.'] E.p. : ' without noticing differences of time.'

¹⁰ E.p. : ' as I have said.'

presents them to the understanding, whereupon the understanding considers them and judges them. And not only so, but the soul can also prepare and imagine others like to those with which it is acquainted.¹

3. It must be understood, then, that, even as the five outward senses represent² the images and species of their objects to these inward senses, even so, supernaturally, as we say, without using the outward senses, both God and the devil can represent³ the same images and species, of much more beautiful⁴ and perfect kinds. Wherefore, beneath these images, God often represents many things to the soul, and teaches it much wisdom; this is continually seen in the Scriptures, as where Isaiah saw God in His glory⁵ beneath the smoke which covered the Temple, and beneath the seraphim who covered their faces and their feet with their wings;⁶ and as Jeremiah saw the wand that was watching,⁷ and Daniel a multitude of visions,⁸ etc. And the devil, too, strives to deceive the soul with his visions, which in appearance are good, as may be seen in the Book of the Kings, when he deceived all the prophets of Ahab, presenting to their imaginations the horns wherewith he said the king was to destroy the Assyrians, which was a lie.⁹ Even such were the visions of Pilate's wife, warning him not to condemn Christ;¹⁰ and there are many other places where it is seen how, in this mirror of the fancy and the imagination,¹¹ these imaginary visions come more frequently to proficients than do outward and bodily visions. These, as we say, differ not in their nature (i.e., as images and species) from those which enter by the outward senses; but, with respect to the effect which they produce, and in the degree of their perfection, there is a great difference; for imaginary visions are subtler and produce a deeper impression upon the soul, inasmuch as they are supernatural, and are also more interior than the exterior supernatural visions. Nevertheless, it is true that some of these exterior bodily visions may produce a deeper

¹ E.p. abbreviates: '... and images which it has to make intelligible, and thus the understanding beholds and judges them.'

² E.p.: 'propose and represent.'

³ E.p. has (for 'both ... represent'): 'may be represented.'

⁴ E.p.: 'more vivid.'

⁵ E.p.: 'as when God showed His glory.'

⁶ Isaiah vi, 4.

⁷ Jeremiah i, 11.

⁸ 3 Kings xxii, 11 [A.V., 1 Kings xxii, 11].

⁹ [S. Matthew xxvii, 19.]

¹¹ E.p. has only: 'and [in] many other places.'

⁸ Daniel vii, 10.

impression ; the communication, after all, is as God wills. We are speaking, however, merely of that which belongs to their nature, as being more spiritual.

4. It is to these senses of imagination and fancy that the devil habitually betakes himself with his wiles—now natural, now supernatural ;¹ for they are the door and entrance to the soul, and here, as we have said,² the understanding comes to take up or set down its goods, as it were in a harbour or in a storehouse where it keeps its provisions. And for this reason it is hither that both God and the devil always come with their jewels of supernatural forms and images,³ to offer them to the understanding ; although God does not make use of this means alone to instruct the soul, but dwells within it in substance, and is able to do this by Himself and by other methods.

5. There is no need for me to stop here in order to give instruction concerning the signs by which it may be known which visions are of God and which not, and which are of one kind and which of another ; for this is not my intention, which is only to instruct the understanding herein, that it may not be hindered or impeded as to union with Divine Wisdom by the good visions, neither may be deceived by those which are false.

6. I say, then, that with regard to all these imaginary visions and apprehensions and to all other forms and species whatsoever, which present themselves beneath some particular kind of knowledge or image or form, whether they be false and come from the devil or are recognized as true and coming from God, the understanding must not be embarrassed by them or feed upon them, neither must the soul desire to receive them or to have them,⁴ lest it should no longer be detached, free, pure and simple, without any mode or manner, as is required for union.⁵

7. The reason of this is that all these forms which we have already mentioned are always represented, in the apprehension of the soul, as we have said, beneath certain modes and

¹ E.p. omits : ' now natural, now supernatural.' The Saint employs this last word, in this passage, with the sense of ' preternatural.' Only God can surpass the bounds of nature, but the devil can act in such a way that he appears to be doing so, counterfeiting miracles, and so forth.

² E.p. omits : ' as we have said.'

³ E.p. : ' come hither with images and forms.'

⁴ E.p. : ' or to set its foot upon them.'

⁵ E.p. : ' for Divine union.'

Which signifies : If there be any prophet of the Lord among you, I will appear to him in some vision or form, or I will speak with him in his dreams ; but there is none like My servant Moses, who is the most faithful in all My house, and I speak with him mouth to mouth, and he sees not God by comparisons, similitudes and figures. Herein He says clearly that, in this lofty state of union whereof we are speaking, God is not communicated to the soul by means of any disguise of imaginary vision or similitude or form, neither can He be so communicated ; but mouth to mouth—that is, in the naked and pure essence of God, which is the mouth of God in love, with the naked and pure essence of the soul,¹ which is the mouth of the soul in love of God.

10. Wherefore, in order to come to this essential union of love in God,² the soul must have a care not to lean upon³ imaginary visions, nor upon forms or figures or particular objects of the understanding ; for these cannot serve it as a proportionate and proximate means to such an end ; rather they would disturb it, and for this reason the soul must renounce them and strive not to have them. For if in any circumstance they were to be received and prized, it would be for the sake of the profit which true visions bring to the soul and the good effect which they produce upon it. But it is not necessary, for this reason, to receive them ;⁴ rather, it is well always to reject them for the soul's profit. For these imaginary visions, like the outward bodily visions whereof we have spoken, do the soul good by communicating to it intelligence or love or sweetness. But for this effect to be produced by them in the soul it is not necessary that it should desire to receive them ; for, as has also been said above, at this very time⁵ when they are present to the imagination, they produce in the soul and infuse into it intelligence and love, or sweetness, or whatever effect God wills them to produce. And not only do they produce this joint effect, but principally, although not simultaneously, they produce

¹ The editions of 1630 and later dates add here : ' by means of the will.' But these words are found neither in e.p. nor in the Codices.

² E.p. : ' to this so perfect union of God.'

³ [The progressive form is used in the Spanish : ' not to go (or ' be ') leaning upon.']

⁴ A, B : ' but it is necessary, for this reason, not to admit them.' The second part of this sentence shows that the reading of the text, which is that of both Alc. and e.p., is the correct one.

⁵ E.p. omits : ' at this very time.'

2. The reason which has now moved me to write at length about this is the lack of discretion, as I understand it, which I have observed in certain spiritual masters. Trusting to these supernatural apprehensions, and believing that they are good and come from God, both masters and disciples have fallen into great error and found themselves in dire straits, wherein is fulfilled the saying of Our Lord : *Si cæcus cæco ducatum præstet, ambo in foveam cadunt*.¹ Which signifies : If a blind man lead another blind man, they fall both into the ditch. And He says not ' they shall fall,' but ' they fall.' For they may fall without falling into error, since the very venturing of the one to guide the other is a going astray, and thus, they fall in this respect alone,² at the very least. And, first of all, there are some whose way and method with souls that experience these visions cause them to stray, or embarrass them with respect to their visions, or guide them not along the road of humility, but encourage them to fix their eyes upon them in some way (for which reason they remain without the true spirit of faith)³ and edify them not in faith, but lead them to speak highly of those things.⁴ By doing this they make them realize that they themselves set some value upon them, or⁵ make great account of them, and, consequently, their disciples do the same. Thus their souls have been set upon these apprehensions, instead of being edified in faith, so that they may be empty and detached and freed from those things and can soar to the heights of dark faith. And all this arises from the terms and language which the soul observes its master to employ with respect to this ; somehow it very easily conceives a satisfaction and an esteem for it, which is not in its own control, and which averts the eyes of the soul from the abyss of faith.

3. And the reason why this is so easy must be that the soul is so greatly occupied therewith that, as these are things of sense, to which it is inclined by nature, and as it is likewise disposed to enjoy the apprehension of those distinct and sensible things, it has only to see in its confessor, or in some other person, a certain esteem and appreciation for them, and not merely will it at once conceive the same itself, but

¹ S. Matthew xv, 14.

² E.p. omits ' alone.'

³ E.p. : ' for which reason they journey not by way of the pure and perfect spirit of faith.'

⁴ E.p. : ' and edify them not, neither fortify them in it [i.e., in faith], making these things of great account.'

⁵ E.p. omits : ' set some value upon them, or.'

1 speak any more in His name.¹ Herein, although the holy prophet was speaking with resignation and in the form of a weak man who cannot endure the ways and workings² of God, he clearly indicates the difference between the way wherein the Divine sayings are fulfilled and the ordinary meaning which they appear to have; for the Divine prophets³ were treated as mockers, and suffered so much from their prophecy that Jeremiah himself said elsewhere : *Formido et laqueus facta est nobis vaticinatio et contritio.*⁴ Which signifies : Prophecy has become to us fear and snares and contradiction of spirit.

7. And the reason why Jonah fled when God sent him to preach the destruction of Nineveh was this, namely, that he knew the different meanings of the sayings of God with respect to the understanding of men and with respect to the causes of the sayings.⁵ And thus, lest they should mock him when they saw that his prophecy was not fulfilled, he went away and fled in order not to prophesy; and thus he remained waiting all the forty days outside the city, to see if his prophecy was fulfilled; and, when it was not fulfilled, he was greatly afflicted, so much so that he said to God : *Obsecro, Domine, numquid non hoc est verbum meum, cum adhuc essem in terra mea? propter hoc præoccupavi, ut fugerem in Tharsis.*⁶ That is : I pray Thee, O Lord, was not this perchance my saying when I was in my country? Therefore was I vexed, and fled away to Tarshish. And the saint was wroth and besought God to take away his life.

8. Why, then, must we marvel that God should speak and reveal certain things to souls which come not to pass in the sense wherein they understand them? For, if God affirms or represents such or such a thing to the soul, whether good or evil, with respect to itself or to another, and if that thing be founded upon a certain affection or service or offence of that soul, or of another, with respect to God, and if the soul persevere therein, it will be fulfilled; yet even then its fulfilment⁷ is not certain, since it is not certain that the soul will persevere. Wherefore, we must have confidence,⁸ not in understanding, but in faith.

¹ Jeremiah xx, 7-9.

² E.p. : 'ways and secrets.'

³ A, B : 'the sacred prophets.'

⁴ Lamentations iii, 47.

⁵ E.p. : '... namely, that he understood not the truth of the sayings of God and knew not wholly their meaning.'

⁶ Jonah iv, 2.

⁷ E.p. adds : 'as it seems' [i.e., in the sense which it seems to bear].

⁸ A, B, e.p. add : 'or security.'

how shall he be warm? That is to say: How shall he be other than cold as to the things of God? And if any man can fight and prevail against one enemy (that is, the devil, who can fight and prevail against those that are alone and desire to have God with them in their acts), two men together will resist him—that is, the disciple and the master¹ who come together to know and do² the truth. And until this happens such a man is habitually weak and feeble in the truth, however often he may have heard it from God; so much so that, despite the many occasions on which S. Paul preached the Gospel, which he said that he had heard, not of men, but of God, he could not do otherwise than go and consult with S. Peter and the Apostles, saying: *Ne forte in vacuum currerem, aut cucurrissem.*³ Which signifies: Perchance he should run, or had run, in vain,⁴ having no assurance of himself, until man had given him assurance. This seems a noteworthy thing, O Paul, that He that revealed to thee this Gospel should be unable likewise to reveal to thee the assurance of the fault which thou mightest have committed in preaching the truth concerning Him.⁵

13. Herein it is clearly explained that a man is to place no confidence in the things that God reveals, save in the way that we are describing; for, even in cases where a person is in possession of such certainty, as S. Paul was certain of his Gospel (since he had already begun to preach it), yet, although the revelation be of God, man may still err with respect to it,⁶ or in things relating to it. For, although God reveals one thing, He reveals not always the other; and oftentimes He reveals something without revealing the way in which it is to be done. For ordinarily He neither works nor reveals anything that can be accomplished by human counsel and industry, although He may commune for a long time very lovingly with the soul. Of this S. Paul was very well aware, since, as we say, although he knew that the Gospel was revealed to him by God, he went to take counsel with S. Peter. And we see this clearly in the Exodus, where God had communed most familiarly with Moses, yet had never given him that salutary counsel which was given him by his father-in-law Jethro—that is to say, that he

¹ [i.e., the penitent and the confessor or director.]

² E.p.: 'and work.'

³ Galatians ii, 2.

⁴ E.p. omits the rest of this paragraph.

⁵ A, B: 'the truth of the Lord.'

⁶ E.p.: 'may still err in the execution of it.'

should choose other judges to assist him, so that the people should not be waiting from morning till night.¹ This counsel God approved, though it was not He that had given it to him, for it was a thing that fell within the limits of human judgement and reason. With respect to Divine visions and revelations and locutions, God is not wont to reveal them,² for He is ever desirous that men should make such use of their own reason as is possible, and all such things have to be governed by reason,³ save those that are of faith, which transcend all judgement and reason, although these are not contrary to faith.⁴

14. Wherefore let none think that, because it may be true that God and the saints commune with him familiarly about many things, they will of necessity explain to him the faults that he commits with regard to anything, if it is possible for him to recognize these faults by other means. He can have no assurance about this ; for, as we read came to pass in the Acts of the Apostles, S. Peter, though a prince of the Church, who was taught directly by God, went astray nevertheless with respect to a certain ceremony that was in use among the people, and God was silent. So far did he stray that S. Paul reprov'd him, as he affirms, saying : *Cum vidissem, quod non recte ad veritatem Evangelii ambularent, dixi coram omnibus : Si tu judaeus cum sis, gentiliter vivis, quomodo Gentes cogis judaizare ?*⁵ Which signifies : When I saw (says S. Paul) that the disciples walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said to Peter before them all : If thou, being a Jew, as thou art, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, how feignest thou to force the Gentiles to follow the Jews ? And God reprov'd not S. Peter Himself for this fault, for that simulation was a thing that had to do with reason, and it was possible for him to know it by rational means.⁶

15. Wherefore on the day of judgement God will punish for their many faults and sins many souls with whom He may quite habitually have held converse here below, and to whom

¹ Exodus xviii, 21-2.

² E.p. : 'for it was a thing that pertained to human counsel and judgement. And thus God is not wont to reveal all things that may pertain to human counsel and reason with respect to the visions and locutions of God . . .'

³ E.p. omits : 'and all such . . . by reason.'

⁴ A, B, e.p. : 'they are not contrary to reason and judgement.'

⁵ Galatians ii, 14.

⁶ E.p. : 'for it was a thing that he might know by ordinary means.'

He may have given much light and virtue ; for, as to those things that they have known that they ought to do, they have been neglectful, and have relied upon that converse that they have had with God and upon the virtue that He has given them.¹ And thus, as Christ² says in the Gospel, they will marvel at that time, saying : *Domine, Domine, nonne in nomine tuo prophetavimus, et in nomine tuo daemonia ejecimus, et in nomine tuo virtutes multas fecimus ?*³ That is : Lord, Lord, were the prophecies that Thou spakest to us perchance not prophesied in Thy name ? And in Thy name cast we not out devils ?⁴ And in Thy name performed we not many miracles and mighty works ? And the Lord says that He will answer them in these words : *Et tunc confitebor illis, quia numquam novi vos : discedite a me omnes qui operamini iniquitatem.*⁵ That is to say : Depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity, for I never knew you. Of the number of these was the prophet Balaam and others like to him, who, though God spake with them and gave them thanks,⁶ were sinners. But the Lord will likewise give their proportion of reproof to His friends and chosen ones, with whom He communed familiarly here below, as to the faults and sins of neglect that they may have committed ; whereof there was no need that God should Himself warn them, since He had already warned them through the natural reason and law that He had given to them.

16. In concluding this part of my subject, therefore, I say, and I infer from what has been said, that anything, of whatsoever kind, received by the soul through supernatural means, clearly and plainly, entirely and simply,⁷ must at once be communicated to the spiritual director. For although there may seem no reason to speak of it, or to spend time upon it, yet the soul acts safely, as we have said, if it casts it aside and pays no heed to it, neither desires it.⁸ Especially is this so when it is a question of visions or revelations or other supernatural communications, which are either quite clear or very nearly so. It is very necessary to give an account of them all, although it may seem to the

¹ A, B, e.p. add : ' and on that account being neglectful.'

² So Alc. A, B : ' as Christ our Lord.' E.p. : ' as our Lord Jesus.'

³ S. Matthew vii, 22.

⁴ Alc. omits this sentence. E.p. adds : ' Indeed we have cast out devils.'

⁵ S. Matthew vii, 23.

⁶ E.p. omits : ' and gave them thanks.'

⁷ E.p. adds : ' with all truth.'

⁸ E.p. omits : ' neither desires it.'

soul that there is no reason for so doing. And this for three causes.¹ First, because, as we have said, God communicates many things, the effect, power,² light and security whereof He confirms not wholly in the soul, until, as we have said, the soul consults him whom God has given to it as a spiritual judge, which is he that has the power to bind or to loose, and to approve or to blame, as we have shown by means of the passages quoted above;³ and we can show it daily by experience, for we see humble souls to whom these things come to pass, and who, after discussing them with fit persons, experience a new satisfaction, power, light and assurance; so much so that to some it seems that they belong not to them, neither have they possession of them, until they communicate them to the director, and that then they are given to them anew.

17. The second cause is that the soul habitually needs instruction upon the things that come to pass within it, in order to be directed by that means to spiritual poverty and detachment, which is the dark night. For if this instruction is being withheld from it—even when the soul desires not such things—it will gradually, without realizing it, become callous⁴ as it treads the spiritual road, and draw near again to the road of sense; it is partly with respect to this that these distinct things happen.⁵

18. The third cause is that, for the sake of the humility and submission and mortification of the soul, it is well to relate everything to the director, although he make⁶ no account of it all and consider it as of no importance. There are some souls who greatly dislike speaking of such things, because they think them to be of no importance. And they know not how the person to whom they are to relate them will receive them; which is lack of humility, for which reason it is needful to submit themselves and relate these things. And there are others who are very timid in relating them, because they see not why they should have these experiences, which seem to belong to saints, as well as other things which

¹ So Alc. B has: 'three reasons'; A, e.p.: 'three things.'

² A, B: 'the effort, effect . . .'

³ A, B omit: 'by means of the passages quoted above.'

⁴ A, e.p. read 'rude' for 'callous.' [The change is a slight one: *enrudeciendo* for *endureciendo*.]

⁵ E.p. omits: 'it is partly . . . happen.'

⁶ [The Spanish phrase equally admits the reading: 'although the soul make.']

they are sorry to have to describe ; for which cause they think there is no reason to speak of them because they make no account of them ; but for this very reason it is well for them to mortify themselves and relate them, until in time they come to speak of them humbly, unaffectedly, submissively and readily, and after this they will always find it easy to do so.

19. But, with respect to what has been said, it must be pointed out that, although we have insisted so much¹ that such things should be set aside, and that confessors should not incite their penitents to discuss them, it is not well that spiritual fathers should show displeasure in regard to them, or should seek to avoid them or despise them, or give their penitents cause to show reserve and not to venture to speak of them, for it would be the means of causing them many inconveniences if the door were closed upon their relating them. For, since this is a means and manner² whereby God guides such souls, there is no reason for thinking ill of it or for being alarmed or offended by it ; but rather there is a reason for proceeding³ very quietly and kindly, for encouraging these souls and for giving them an opportunity to speak of these things ; if necessary, they must be exhorted to speak ; and, in view of the difficulty that some souls experience in describing these things, this is sometimes quite essential. Let confessors direct their penitents in faith, instructing them frankly to turn away their eyes from all such things, teaching them how to void the desire and the spirit of them that they may make progress, and giving them to understand how much more precious in God's sight is one work or act of the will performed in charity than are all the visions and communications⁴ that they may receive from Heaven, since these imply neither merit nor demerit.⁵ Let them point out, too, that many souls who have known nothing of such things have made incomparably greater progress than others who have received many of them.

¹ B : ' so rigorously.'

² E.p. : ' For, as we have said, this is a means ; and, since it is a means and manner . . . '

³ None of the MSS. have ' proceeding,' which e.p. supplies.

⁴ E.p. : ' than are all the visions and revelations.' A, B : ' than are all the visions and revelations and communications.'

⁵ E.p. omits : ' since these . . . demerit.'

it is possible for it to be greatly deceived through its own imprudence.

5. And although, in one sense, we might conclude with these four kinds of apprehension, by treating them all together and giving advice which holds good of them all, as we have given concerning all the others—namely, that they should neither be desired nor aspired to—yet, since we shall presently throw more light upon the way in which this is to be done, and certain things will be said in connection with them, it will be well to treat of each one of them in particular, and thus we shall now speak of the first apprehensions, which are intellectual or spiritual visions.

CHAPTER XXIV

Which treats of two kinds of spiritual vision that come supernaturally.

1. Speaking now strictly of those visions which are spiritual, and are received without the intervention of any bodily sense, I say that there are two kinds of vision that may come to the understanding; the one kind is of corporeal substances; the other, of incorporeal or separated substances. The corporeal visions have respect to all material things that are in Heaven and on earth, which the soul is able to see, even while it is still in the body, by the aid of a certain supernatural illumination, derived from God, wherein it is able to see all absent things in Heaven and on earth,¹ even as S. John saw, as we read in the twenty-first chapter of the Apocalypse, where he describes and relates the excellence of the celestial Jerusalem, which he saw in Heaven. Even so, again, we read of S. Benedict that in a spiritual vision he saw the whole world.² This vision, says S. Thomas in the first of his Quodlibets, was in the light that is derived from above, as we have said.

2. The other visions, which are of incorporeal substances, cannot be seen by the aid of this derived illumination, whereof we are here speaking, but only by another and a higher illumination which is called the illumination of glory. And thus these visions of incorporeal substances, such as

¹ The remainder of this paragraph is omitted by e.p.

² S. Gregory: *Dial.*, Bk. II, Chap. xxxv. 'Omnis etiam mundus velut sub uno solis radio collectus, ante oculos eius adductus est.'

natural functions of the body are supplied by His favour. This is why, at the time when it is thought that S. Paul saw these (namely, the incorporeal substances in the third heaven) that saint says :¹ *Sive in corpore, nescio, sive extra corpus, nescio, Deus scit.*² That is, he was enraptured, and of that which he saw he says that he knows not if it was in the body or out of the body, but that God knows. Herein it is clearly seen that the limits of natural means of communication³ were passed, and that this was the work of God. Likewise, it is believed that God showed His Essence to Moses, for we read that God said to him that He would set him in the cleft of the rock, and would protect him, by covering him with His right hand, and protecting him so that he should not die when His glory passed ; the which glory passed indeed, and was shown to him fleetingly, and the natural life of Moses was protected by the right hand of God.⁴ But these visions that were so substantial—like that of S. Paul and Moses, and that of our father⁵ Elijah, when he covered his face at the gentle whisper of God—although they are fleeting, occur only very rarely—indeed, hardly ever—and to very few ; for God performs such a thing in those that are spiritually most strong⁶ in the Church and the law of God, as were the three men named above.

4. But, although these visions of spiritual substances cannot⁷ be unveiled and be clearly seen in this life by the understanding, they can nevertheless be perceived in the substance of the soul, with the sweetest touches and unions, all of which belongs to spiritual feelings, whereof, with the Divine favour, we shall treat presently ; for our pen is being directed and guided to these—namely, to the Divine bond and union of the soul with Divine Substance. We shall speak of this when we treat of the dark and confused mystical understanding which remains to be described, wherein we shall show how, by means of this dark and loving knowledge, God is united with the soul in a lofty and Divine degree ;⁸ for, after some manner, this dark and loving knowledge,

¹ Alc. omits : ' namely . . . saint says.'

² 2 Corinthians xii, 2.

³ A, B : ' that the limits of life.'

⁴ Exodus xxxiii, 22.

⁵ Only Alc. and the edition of 1630 have : ' our father.'

⁶ The edition of 1630 omits ' most.' A, B [by changing one letter and writing *fuentes* for *fuertes*] read : ' that are spiritual fountains.'

⁷ The edition of 1630 adds : ' according to the ordinary law.'

⁸ This description the Saint probably accomplished, or intended to accomplish, in his commentaries on the last five stanzas of the *Dark Night*, which have not come down to us.

which is faith, serves as a means to Divine union in this life, even as, in the next life, the light of glory serves as an intermediary to the clear vision of God.

5. Let us, then, now treat of the visions of corporeal substances, received spiritually in the soul, which come after the manner of bodily visions. For, just as the eyes see bodily visions by means of natural light, even so does the soul, through the understanding, by means of supernaturally derived light, as we have said, see those same natural things inwardly, together with others, as God wills ; the difference between the two kinds of vision is only in the mode and manner of them. For spiritual and intellectual visions are much clearer and subtler than those which pertain to the body. For, when God is pleased to grant this favour to the soul, He communicates to it that supernatural light whereof we speak, wherein the soul sees the things that God wills it to see, easily and most clearly, whether they be of Heaven or of earth, and the absence or presence of them is no hindrance to the vision. And it is at times as though a door were most clearly opened before it, through which the soul sees a light, after the manner of a lightning flash, which, on a dark night, reveals things suddenly, and causes them to be clearly and distinctly seen, and then leaves them in darkness, although the forms and figures of them remain in the fancy. This comes to pass much more perfectly in the soul,¹ because those things that the spirit has seen in that light remain impressed upon it in such a way that whensoever it observes² them it sees them in itself as it saw them before ;³ even as in a mirror the forms that are in it⁴ are seen whensoever a man looks in it, and in such a way that those forms of the things that he has seen are never wholly removed from his soul, although in course of time they become somewhat remote.⁵

6. The effect which these visions produce in the soul is that of quiet, illumination, joy like that of glory, sweetness, purity and love, humility and inclination or elevation of the spirit in God ; sometimes more so, at other times less ; with sometimes more of one thing, at other times more of another ; according to the spirit wherein they are received and according as God wills.

¹ E.p. omits the rest of the paragraph.

² 'Whensoever, enlightened by God, it observes . . .' reads the edition of 1630.

³ A : 'it sees them even as it saw them before.'

⁴ Edition of 1630 : 'that are represented in it.'

⁵ *Ibid.* : 'more remote.'

5. These Divine manifestations of knowledge which have respect to God never relate to particular matters, inasmuch as they concern the Chief Beginning, and therefore can have no particular reference, unless it be a question of some truth concerning a thing less than God, which in some way is seen together with the rest ; but these Divine manifestations themselves—no, in no way whatsoever.¹ And these lofty manifestations of knowledge can only come to the soul that attains to union with God, for they are themselves that union; and to receive them is equivalent to a certain contact with the Divinity² which the soul experiences, and thus it is God Himself Who is perceived and tasted therein. And, although He cannot be experienced manifestly and clearly, as in glory, this touch of knowledge and delight is nevertheless so sublime and profound that it penetrates the substance³ of the soul, and the devil cannot meddle with it or produce any manifestation like to it, for there is no such thing, neither is there aught that compares with it, neither can he infuse pleasure or delight that is like to it ; for such kinds of knowledge savour of the Divine Essence and of eternal life, and the devil cannot counterfeit a thing so lofty.

6. Nevertheless he might make some pretence of imitating it, by representing to the soul certain great things and pregnant matters which can readily be perceived by the senses and endeavouring to persuade the soul that these are God ; but not in such wise that it enters into the substance⁴ of the soul and of a sudden⁵ renews it and enkindles it with love, as do the manifestations of God. For there are certain kinds of knowledge, and certain of these touches wrought by God in the substance of the soul, which enrich it after such wise that not only does one of them suffice to take from the soul once and for all the whole of the imperfections that it had itself been unable to throw off during its whole life, but it leaves the soul full of virtues and blessings⁶ from God.

7. And these touches are so delectable to the soul, and of a delight so intimate, that if it received only one of them it

¹ E.p. : ' and therefore can have no particular reference, unless this knowledge should be extended to some other truth concerning something less than God which is capable of being described in some way ; but these general manifestations—no.' ² E.p. has ' Divine Truth ' for ' Divinity.'

³ E.p. : ' the inmost part.'

⁴ E.p. : ' into the very interior part.' A : ' into the wisdom.'

⁵ So Alc., D. A, B, C, P, e.p. have : ' and sublimely.' [The difference is slight : *subidamente* for *subitamente*.]

⁶ A, erroneously, has : ' and visions.'

would consider itself well rewarded for all the trials that it had suffered in this life, even had they been innumerable ; and it is so greatly encouraged and given such energy to suffer many things for God's sake that it suffers above all in seeing that it suffers not more.

8. The soul cannot attain to these lofty degrees of knowledge by means of any comparison or imagination of its own, because¹ they are loftier than all these ; and so God works them in the soul without making use of its own capacities. Wherefore, at certain times, when the soul is least thinking of it and least desiring it, God is wont to give it these Divine touches, by causing it certain recollections of Himself. And these are sometimes suddenly caused in the soul by its mere recollection of certain things—sometimes of very small things. And they are so readily perceived² that at times they cause not only the soul, but also the body, to tremble. But at other times they come to pass in the spirit when it is very tranquil, without any kind of trembling, but with a sudden³ sense of delight and spiritual refreshment.

9. At other times, again, they come when the soul repeats or hears some word, from Scripture or possibly from some other source ; but they are not always equally efficacious and sensible, for oftentimes they are extremely faint ; yet, however faint they may be, one of these recollections and touches of God is more profitable to the soul than many other kinds of knowledge or many meditations upon the creatures and the works of God. And, since these manifestations of knowledge come to the soul suddenly,⁴ and independently of its own free will, it must neither desire to have them, nor desire not to have them⁵ ; but must merely be humble and resigned concerning them, and God will perform His work how and when He wills.

10. And I say not that the soul should behave in the same negative manner with regard to these apprehensions as with regard to the rest, for, as we have said, they are a part of the union, towards which we are directing the soul ; to which end we are teaching it to detach and strip itself of all other apprehensions. And the means by which God will

¹ E.p. adds : ' as we have said.'

² E.p. : ' And they are so efficacious.'

³ So Alc. The other authorities read : ' with a sublime' [*súbito* for *súbito*, as above].

⁴ E.p. adds : ' as we have said.'

⁵ E.p. : ' it must neither strive to have them nor strive not to have them.'

do this must be humility and suffering for love of God with resignation¹ as regards all reward ; for these favours are not granted to the soul which still cherishes attachments, inasmuch as they are granted through a very special love of God toward the soul which loves Him likewise with great detachment. It is to this that the Son of God referred, in S. John, when He said : *Qui autem diligit me, diligitur a Patre meo, et ego diligam eum, et manifestabo ei me ipsum.*² Which signifies : He that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him. Herein are included the kinds of knowledge and touches to which we are referring, which God manifests to the soul that truly loves Him.³

11. The second kind of knowledge or vision of interior truths⁴ is very different from this that we have described, since it is of things lower than God. And herein is included the perception of the truth of things in themselves, and that of the events and happenings which come to pass among men. And this knowledge is of such a kind that, when the soul is taught these truths, they sink into it deeply, without anyone saying aught to it about them, to such an extent that, although they may tell it something else, the soul cannot give its inward assent to this, even though it endeavour to give such assent by making a great effort ; for it is learning something else within the spirit by means of the spirit that teaches it that thing,⁵ which is equivalent to seeing it clearly. This pertains⁶ to the spirit of prophecy and to the grace which S. Paul calls the gift of the discernment of spirits.⁷ Yet, although the soul holds something which it understands to be quite certain and true, as we have said, and although it may be unable to give it that passive interior consent, it must not therefore cease to believe and to give the consent of reason to that which its spiritual director tells it and commands it,⁸ even though this may be quite contrary to its own feelings, so that it may be directed in faith to Divine union, to which a soul must journey by believing rather than by understanding.

¹ E.p. adds : ' and disinterestedness.'

² S. John xiv, 21.

³ A, B : ' that draws near to Him and truly loves Him.'

⁴ A, B : ' or of interior truths.'

⁵ E.p. : ' something else in that which has been spiritually represented to it.'

⁶ E.p. : ' This may pertain.'

⁷ 1 Corinthians xii, 10.

⁸ E.p. abbreviates : ' as we have said, it cannot but follow that which its spiritual director commands.'

judgeth all things. And again he says : *Spiritus enim omnia scrutatur, etiam profunda Dei.*¹ The spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. Wherefore, although spiritual persons cannot by nature know thoughts, or things that are in the minds of others,² they may well interpret them through supernatural enlightenment or by signs. And, although they may often be deceived in their interpretation of signs, they are more generally correct. Yet we must trust neither to the one means nor to the other, for the devil meddles herein greatly, and with much subtlety, as we shall afterwards say, and thus we must ever renounce such kinds of knowledge.

15. And that spiritual persons may have knowledge of the deeds and happenings of men, even though they be elsewhere, we have witness and example in the Fourth Book of the Kings, where Gehazi, the servant of our father Elisha,³ desired to hide from him the money which he had received from Naaman the Syrian, and Elisha said : *Nonne cor meum in presenti erat, quando reversus est homo de curru suo in occursum tui ?*⁴ Was not my heart perchance present, when Naaman turned again from his chariot and went to meet thee ? This happens spiritually ; the spirit sees it as though it were happening in its presence. And the same thing is proved in the same book, where we read likewise of the same Elisha, that, knowing all that the King of Syria did with his princes in his secret place, he told it to the King of Israel, and thus the counsels of the King of Syria were of no effect ; so much so that, when the King of Syria saw that all was known, he said to his people⁵ : Wherefore do ye not tell me which of you is betraying me to the King of Israel ? And then one of his servants said : *Nequaquam, Domine mi Rex, sed Eliseus Propheta, qui est in Israel, indicat Regi Israel omnia verba, quaecumque locutus fueris in conclavi tuo.*⁶ It is not so, my lord, O king, but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel all the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.

16. Both kinds of this knowledge of things, as well as other kinds of knowledge, come to pass⁷ in the soul passively, so

¹ 1 Corinthians ii, 10.

² [*Lit.*, 'in the interior.']

³ This phrase is found only in Alc. and e.p.

⁴ 4 Kings [A.V., 2 Kings] v, 26.

⁵ A, B : 'to his counsellors.'

⁶ 4 Kings [A.V., 2 Kings] vi, 12.

⁷ E.p. : 'Both kinds of this knowledge of things also come to pass.'

that for its own part it does naught. For it will come to pass that, when a person is inattentive to a matter and it is far from his mind, there will come to him a vivid understanding of what he is hearing or reading, and that much more clearly than it could be conveyed by the sound of the words ; and at times, though he understand not the words, as when they are in Latin and he knows not that tongue, the knowledge of their meaning comes to him, despite his not understanding them.

17. With regard to the deceptions which the devil can bring about, and does bring about, concerning this kind of knowledge and understanding, there is much that might be said, for the deceptions which he effects in this way are very great and very difficult to unmask. Inasmuch as, through suggestion,¹ he can represent to the soul many kinds of intellectual knowledge and implant them so firmly that it appears impossible that they should not be true, he will certainly make the soul to believe innumerable falsehoods if it be not humble and cautious. For suggestion has sometimes great power over the soul, above all when it is to some extent aided by the weakness of sense, causing the knowledge which it conveys to sink into the soul with such great power, persuasiveness and determination that the soul needs to give itself earnestly to prayer and to exert great strength if it is to cast it off. For at times the devil is accustomed to represent to the soul the sins of others, and evil consciences and evil souls,² falsely but very vividly, and all this he does to harm the soul, trusting that it may spread abroad his revelations, and that thus more sins may be committed, for which reason he fills the soul with zeal by making it believe that these revelations are granted it so that it may commend the persons concerned to God. Now, though it is true that God sometimes sets before holy souls the necessities of their neighbours, so that they may commend them to God or relieve them, even as we read that He revealed to Jeremiah the weakness of the Prophet Baruch, that he might give him counsel concerning it,³ yet it is more often the devil who does this, and speaks falsely about it, in order to cause infamy, sin and discouragement, whereof we have very great experience. And at other times he implants other kinds of knowledge

¹ E.p. adds : ' making use of the bodily senses.'

² A, B : ' and the evil souls of others.'

³ Jeremiah xlv, 3.

with great assurance, and persuades the soul to believe them.

18. Such knowledge as this, whether it be of God or no, can be of very little assistance to the progress of the soul¹ on its journey to God, if the soul desire it and be attached to it; on the contrary, if it were not scrupulous in rejecting it, not only would it be hindered on its road, but it would even be greatly harmed and led far astray. For all the perils and inconveniences which, as we have said, may be involved in the supernatural apprehensions whereof we have treated up to this point, may occur here, and more also. I will not, therefore, treat more fully of this matter here, since sufficient instruction has already been given in past chapters; but I will² only say that the soul must always be very scrupulous in rejecting these things, and seek to journey to God by the way of unknowing; and must ever relate its experiences to its spiritual confessor, and be ever attentive to his counsel. Let the confessor guide the soul past this, as though it were a passing matter, for it is of no kind of importance for³ the road to union; for when these things are granted to the soul passively they always leave in it such effect as God wills shall remain, without necessity for the soul to exert any diligence in the matter.⁴ And thus it seems to me that there is no reason to describe here either the effect which is produced by true knowledge, or that which comes from false knowledge, for this would be wearisome and never-ending. For the effects of this knowledge cannot all be described in a brief instruction, the knowledge being great and greatly varied, and its effects being so likewise, since good knowledge produces good effects, and evil knowledge, evil effects,⁵ etc. In saying that all should be rejected,⁶ we have said sufficient for the soul not to go astray.⁷

¹ E.p.: 'can bring very little profit to the soul.'

² A, B: 'therefore I will . . .'

³ E.p.: ' . . . passing matter, treating it as of no account for . . .'

⁴ E.p. omits: 'without . . . in the matter.'

⁵ A, B, e.p. have: ' . . . good effects [leading] to good, and evil knowledge evil effects [leading] to evil.' Alc. ends the chapter here.

⁶ E.p. adds: 'and how this is to be done.'

⁷ E.p. omits: 'for the soul not to go astray.' We follow A and B in our reading of this last sentence.

and then to think that it is God Who is answering them and speaking to them. They therefore commit great blunders if they put not great restraint upon themselves, and if their director obliges them not to abstain from these kinds of reflection. For they are apt to gain from them mere non-sensical talk and impurity of soul rather than humility and mortification of spirit, if they think 'This was indeed a great thing' and 'God was speaking'; whereas it will have been little more than nothing, or nothing at all, or less than nothing. For, if humility and charity be not engendered by such experiences, and mortification and holy simplicity and silence, etc., what can be the value of them? I say, then, that these things may hinder the soul greatly in its progress to Divine union because, if it pay heed to them, it is led far astray from the abyss of faith, where the understanding must remain in darkness, and must journey in darkness, by love and in faith, and not by much reasoning.

6. And if you ask me why the understanding must be deprived of these truths, since it is illumined through them by the Spirit of God, and that thus they cannot be evil, I say that the Holy Spirit illumines the understanding which is recollected, and illumines it according to the manner of its recollection,¹ and that the understanding cannot find any other and greater recollection than in faith; and thus the Holy Spirit will illumine it in naught more than in faith. For the purer and the more refined in faith² is the soul, the more it has of the infused charity of God; and the more charity it has, the more is it illumined and the more gifts of the Holy Spirit are communicated to it, for charity is the cause and the means whereby they are communicated to it.³ And although it is true that, in this illumination of truths, the Holy Spirit communicates a certain light to the soul, this is nevertheless as different in quality from that

¹ This profound and important principle, which has often been developed in mystical theology, is well expounded by P. José de Jesús María in a treatise called *Reply to a question* [*Respuesta a una duda*]. Here, among other things, he says: 'As S. Thomas proves (*De Veritate*, q. 12, a. 6), Divine illumination, like every other spiritual form, is communicated to the soul after the manner of the receiver of it, whether according to sense or according to spirit, to the particular or to the universal. And thus, he that receives it must prepare himself for it to be communicated to him further, whether in small measure (as we say) or according to sense, or in large measure or intellectually.'

² E.p.: 'in perfection of living faith.'

³ E.p. omits 'of the Holy Spirit' and 'for charity . . . communicated to it.'

which is in faith, wherein is no clear understanding, as is the most precious gold from the basest metal ; and, with regard to its quantity,¹ the one is as much greater than the other as the sea is greater than a drop of water. For in the one manner there is communicated to the soul wisdom concerning one or two or three truths, etc., but in the other there is communicated to it all the wisdom of God in general, which is the Son of God, Who communicates Himself to the soul in faith.²

7. And if you tell me that this is all good, and that the one impedes not the other, I reply that it impedes it greatly if the soul sets store by it ; for to do this is to busy itself with things which are quite clear and of little importance, yet which are quite sufficient to hinder the communication of the abyss of faith, wherein God supernaturally and secretly instructs the soul, and exalts it in virtues and gifts in a way that it knows not. And the profit which these successive communications will bring us cannot come by our deliberately applying the understanding to them, for if we do this they will rather lead us astray, even as Wisdom says to the soul in the *Songs* : Turn away thine eyes from me, for they cause me to soar aloft.³ That is to say : They make me to soar far away from thee and to set myself higher. We must therefore not apply the understanding⁴ to that which is being supernaturally communicated to it, but simply and sincerely apply the will to God with love,⁵ for it is through love that these blessings are communicated and through love they will be communicated in greater abundance than before. For if the ability of the natural⁶ understanding or of other faculties be brought actively to bear upon these things which are communicated supernaturally and passively, its imperfect nature will not reach them, and thus they will perforce be modified according to the capacity of the understanding, and consequently will perforce be changed ; and thus the understanding will necessarily go astray⁷ and begin to form reasonings within itself, and there will no longer be anything supernatural or any semblance thereof, but all will be merely natural and most erroneous and unworthy.

¹ E.p. : 'and, as to the abundance of its light.'

² E.p. : 'in general, by a simple and universal knowledge which is given to the soul in faith.' ³ [Canticles vi, 5.]

⁴ E.p. : 'the strength of the understanding.'

⁵ A, B : 'apply the will to the love of God.'

⁶ E.p. omits 'natural.'

⁷ E.p. : 'will necessarily be in peril of straying.'

8. But there are certain types of understanding so quick and subtle that, when they become recollected during some meditation, they reason in conceptions, and begin naturally, and with great facility, to form their conceptions into these words and arguments, and think that without doubt they come from God. Yet they come only from the understanding, which, with its natural illumination, being to some extent freed from the operation of the senses, is able to effect all this, and more, without any supernatural aid. This happens very commonly, and such persons are greatly deceived, thinking that they have attained to a high degree of prayer and are receiving communications from God, wherefore they either write this down or cause¹ it to be written. And it turns out² to be nothing, and to have the substance of no virtue, and it does them no greater service than to encourage them in vanity.

9. Let these learn to be intent upon naught, save only upon grounding the will in humble love, working diligently, suffering and thus imitating the Son of God in His life and mortifications,³ for this is the road whereby a man will come to all spiritual good, rather than by much inward reasoning.

10. In this type of locution—namely, in successive interior words—the devil intervenes frequently, especially in the case of such as have some inclination or affection for them. At the time when such persons begin to be recollected, the devil is accustomed to offer them ample material for distractions, forming conceptions or words by suggestion in their understanding, and then corrupting⁴ and deceiving it most subtly with things that have great appearance of truth. And this is one of the manners wherein he communicates⁵ with those who have made some implicit or expressed compact with him; as with certain heretics, especially with certain heresiarchs, whose understanding he fills with most subtle, false and erroneous conceptions and arguments.

11. From what has been said, it is evident that these successive locutions may proceed in the understanding from three causes, namely: from the Divine Spirit, Who moves and illumines the understanding; from the natural illumina-

¹ E.p.: ' . . . from God, and they write down what happens to them or cause . . . ' ² E.p.: ' And it all turns out . . . '

³ E.p.: ' in His life, and mortifying themselves in all things. '

⁴ [Lit., ' and then throwing it down. ']

⁵ E.p.: ' It is in this way that he is wont to communicate . . . '

good or from an evil spirit. But the words must be repeated to an experienced confessor, or to a discreet and learned person, that he may give instruction and see what it is well to do, and impart his advice ; and the soul must behave, with regard to them, in a resigned and passive¹ manner. And, if such an expert person cannot be found, it is better to attach no importance to these words² and to repeat them to nobody ; for it is easy to find persons who will ruin the soul rather than edify it. Souls must not be given into the charge of any kind of director, since it is a thing of such importance in so grave a matter whether one goes astray or acts rightly.

6. And let it be clearly noted that a soul should never act according to its own opinion or accept anything of what these locutions express, without much reflection and without taking advice of another.³ For strange and subtle deceptions may arise in this matter ; so much so that I myself believe that the soul that does not set itself against accepting such things cannot fail to be deceived by many of them.⁴

7. And since we have treated of these deceptions and perils, and of the caution to be observed with regard to them, in Chapters seventeen, eighteen, nineteen and twenty of this book, I refer the reader to these and say no more on this matter here ; I only repeat that my chief instruction is that the soul should attach no importance to these things in any way.⁵

CHAPTER XXXI

*Which treats of the substantial words that come interiorly to the spirit. Describes the difference between them and formal words, and the profit which they bring and the resignation and respect which the soul must observe with regard to them.*⁶

1. The third kind of interior words, we said, is called substantial. These substantial words, although they are

¹ [Lit., 'negative.']

² E.p. : 'it is better to take the substantial and secure part of what these words bring, and otherwise to attach no importance to them.'

³ E.p. omits : 'of another.'

⁴ A, B, e.p. add : 'either to a small, or to a great extent.'

⁵ So Alc. A, B : '... my chief instruction, and the surest, to this end, is that the soul should attach no importance whatever to these things, however highly it may think of them, but should be guided in all things by reason and by what the Church has already taught us and teaches us daily.'

⁶ This chapter is notable for the hardly surpassable clarity and precision with which the Saint defines substantial locutions. Some critics, however, have found fault with him for saying that the soul should not fear these

likewise formal, since they are impressed upon the soul with all formality, differ, nevertheless, in that substantial words produce vivid and substantial effects upon the soul, whereas words which are merely formal do not. So that, although it is true that every substantial word is formal, every formal word is not therefore substantial, but only, as we said above, such a word as impresses substantially¹ on the soul that which it signifies. It is as if Our Lord were to say formally to the soul: 'Be thou good'; it would then substantially be good. Or as if He were to say to it: 'Love thou Me'; it would then have and feel within itself the substance of love for God.² Or as if it feared greatly and He said to it: 'Fear thou not': it would at once be conscious of great fortitude and tranquillity. For the sayings of God, and His words, as the Wise Man says, are full of power;³ and thus that which He says to the soul He produces substantially within it. For it is this that David signified when he said: See, He will give to His voice a voice of virtue.⁴ And even so with Abraham, when He said to him: Walk in My presence and be thou perfect:⁵ he was then perfect and walked ever in the fear of God. And this is the power of His word in the Gospel, wherewith He healed the sick, raised the dead, etc., by no more than a word. And after this manner He gives certain souls locutions which are substantial; and they are of such moment and price that they are life and virtue and incomparable blessing to the soul; for one of these words works⁶ a greater blessing within the soul than all that the soul has itself done throughout its life.

2. With respect to these words, the soul should do nothing. It should neither desire them, nor refrain from desiring

locutions, but accept them humbly and passively, since they depend wholly on God. The reply is that, when God favours the soul with these locutions, its own restless effort can only impede His work in it, as has already been said. The soul is truly co-operating with God by preparing itself with resignation and humble affection to receive His favours: it is in no sense, as some critics have asserted, completely inactive. As to the fear of being deceived by these locutions, both S. Thomas and all the principal commentators are in conformity with the Saint's teaching. S. Teresa, too, took the same attitude as S. John of the Cross. Cf. her *Life*, Chap. xxv, and *Mansions*, VI, Chap. iii.

¹ E.p.: 'impresses truly.'

² E.p. modifies thus: 'Or if He were to say formally to the soul: Love thou Me: it would then have and feel within itself impulses of love for God.' The edition of 1630 has: '... the substance of love—that is, true love of God,' reading otherwise as in the text.

³ Ecclesiastes viii, 4.

⁴ Psalm lxvii, 34 [A.V., lxxviii, 33].

⁵ Genesis xvii, 1.

⁶ E.p.: 'perhaps works.'

them ; it should neither reject them nor fear them. It should do nothing¹ in the way of executing what these words express, for these substantial words are never pronounced by God in order that the soul may translate them into action, but that He may so translate them within the soul ; herein they differ from formal and successive words. And I say that the soul must neither desire nor refrain from desiring, for its desire is unnecessary in order that God may translate these words into effect, nor is it sufficient for the soul to refrain from desiring in order for the said effect not to be produced. Let the soul rather be resigned and humble with respect to them. It should not reject them,² since the effect of these words remains substantially within it and is full of the blessing of God. As the soul receives this blessing passively, its action is in no way of any importance. Nor should it fear any deception ; for neither the understanding nor the devil can intervene herein, nor can they succeed³ in passively producing this substantial effect in the soul, in such a way that the effect and habit of the locution may be impressed upon it, unless the soul should have given itself to the devil by a voluntary compact, and he should have dwelt in it as its master, and impressed upon it these effects, not of good, but of evil.⁴ Inasmuch as that soul would be already voluntarily united to him in perversity, the devil might easily impress upon it the effects of his sayings and words with evil intent.⁵ For we see by experience that in many things and even upon good souls he works great violence, by means of suggestion, making his suggestions very efficacious ; and if they were evil he might work in them the consummation of these suggestions.⁶ But he cannot leave upon a soul effects similar

¹ Alc. omits : ' desire nothing . . . should do nothing.'

² E.p. abbreviates this paragraph thus : ' With respect to these words, the soul should itself do nothing and desire nothing at the time, but conduct itself with resignation and humility, giving its free consent to God ; neither should it reject anything, nor fear anything. It should not labour in executing what these words express, for by these substantial words God works in the soul ; wherein they differ from formal and successive words. It should not reject them,' etc.

³ E.p. : ' nor can this evil one succeed . . . '

⁴ E.p. has (for ' unless the soul . . . of evil '): ' although in souls that were given to the devil by a voluntary compact, in whom he dwelt as their master, he could by suggestion impel them to [produce] results of great malignity.'

⁵ So A, B. Alc. omits this sentence. E.p. has : ' For, as such souls would already be voluntarily united to him in perversity, the devil could easily impel them thereto.'

⁶ E.p. : ' he might impel them more violently still.'

to those of locutions which are good ; for there is no comparison between the locutions of the devil and those of God. The former are all as though they were not, in comparison with the latter, neither do they produce any effect at all compared with the effect of these. For this cause God says through Jeremiah : What has the chaff to do with the wheat ? Are not My words perchance as fire, and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces ?¹ And thus these substantial words are of great service to the union of the soul with God ; and the more interior and the more substantial they are, the greater is the profit that they bring. Happy is the soul to whom God speaks. Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.²

CHAPTER XXXII

Which treats of the apprehensions received by the understanding from interior feelings which come supernaturally to the soul. Describes their cause, and the manner wherein the soul must conduct itself so that they may not obstruct its road to union with God.

1. It is now time to treat of the fourth and last kind of intellectual apprehension which we said might come to the understanding through the spiritual feelings which are frequently produced supernaturally in the souls of spiritual persons and which we count amongst the distinct apprehensions of the understanding.

2. These distinct spiritual feelings may be of two kinds. The first kind is in the affection of the will. The second, in the substance of the soul.³ Each of these may be of many kinds. Those of the will, when they are of God, are most sublime ; but those that are of the substance of the soul are very high and of great good and profit.⁴ As to these, neither the soul nor he that treats with it can know or understand the cause whence they proceed, or what are the acts whereby God grants it these favours ; for they depend not upon any good works performed by the soul, nor upon its meditations,

¹ Jeremiah xxiii, 28-9. A, B, e.p. read 'stones' for 'rocks.'

² 1 Kings [A.V., 1 Samuel] iii, 10.

³ E.p. : 'The second, feelings that, though they are also in the will, yet, because they are most intense, sublime, profound and secret, seem not to touch the will, but to be wrought in the substance of the soul.'

⁴ E.p. : 'but the second are very high and of great good and profit.'

although both these things are a good preparation for them : God grants these favours to whom He wills and for what reason He wills.¹ For it may come to pass that a person will have performed many good works yet that He will not give him these touches of His favour ; and another will have done far fewer good works, yet He will give him them to a most sublime degree and in great abundance. And thus it is not needful that the soul should be actually employed and occupied in spiritual things (although it is much better that it should be so employed if it is to have these favours) for God to give it these touches in which the soul experiences the said feelings ; for in the majority of cases the soul is quite heedless of them. Of these touches, some are distinct and are quickly gone ; others are less distinct and last longer.

3. These feelings, inasmuch as they are feelings only,² belong not to the understanding but to the will ; and thus I refrain, of set purpose, from treating of them here, nor shall I do so until we treat of the night and purgation of the will in its affections : this will be in the third book, which follows this.³ But since frequently, and even in the majority of cases, apprehensions and knowledge and intelligence overflow from them into the understanding, it will be well to make mention of them here, for that reason only. It must be known, then, that from these feelings, both from those of the will and from those which are in the substance of the soul, whether⁴ they are caused suddenly by the touches of God, or are durable and successive, an apprehension of knowledge or intelligence overflows frequently, as I say, into the understanding ; and this is normally a most sublime perception of God, most delectable to the understanding, to which no name can be given, any more than to the feeling whence it overflows. And these manifestations of knowledge are sometimes of one kind and sometimes of another ; sometimes they are clearer and more lofty, according to the nature of the touches which come from God and which cause

¹ A, B : ' and how He wills.' Note that the Saint does not deprecate good works, as did the Illuminists (*alumbrados*), who bade the soul set them aside for contemplation, even though they were works of obligation. On the contrary, he asserts that good works have a definite, though a preparatory part, to play in the life of the contemplative.

² E.p. : ' . . . they are feelings only of the kind whereof we here speak . . . '

³ Alc. alone has : ' which follows this.' The Saint does not, in fact, return to this matter, either in the third book or elsewhere.

⁴ E.p. : ' that from all these feelings, whether . . . '

the feelings whence they proceed, and according also to their property.¹

4. It is unnecessary here to spend a great store of words² in cautioning and directing the understanding, through these manifestations of knowledge, in faith, to union with God. For albeit the feelings which we have described are produced passively in the soul, without any effective assistance to that end on its own part, even so likewise is the knowledge of them received passively in the understanding, in a way called by the philosophers 'passible,' wherein the understanding plays no part. Wherefore, in order not to go astray on their account nor to impede the profit which comes from them, the understanding must do nothing in connection with these feelings, but conduct itself passively,³ and not interfere by applying to them its natural capacity. For, as we have said in dealing with successive locutions, the understanding, with its activity, would very easily disturb and ruin the effect of these delicate manifestations of knowledge, which are a delectable supernatural intelligence that human nature cannot reach or apprehend by its own efforts, but only by an attitude of receptivity.⁴ And thus the soul must not strive to attain them or desire to receive them,⁵ lest the understanding should itself form other manifestations, or the devil should make his entry with still more that are different from them and false. This he may very well do by means⁶ of the feelings aforementioned, or of those which he can himself infuse into the soul that gives itself to these kinds of knowledge.⁷ Let the soul be resigned, humble and passive herein, for, since it receives this knowledge passively from God, He will communicate it whensoever He is pleased, if He sees the soul to be humble and detached. And in this way the soul will do nothing to counteract the help which these kinds of knowledge give it in its progress toward Divine union, which help is great; for these touches are all touches of union, which are wrought passively in the soul.⁸

¹ E.p.: 'to their capacity.'

² E.p.: 'to spend many words.'

³ E.p. adds here: 'inclining the will to free consent and gratitude.'

⁴ [*Lit.*, 'or apprehend by doing, but by receiving.']

⁵ E.p. omits: 'or desire to receive them.'

⁶ The edition of 1630 has: '... do in the soul, when it gives itself to these kinds of knowledge, by means ...'

⁷ E.p. substitutes for 'or of those ... kinds of knowledge' the words: 'making use of the bodily senses.'

⁸ Some editions here add a long paragraph, which, however, is the work of P. Jerónimo de S. José, who was responsible for the edition of

virtue consists not in apprehensions and feelings concerning God, howsoever sublime they be, nor in anything of this kind that a man can feel within himself ; but, on the contrary, in that which has nothing to do with feeling—namely, a great humility and contempt of oneself and of all that pertains to oneself, firmly rooted in the soul and keenly felt by it ; and likewise in being glad that others feel in this very way concerning oneself and in not wishing to be of any account in the esteem¹ of others.

4. Secondly, it must be noted that all visions, revelations and feelings coming from Heaven, and any thoughts that may proceed from these, are of less worth than the least act of humility ; for such an act has the effects of charity. The humble soul esteems not its own things nor strives to attain them ; nor thinks evil, save of itself ; nor thinks any good thing of itself, but only of others. It is well, therefore, that these supernatural apprehensions should not attract men's eyes, but that they should strive to forget them in order that they may be free.

CHAPTER X

Of the third evil that may come to the soul from the devil, through the imaginary apprehensions of the memory.

1. From all that has been said above it may be clearly understood and inferred how great is the evil that may come to the soul from the devil by way of these supernatural apprehensions. For not only can he represent to the memory and the fancy many false forms and notions, which seem true and good, impressing them on spirit and sense with great effectiveness and certifying them to be true by means of suggestion (so that it appears to the soul that it cannot be otherwise, but that everything is even as he represents it ; for, as he transfigures himself into an angel of light, he appears as light to the soul) ; but he may also tempt the soul in many ways with respect to true knowledge, which is of God, moving its desires² and affections, whether spiritual or sensual, in unruly fashion with respect to these ; for, if the soul takes pleasure in such apprehensions, it is very easy for the devil to cause its desires and affections to grow³ within it,

¹ [*Lit.*, 'in the heart.']

² A, B : 'its will and desires.'

³ A, B and many of the editions (not, however, e.p.) have *creer* ('believe') for *crecer* ('grow'), so that we should have to read : 'to cause it to believe its desires and affections.'

and to make it fall into spiritual gluttony and other evils.

2. And, in order the better to do this, he is wont to suggest and give pleasure, sweetness and delight to the senses with respect to these same things of God, so that the soul is corrupted and bewildered¹ by that sweetness, and is thus blinded with that pleasure and sets its eyes on pleasure rather than on love (or, at least, very much more than upon love), and gives more heed to the apprehensions than to the detachment and emptiness which are found in faith and hope and love of God. And from this he may go on gradually to deceive the soul and cause it to believe his falsehoods with great facility. For to the soul that is blind falsehood no longer appears to be falsehood, nor does evil appear to be evil, etc. ; for darkness appears to be light, and light, darkness ; and hence that soul comes to commit a thousand foolish errors,² whether with respect to natural things, or to moral things, or to spiritual things ; so that that which was wine to it becomes vinegar. All this happens to the soul because it began not, first of all, by denying itself the pleasure of those supernatural things. At first this is a small matter, and not very harmful, and the soul has therefore no misgivings, and allows it to continue, and it grows,³ like the grain of mustard seed, into a tall tree. For a small error at the beginning, as they say, becomes a great error in the end.

3. Wherefore, in order to flee from this great evil, which comes⁴ from the devil, the soul must not desire to have any pleasure in such things, because such pleasure will most surely lead it to become blind and to fall. For of their own nature, and without the help of the devil,⁵ pleasure and delight and sweetness blind⁶ the soul. And this was the meaning of David when he said : Peradventure darkness shall blind me in my delights and I shall have the night for my light.⁷

¹ [The two verbs, in the original, have very definite and concrete meanings, 'sweetened with honey' and 'dazzled by a lamp' respectively.]

² E.p. adds here : 'so that that which was wine to it becomes vinegar,' omitting this same phrase where it occurs below.

³ E.p. : 'to continue and grow.'

⁴ E.p. : 'which may come.'

⁵ E.p. omits : 'and without the help of the devil.'

⁶ E.p. : 'dull and blind.'

⁷ Psalm cxxxviii, 11 [A.V., cxxxix, 11].

communicates to it ; for the work of God is passive and supernatural, and that of the soul is active and natural ;¹ and in this way the soul would therefore be quenching the Spirit.

4. That this activity of the soul is an inferior one is also clear from the fact that the faculties of the soul cannot, of their own power,² reflect and act, save upon some form, figure and image, and this is the rind and accident of the substance and spirit which exists below this rind and accident. This substance and spirit unite not with the faculties of the soul in true understanding and love, save when at last the operation of the faculties ceases. For the aim and end of this operation is only that the substance which can be understood and loved and which lies beneath these forms may come to be received in the soul. The difference, therefore, between passive and active operation, and the superiority of the former, corresponds to the difference that exists between that which is being done and that which is done already, or between that which a man tries to attain and effect and that which is already effected. Hence it may likewise be inferred that, if the soul desires to employ its faculties actively on these supernatural apprehensions, wherein God, as we have said, bestows the spirit of them passively, it would do nothing less than abandon what it had already done, in order to do it again, neither would it enjoy what it had done, nor could it produce any other result, by these actions of its own, save that of frustrating what has been done already. For, as we say, the faculties cannot of their own power attain to the spirituality which God bestows upon the soul without any operation of their own. And thus the soul would be directly quenching the spirituality³ which God infuses through these imaginary apprehensions aforementioned if it were to set any store by them ; wherefore it must set them aside, and take up a passive and negative attitude with regard to them.⁴ For at that time God is moving the soul to things which are above its own power and knowledge. For this cause the prophet said : I will stand upon my watch and set my step upon my tower, and I will watch to see that which will be said to me.⁵ This is as though he were to say : I will stand on guard over

¹ The 1630 edition omits : ' for the work . . . active and natural.'

² E.p. : ' cannot, according to their natural and ordinary method.'

³ [Or ' the Spirit.' Cf. p. 251, nn. 4, 11, above.]

⁴ E.p. omits ' and negative ' and adds ' as we say.'

⁵ Habakuk ii, 1. [The original has 'munition' for 'tower' and 'contemplate' for 'watch to see.']

the second book, where we treated this knowledge as apprehensions of the understanding. Let this be referred to, for we there described how it was of two kinds : either uncreated¹ or of the creatures. I speak now only of things relating to my present purpose—namely, how the memory must behave with respect to them in order to attain to union. And I say, as I have just said of formal knowledge in the preceding chapter (for this, being of created things, is of the same kind), that these apprehensions may be recalled when they produce good effects, not that they may be dwelt upon, but that they may quicken the soul's love and knowledge of God. But, if the recollection of them produces not good effects, let the memory never give them even passing attention. With regard to uncreated knowledge,² I say that the soul should try to recall it as often as possible, for it will produce great effects. As we said above, it produces touches and impressions of union with God, which is the aim towards which we are directing the soul. And by no form, image or figure which can be impressed upon the soul does the memory recall these (for these touches and impressions of union with the Creator³ have no form), but only by the effects which they have produced upon it of light, love, joy and renewal of the spirit, and so forth, some of which are wrought anew in the soul whensoever they are remembered.

CHAPTER XV

Which sets down the general method whereby the spiritual person must govern himself with respect to this sense.

1. In order to conclude this discussion on the memory, it will be well at this point to give the spiritual reader an account of⁴ the method which he must observe, and which is of universal application, in order that he may be united with God according to this sense.⁵ For, although what has been said makes the subject quite clear, it will nevertheless be more easily apprehended if we summarize it here. To this end it must be remembered that, since our aim is the union

¹ E.p. : 'either of uncreated perfections.'

² E.p. : 'With regard to the knowledge of things uncreated.'

³ A, B : 'with God.'

⁴ Only Alc. and e.p. have : 'an account of.'

⁵ E.p. : 'this faculty.'

of the soul with God in hope, according to the memory, and since that which is hoped for is that which is not possessed, and since, the less we possess of other things, the greater scope and the greater capacity we have for hoping, and consequently the greater hope,¹ therefore, the more things we possess, the less scope and capacity there is for hoping, and consequently the less hope² have we. Hence, the more the soul dispossesses the memory of forms and things which may be recalled by it, which are not God,³ the more will it set its memory upon God, and the emptier will its memory become, so that it may hope for Him Who shall fill it. What must be done, then, that the soul may live in the perfect and pure hope of God is that, whensoever these distinct images, forms and notions come to it, it must not rest in them, but must turn immediately to God, voiding the memory of them entirely, with loving affection. It must neither think of these things nor consider them beyond the degree which is necessary for the understanding and performing of its obligations, if they have any concern with these. And this it must do without setting any affection or inclination upon them, so that they may produce no effects⁴ in the soul. And thus a man must not fail to think and recall that which he ought to know and do, for, provided he preserves no affection or attachments, this will do him no harm. For this matter the lines of the Mount, which are in the thirteenth chapter⁵ of the first book, will be of profit.

3. But here it must be borne in mind that this doctrine of ours does not agree, nor do we desire that it should agree, with the doctrine of those pestilent men, who, inspired by Satanic pride and envy, have desired to remove from the eyes of the faithful the holy and necessary use, and the worthy⁶ adoration, of images of God and of the saints. This doctrine of ours is very different from that; for we say not here, as they do, that images should not exist, and should not be

¹ E.p. : 'the greater perfection of hope.'

² E.p. : 'the less perfection of hope.'

³ E.p. : 'which are not Divinity or God made human, the memory of Whom is always a help to that end, since He is the true Way and Guide and Author of all good.' With this addition, cf. that quoted on p. 232, n. 3, above.

⁴ E.p. : 'no effects or perturbations.'

⁵ So e.p. A, B have : 'in the first chapter,' referring apparently to the drawing described above (pp. xxxiv-v). Alc., C, D [followed by P. Silverio] read : 'in the chapter.'

⁶ [The Spanish word, *inclita*, is stronger than this, meaning 'distinguished,' 'illustrious.']

of faith, and by the purgation of the memory¹ in order to ground it in hope, if we purged not the will also according to the third virtue, which is charity,² whereby the works that are done in faith live and have great merit, and without it are of no worth. For, as S. James says : Without works of charity, faith is dead.³ And, now that we have to treat of the active detachment and right of this faculty, in order to form it and make it perfect in this virtue of the charity of God, I find no more fitting authority than that which is written in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, where Moses says : Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength.⁴ Herein is contained all that the spiritual man ought to do, and all that I have here to teach him, so that he may truly attain to God, through union of the will, by means of charity. For herein man is commanded to employ all the faculties and desires and operations and affections of his soul in God, so that all the ability and strength of his soul may serve for no more than this, according to that which David says, in these words : *Fortitudinem meam ad te custodiam.*⁵

2. The strength of the soul consists in its faculties, passions and desires, all of which are governed by the will. Now when these faculties, passions and desires are directed by the will toward God, and turned away from all that is not God, then the strength of the soul is kept for God, and thus the soul is able to love God with all its strength. And, to the end that the soul may do this, we shall here treat of the purgation from the will of all its unruly affections, whence arise unruly operations, affections and desires,⁶ and whence also arises its failure to keep all its strength for God. These affections and passions are four, namely : joy, hope, grief and fear. These passions, when they are controlled by reason with respect to God, so that the soul rejoices only in that which is purely the honour and glory of God, and hopes for naught else, neither grieves save for things that concern this, neither fears aught save God alone, it is clear that the strength and ability of the soul are being directed toward God and kept for Him. For, the more the soul rejoices in any other thing

¹ E.p. adds : 'in the sense referred to in the sixth chapter of the second book.'

² E.p. : 'if we purged not the will also with respect to charity.'

³ S. James ii, 20.

⁴ Deuteronomy vi, 5.

⁵ Psalm lvi, 10 [A.V., lix, 9].

⁶ E.p. omits : 'whence arise . . . and desires.'

than God, the less completely will it centre its rejoicing in God;¹ and the more it hopes in aught else, the less will it hope in God; and so with the other passions.

3. And in order to give fuller instructions concerning this, we shall treat, in turn and in detail, as is our custom, of each of these four passions and of the desires of the will. For the whole business of attaining to union with God consists in purging the will from its affections and desires; so that thus it may no longer be a base, human will, but may become a Divine will, being made one² with the will of God.

4. These four passions have the greater dominion in the soul and assail it the more vehemently, when the will is less strongly attached to God and more dependent on the creatures. For then it rejoices very readily at things that merit not rejoicing, hopes in that which brings no profit, grieves over that in which perchance it ought to rejoice, and fears where there is no reason for fearing.

5. From these affections, when they are unbridled, arise in the soul all the vices and imperfections which it possesses, and likewise, when they are ordered and composed, all its virtues. And it must be known that, if one of them should become ordered and controlled by reason, the rest will become so likewise; for these four passions of the soul are so closely and intimately united to one another that the actual direction of one is the virtual direction of the others; and if one be actually recollected the other three will virtually and proportionately be recollected likewise. For, if the will rejoice in anything, it will as a result hope for the same thing to the extent of its rejoicing, and herein are virtually included grief and fear with regard to the same thing; and, in proportion as desire for these is taken away, fear and grief concerning them are likewise gradually lost, and hope for them is removed.³ For the will, with these four passions, is denoted by that figure which was seen by Ezekiel, of four beasts with one body, which had four faces; and the wings of the one were joined to those of the other, and each one went straight before his face, and when they went forward they turned not back.⁴ And thus in the same manner the wings of each one of these affections are joined to those of each of the others, so that,

¹ [*Lit.*, 'the less strongly its rejoicing will be employed in God.']

² [The original is stronger: 'one same thing.']

³ E.p. adds: 'after the manner (though it is not this that is there meant) of those four beasts that were seen by Ezekiel.'

⁴ Ezekiel i, 5-9.

3. It follows, then, that a man must neither rejoice in riches when he has them, nor when his brother has them,¹ unless they help them to serve God. For if ever it is allowable to rejoice in them,² this will be when they are spent and employed in the service of God, for otherwise no profit will be derived from them. And the same is to be understood of other blessings (titles, offices, etc.) : in all of which it is vain to rejoice if a man feel not that God is the better served because of them and the way to eternal life is made more secure. And as it cannot be clearly known if this is so (if God is better served, etc.), it would be a vain thing to rejoice in these things deliberately, since such a joy³ cannot be reasonable. For, as the Lord says : If a man gain all the world, he may yet lose his soul.⁴ There is naught, then, wherein to rejoice save in the fact that God is better served.

4. Neither is there cause for rejoicing in children, be they many, or rich, or endowed with natural graces and talents and blessings of fortune, but only in that they serve God. For Absalom, the son of David, found neither his beauty nor his riches nor his lineage of any service to him because he served not God.⁵ Hence it was a vain thing to have rejoiced in such a son. For this reason it is also vain for men to desire to have children, as do some who trouble and disturb everyone with their desire for them, since they know not if such children will be good and serve God. Nor do they know if their satisfaction in them will be turned into pain ; nor if the comfort and consolation which they should have from them will change to disquiet and trial ; and the honour which they should bring them, into dishonour ; nor if they will cause them to give greater offence to God, as happens to many. Of these Christ says that they encompass sea and land to enrich them and to make them doubly the children of perdition which they are themselves.⁶

5. Wherefore, though all things smile upon a man and all that he does turns out prosperously,⁷ he ought to have misgivings rather than to rejoice ; for these things increase

¹ E.p. : ' . . . rejoice because he has riches, nor because his brother has them.'

² A, Alc. [and P. Silverio] add : ' as one will rejoice in riches.'

³ E.p. : ' such a joy in them.'

⁴ S. Matthew xvi, 26. E.p. has : ' If a man gain all the world, it profits him little, if he suffers detriment in his soul.'

⁵ 2 Kings [A.V., 2 Samuel] xiv, 25.

⁶ S. Matthew xxiii, 15.

⁷ E.p. adds : ' and, as they say, [good things] fall into his mouth.'

the occasion and peril of his forgetting God.¹ For this cause Solomon says, in Ecclesiastes, that he was cautious : Laughter I counted error and to rejoicing I said, ' Why art thou vainly deceived ? ' ² Which is as though he had said : When things smiled upon me I counted it error and deception to rejoice in them ; for without doubt it is great error and folly on the part of a man if he rejoice when things are bright and pleasant for him, knowing not of a certainty that there will come to him thence some eternal good. The heart of the fool, says the Wise Man, is where there is gladness, but that of the wise man is where there is sorrow.³ For gladness⁴ blinds the heart and allows it not to consider things and ponder them ; but sadness makes a man open his eyes and look at the profit and the harm of them. And hence it is that, as he himself says, anger is better than laughter.⁵ Wherefore it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of a feast ; for in the former is figured the end of all men,⁶ as the Wise Man says likewise.

6. It would therefore be vanity for a woman or her husband to rejoice in their marriage when they know not clearly that they are serving God better thereby. They ought rather to feel confounded, since matrimony is a cause, as S. Paul says, whereby each one sets his heart upon the other and keeps it not wholly with God. Wherefore he says : If thou shouldst find thyself free from a wife, desire not to seek a wife ; while he that has one already should walk with such freedom of heart as though he had her not.⁷ This, together with what we have said concerning temporal blessings, he teaches us himself, in these words : This is certain ; as I say to you, brethren, the time is short ; it remaineth both that they that have wives be as though they had none ; and they that weep, as them that weep not ; and they that rejoice, as them that rejoice not ; and they that buy, as them that possess not ; and they that use this world, as them that use it not.⁸ All this he says to show us that we must not set our rejoicing⁹ upon any other thing than

¹ A, B, e.p. add : ' and of offending Him, as we have said.'

² Ecclesiastes ii, 2.

⁴ E.p. : ' For vain gladness.'

⁶ Ecclesiastes vii, 2.

⁷ 1 Corinthians vii, 27.

⁸ 1 Corinthians vii, 29-30.

⁹ [The original reads : ' to show us that to set,' etc., leaving the sentence grammatically incomplete. P. Gerardo omits ' since the rest ' and reads : ' to show us that to set . . . service of God is vanity,' etc.] Alc. omits all the paragraph down to this point, reading : ' And thus we must not set our rejoicing . . . '

that which tends to the service of God, since the rest is vanity and that which profits not ; for joy that is not according to God can bring no profit.¹

CHAPTER XIX

Of the evils that may befall the soul when it sets its rejoicing upon temporal blessings.

1. If we had to describe the evils which environ the soul when it sets the affections of its will upon temporal blessings, neither ink nor paper would suffice us and our time would be too short. For from very small beginnings a man may attain to great evils and destroy great blessings ; even as from a spark of fire, if it be not quenched, may be enkindled great fires which set the world aflame. All these evils have their root and origin in one important evil of a privative kind that is contained in this joy—namely, withdrawal from God. For even as, in the soul that is united with Him by the affection of its will, there are born all blessings, even so, when it withdraws itself from Him because of this creature affection, there beset it all evils and disasters proportionately to the joy and affection wherewith it is united with the creature ; for this is inherent in² withdrawal from God. Wherefore a soul may expect the evils which assail it to be greater or less according to the greater or lesser degree of its withdrawal from God. These evils may be extensive or intensive ; for the most part they are both together.

2. This privative evil, whence, we say, arise other privative and positive evils, has four degrees, each one worse than the other. And, when the soul compasses the fourth degree, it will have compassed all the evils and depravities that arise in this connection.³ These four degrees are well indicated by Moses in Deuteronomy in these words, where he says : The Beloved grew fat and kicked. He grew fat and became swollen and gross.⁴ He forsook God his Maker and departed from God his Salvation.⁵

3. This growing fat of the soul, which was loved before it

¹ A, B : ' . . . to God cannot please the soul.' E.p. : ' . . . to God cannot do the soul good.'

² [Lit., 'for this is.']

³ [Lit., 'that can be told in this case.']

⁴ E.p. : 'The Beloved became fat and turned ; he became swollen and gross.'

⁵ Deuteronomy xxxii, 15.

grew fat,¹ indicates absorption in this joy of creatures. And hence arises the first degree of this evil, namely the going backward ; which is a certain blunting of the mind with regard to God, an obscuring of the blessings of God like the obscuring of the air by mist, so that it cannot be clearly illumined by the light of the sun. For, precisely when the spiritual person sets his rejoicing upon anything, and gives rein to his desire for foolish things, he becomes blind as to God, and the simple intelligence of his judgement becomes clouded, even as the Divine Spirit teaches in the Book of Wisdom, saying : The use and association of vanity² and scorn obscureth good things, and inconstancy of desire overturneth and perverteth the sense and judgement that are without malice.³ Here the Holy Spirit shows that, although there be no malice⁴ conceived in the understanding of the soul, concupiscence and rejoicing in the creatures suffice of themselves to create in the soul the first degree of this evil, which is the blunting of the mind and the darkening of the judgement, by which the truth is understood and each thing honestly judged as it is.

4. Holiness and good judgement suffice not to save a man from falling into this evil, if he gives way to concupiscence or rejoicing in temporal things. For this reason God warned us by uttering these words through Moses : Thou shalt take no gifts, which blind even the prudent.⁵ And this was addressed particularly to those who were to be judges ; for these have need to keep their judgement clear and alert, which they will be unable to do if they covet and rejoice in gifts. And for this cause likewise God commanded Moses to make judges of those who abhorred avarice, so that their judgement should not be blunted with the lust of the passions.⁶ And thus he says not only that they should not desire it, but that they should abhor it. For, if a man is to be perfectly defended from the affection of love, he must preserve an abhorrence of it, defending himself by means of the one thing against its contrary. The reason why the prophet Samuel, for example, was always so upright and enlightened a judge is that (as he said in the Book of the Kings) he had never received a gift from any man.⁷

¹ E.p. : ' This becoming fat of the soul, which previously was loved . . . '

² E.p. : ' The false appearance of vanity . . . ' ³ Wisdom iv, 12.

⁴ E.p. : ' no precedent malice.' ⁵ Exodus xxiii, 8.

⁶ Exodus xviii, 21-2.

⁷ 1 Kings [A.V., 1 Samuel] xii, 3.

when it is so small and in its beginnings, he has not the courage to make an end of it, how does he suppose, and presume, that he will be able to do so when it is great and more deeply rooted. The more so since Our Lord said in the Gospel : He that is unfaithful in little will be unfaithful also in much.¹ For he that avoids the small sin will not fall into the great sin ; but great evil is inherent in the small sin,² since it has already penetrated within the fence and wall of the heart ; and as the proverb says : Once begun, half done. Wherefore David warns us, saying : Though riches abound, let us not apply our heart to them.³

2. Although a man might not do this for the sake of God and of the obligations of Christian perfection, he should nevertheless do it because of the temporal advantages that result from it, to say nothing of the spiritual advantages, and he should free his heart completely from all rejoicing in the things mentioned above. And thus, not only will he free himself from the pestilent evils which we have described in the last chapter, but, besides this, he will withdraw his joy from temporal blessings and acquire the virtue of liberality, which is one of the principal attributes of God,⁴ and can in no wise coexist with covetousness. Apart from this, he will acquire liberty of soul, clarity of reason, rest, tranquillity and peaceful confidence in God and a true reverence and worship of God which comes from the will.⁵ He will find greater joy and recreation in the creatures through his detachment from them, for he cannot rejoice in them if he look upon them with attachment to them as to his own. Attachment is an anxiety that, like a bond, ties the spirit down to the earth and allows it no enlargement of heart. He will also acquire, in his detachment from things, a clear conception of them, so that he can well understand the truths relating to them, both naturally and supernaturally. He will therefore enjoy them after a very different fashion from that of one who is attached to them, and he will have a great advantage and superiority over such a one. For, while he

¹ S. Luke xvi, 10.

² [The word 'sin' is not in the original of this sentence, which reads 'the small . . . the great . . .' etc.]

³ Psalm lxi, 11 [A.V., lxii, 10]. E.p. : 'let us not attach our heart to them.'

⁴ So Alc., e.p. A, B : 'one of the principal virtues of God, or, rather, attributes.'

⁵ A, B : 'which comes from liberty.' [The word translated 'reverence' normally implies respectful acquiescence.]

enjoys them according to their truth, the other enjoys them according to their deceptiveness;¹ the one appreciates the best side of them and the other the worst; the one rejoices in their substance; the other, whose sense is bound to them, in their accident. For sense cannot grasp or attain to more than the accident, but the spirit, purged of the clouds and species of accident, penetrates the truth and worth of things, for this is its object. Wherefore joy, like a cloud, darkens the judgement, since there can be no voluntary joy in creatures without voluntary attachment, even as there can be no joy which is passion when there is no habitual attachment in the heart;² and the renunciation and purgation of such joy leave the judgement clear, even as the mists leave the air clear when they are scattered.

3. This man, then, rejoices in all things—since his joy is dependent upon none of them—as if he had them all; and this other, through looking upon them with a particular sense of ownership, loses all the pleasure of them in general. This former man, having none of them in his heart, possesses them all, as S. Paul says, in great freedom.³ This latter man, inasmuch as he has something of them through the attachment of his will, neither has nor possesses anything; it is rather they that have possessed⁴ his heart, and he is, as it were, a sorrowing captive. Wherefore, if he desire to have a certain degree of joy in creatures, he must of necessity have an equal degree of disquietude and grief in his heart, since it is seized and possessed by them. But he that is detached is untroubled by anxieties, whether in prayer or apart from it; and thus, without losing time, he readily gains great spiritual treasure. But the other man loses everything, running to and fro upon the chain by which his heart is attached and bound; and with all his diligence he can still hardly free himself for a short time from this bond of thought and rejoicing by which his heart is bound. The spiritual man, then, at the first motion of his heart towards creatures, must restrain it, remembering the truth which we have here laid down, that there is naught wherein a man must rejoice, save in his service of God, and in his striving for His glory and honour in all things, directing all things solely to this end and turning aside from vanity in them, looking in them neither for his own joy nor for his consolation.

¹ Alc. omits the rest of this sentence and the whole of the next.

² E.p. [for 'when . . . heart'] reads: 'without voluntary attachment.'

³ 2 Corinthians vi, 10.

⁴ A, B: 'they have seized.'

4. There is another very great and important benefit in this detachment of the rejoicing from creatures—namely, that it leaves the heart free for God. This is the dispositive foundation of all the favours which God will grant to the soul, and without this disposition He grants them not. And they are such that, even from the temporal standpoint, for one joy which the soul renounces for love of Him and for the perfection of the Gospel, He will give him a hundred in this life, as His Majesty promises in the same Gospel.¹ But, even were there not so high a rate of interest, the spiritual man should quench these creature joys in his soul because of the displeasure which they give to God. For we see in the Gospel that, simply because that rich man rejoiced at having goods for many years, God was so greatly angered that He told him that his soul would be brought to account on that very night.² Therefore, we must believe³ that, whensoever we rejoice vainly, God is beholding us and preparing some punishment and bitter draught according to our deserts, so that the pain which results from the joy may sometimes be a hundred times greater⁴ than the joy. For, although it is true, as S. John says on this matter, in the Apocalypse, concerning Babylon, that as much as she had rejoiced and lived in delights, so much torment and sorrow⁵ should be given her, yet this is not to say that the pain will not be greater than the joy, which indeed it will be, since for brief pleasures are given eternal torments. The words mean that there shall be nothing without its particular punishment, for He who will punish the idle word will not pardon vain rejoicing.

CHAPTER XXI

Which describes how it is vanity to set the rejoicing of the will upon the good things of nature, and how the soul must direct itself, by means of them, to God.

1. By natural blessings we here understand beauty, grace, comeliness, bodily constitution and all other bodily endowments; and likewise, in the soul, good understanding, discretion and other things that pertain to reason. Many a man

¹ S. Matthew xix, 29.

² S. Luke xii, 20.

³ E.p.: 'Therefore, we may fear.'

⁴ E.p.: '... may often be greater.'

⁵ Revelation xviii, 7.

sets his rejoicing upon all these gifts, to the end that he himself, or those that belong to him, may possess them, and for no other reason, and gives no thanks to God Who bestows them on him so that He may be the better known and loved by him because of them. But it is vanity and deception to rejoice for this cause alone, as Solomon says in these words : Deceitful is grace and vain is beauty ; the woman who fears God, she shall be praised.¹ Here he teaches us that a man ought rather to be fearful because of these natural gifts, since he may easily be distracted² by them from the love of God, and, if he be attracted by them, he may fall into vanity and be deceived. For this reason bodily grace is said to be deceptive because it deceives a man in the way³ and attracts him to that which beseems him not, through vain joy and complacency, either in himself or in others that have such grace. And it is said that beauty is vain because it causes a man to fall in many ways when he esteems it and rejoices in it, for he should only rejoice if he serves God or others through it. But he ought rather to fear and harbour misgivings lest perchance his natural graces and gifts should be a cause of his offending God, either by his vain presumption or by the extreme affection⁴ with which he regards them. Wherefore he that has such gifts should be cautious and live carefully, lest, by his vain ostentation, he give cause to any man to withdraw his heart in the smallest degree from God. For these graces and gifts of nature are so full of provocation and occasion of evil, both to him that possesses them and to him that looks upon them, that there is hardly any who entirely escapes from binding and entangling his heart in them. We have heard that many spiritual persons, who had certain of these gifts, had such fear of this that they prayed God to disfigure them, lest they should be a cause and occasion of any vain joy or affection to themselves or to others, and God granted their prayer.

2. The spiritual man, then, must purge his will, and make it to be blind to this vain rejoicing, bearing in mind that beauty and all other natural gifts are but earth, and that they come from the earth and will return thither ; and that grace and beauty are smoke and vapour of this same earth ; and that they must be held and esteemed as such by a man that desires not to fall into vanity, but will direct his heart to God

¹ Proverbs xxxi, 30.

³ A, B : ' in the road.'

² A, B : ' be kept back.'

⁴ A, B, e.p. : ' the strange affection.'

comes our love for our neighbour. For, when love is grounded in God, the reason for all love is one and the same and the cause of all love is one and the same also.

2. Another excellent benefit results to the soul from its renunciation of this kind of rejoicing,¹ which is that it fulfils and keeps² the counsel of Our Saviour which He gives us through S. Matthew. Let him that will follow Me, He says, deny himself.³ This the soul could in no wise do if it were to set its rejoicing upon the good things⁴ of nature; for he that attaches any importance to himself neither denies himself nor follows Christ.

3. There is another great benefit in the renunciation of this kind of rejoicing, which is that it produces great tranquillity in the soul, empties it of distractions and brings recollection to the senses, especially to the eyes. For the soul that desires not to rejoice in these things desires neither to look at them nor to attach the other senses to them, lest it should be attracted or entangled by them.⁵ Neither will it spend time or thought upon them, being like the prudent serpent, which stops its ears that it may not hear the charmers⁶ lest they make some impression upon it.⁷ For, by guarding its doors, which are the senses, the soul guards itself safely and increases its tranquillity and purity.

4. There is another benefit of no less importance to those that have become proficient in the mortification of this kind of rejoicing, which is that evil things and the knowledge of them neither make an impression upon them nor stain them as they do those to whom they still give any delight. Wherefore the renunciation and mortification of this rejoicing result in spiritual cleanness of soul and body; that is, of spirit and sense; and the soul comes to have an angelical conformity with God, and becomes, both in spirit and in body, a worthy temple of the Holy Spirit. This cannot come to pass if the heart rejoices in natural graces and good things.⁸ For this reason it is not necessary to have given consent to any evil thing, or to have remembrance of such;⁹ for that rejoicing

¹ 'From . . . rejoicing' are words found in Alc. only.

² E.p. adds: 'with perfection.'

³ S. Matthew xvi, 24.

⁴ A, B, e.p. read: 'the gifts.'

⁵ E.p. omits: 'or entangled by them.'

⁶ So Alc. A, B: 'incantations.' E.p.: 'charms.'

⁷ Psalm lvii, 5 [A.V., lviii, 4-5].

⁸ E.p.: 'if the heart allows itself to be to any extent carried away by rejoicing in natural graces and good things.'

⁹ E.p. omits: 'or to have remembrance of such.'

to God by means of them, it is necessary to assume one truth, which is that, as we have frequently said, the sense of the lower part of man, which is that whereof we are treating, is not, neither can be, capable of knowing or understanding God as God is. So that the eye cannot see Him, or aught that is like Him; neither can the ear hear His voice, or any sound that resembles it; neither can the sense of smell perceive a perfume so sweet as He; neither can the taste detect a savour so sublime and delectable; neither can the touch feel a movement so delicate and full of delight, nor aught like to it; neither can His form or any figure that represents Him enter into the thought or imagination. Even so says Isaiah: Eye hath not seen Him, nor hath ear heard Him, neither hath it entered into the heart of man.¹

3. And here it must be noted that the senses may receive pleasure and delight, either from the spirit, by means of some communication that it receives from God interiorly, or from outward things communicated to them. And, as has been said, neither by way of the spirit nor by that of sense can the sensual part of the soul know God. For, since it has no capacity for attaining to such a point, it receives in the senses both that which is of the spirit and that which is of sense,² and receives them in no other way. Wherefore it would be at the least but vanity to set the rejoicing of the will upon pleasure caused by any of these apprehensions, and it would be hindering the power of the will from occupying itself with God and from centring its rejoicing in Him alone. This the soul cannot perfectly accomplish, save by purging itself and remaining in darkness as to rejoicing of this kind, as also with respect to other things.

4. I said advisedly that if the rejoicing of the will were set upon any of these things it would be vanity. But, when it is not set upon them, and when, as soon as the will finds pleasure in that which it hears, sees and does, it soars upward to rejoice in God—to which end its pleasure furnishes a motive and provides strength—this is very good. In such a case not only need the said motions not be shunned when they cause this devotion and prayer, but the soul may profit by them, and indeed should so profit, to the end that it may accomplish this holy exercise. For there are souls who

¹ Isaiah lxiv, 4; 1 Corinthians ii, 9.

² E.p.: 'and that which is of the intellect.'

are greatly moved by objects of sense to seek God. But much caution must be observed herein and the resulting effects must be considered ; for oftentimes many spiritual persons indulge in the recreations of sense aforementioned under the pretext of offering prayer and devotion to God ; and they do this in a way which must be called recreation rather than prayer, and which gives more pleasure to themselves than to God. And, although¹ the intention that they have is toward God, the effect which they produce² is that of recreation of sense, wherein they find weakness and imperfection, rather than revival of the will and surrender thereof to God.

5. I wish, therefore, to propose a test here whereby it may be seen when these delights of the senses aforementioned are profitable and when they are not. And it is that, whensoever a person hears music and other things, and sees pleasant things,³ and is conscious of sweet perfumes, or tastes things that are delicious or feels soft touches, if his thought and the affection of his will are at once centred upon God and if that thought of God gives him more pleasure than the movement of sense which causes it, and save for that he finds no pleasure in the said movement, this is a sign that he is receiving benefit therefrom, and that this thing of sense is a help to his spirit. In this way such things may be used, for then such things of sense subserve the end for which God created and gave them, which is that He should be the better loved and known because of them. And it must be known, furthermore, that one upon whom these things of sense cause the pure spiritual effect which I describe has no desire for them, and makes hardly any account of them, though they cause him great pleasure when they are offered to him, because of the pleasure which, as I have said, they cause him in God. He is not, however, solicitous for them, and when they are offered to him, as I say, his will passes from them at once and he abandons it to God and sets it upon Him.

6. The reason why he cares little for these motives, although they help him on his journey to God, is that the spirit which is so ready to go by every means and in every way to God is so completely nourished and prepared and satisfied by the spirit of God that it lacks nothing and desires nothing ; or, if it desires anything to that end, the desire

¹ E.p. : 'although it seems that.'

² E.p. : 'which they cause.'

³ A, e.p. : 'hears music or other pleasant things.'

at once passes and is forgotten, and the soul makes no account of it. But one that feels not this liberty of spirit in these things and pleasures of sense, but whose will rests in these pleasures and feeds upon them, is greatly harmed by them and should withdraw himself from the use of them. For, although his reason may desire to employ them to journey toward God, yet, inasmuch as his desire finds pleasure in them which is according to sense, and their effect is ever dependent upon the pleasure which they give, he is certain to find hindrance rather than help in them, and harm rather than profit. And, when he sees that the desire¹ for such recreation reigns in him, he must mortify it ; for, the stronger it becomes, the more imperfection he will have and the greater will be his weakness.

7. Whatsoever pleasure, then, presents itself to the spiritual person from sense, and whether it come to him by chance or by design, he must make use of it only as a means to God, lifting up to Him the rejoicing of his soul so that his rejoicing may be useful and profitable² and perfect ; realizing that all rejoicing which implies not renunciation³ and annihilation of every other kind of rejoicing, although it be with respect to something apparently very lofty, is vain and profits not, but is a hindrance towards the union of the will in God.

CHAPTER XXV

Which treats of the evils that afflict the soul when it desires to set the rejoicing of its will upon the good things of sense.

1. In the first place, if the soul does not darken and quench the joy which may arise within it from the things of sense, and direct its rejoicing to God, all the general kinds of evil which we have described as arising from every other kind of rejoicing follow from this joy in the things of sense : such evils are darkness in the reason, lukewarmness, spiritual weariness, etc. But, to come to particulars, many are the evils, spiritual, bodily and sensual, into which the soul may fall through this rejoicing.

2. First of all, from joy in visible things, when the soul denies not itself in order to reach God, there may come to it,

¹ E.p. : ' that the spirit.'

² Alc. alone has : ' and profitable.'

³ [Lit., ' that is not in renunciation . . .']

loves all that is good (even in barbarians and heathen) and, as the Wise Man says, hinders naught that is good,¹ gave them longer life, greater honour, dominion and peace (as He did for example to the Romans), because they followed just laws ; for He subjected nearly the whole world to them, and gave rewards of a temporal kind for their good customs to those who because of their unbelief were incapable of eternal reward. For God loves moral good so much that, merely because Solomon asked wisdom of Him that he might teach his people, govern them justly and bring them up in good customs, God Himself was greatly pleased with him, and told him that, because he had asked for wisdom to that end, this should be given him, and there should also be given him that which he had not asked, namely, riches and honour, so that no king, either in the past or in the future, should be like him.²

4. But, although the Christian should rejoice in this first way in the moral good that he possesses and in the good works of a temporal kind which he does, since they lead to the temporal blessings which we have described, he must not allow his joy to stop at this first stage (as we have said the heathen did, because their spiritual sight extended not beyond the things of this mortal life) ; but, since he has the light of faith, wherein he hopes for eternal life, without which nothing that belongs to this life and the next will be of any value to him, he must rejoice principally and solely in the possession and employment of these moral goods after the second manner—namely, in that by doing these works for the love of God he will gain eternal life. And thus he should set his eyes and his rejoicing solely on serving and honouring God with his good customs and virtues. For without this intention the virtues are of no worth in the sight of God, as is seen in the ten virgins of the Gospel, who had all kept their virginity and done good works ; and yet, because the joy of five of them was not of the second kind (that is, because they had not directed their joy to God), but was rather after the first and vain kind, for they rejoiced³ in the possession of their good works, they were cast out from Heaven with no acknowledgement or reward from the Bridegroom. And likewise many persons of old had many virtues⁴ and practised

¹ Wisdom vii, 22.

² 3 Kings [A.V., 1 Kings] iii, 11-13.

³ A, B, e.p. add : ' and boasted.'

⁴ E.p. : ' certain virtues.'

good works, and many Christians have them¹ nowadays and accomplish great acts, which will profit them nothing for eternal life, because they have not sought in them the glory and honour which belong to God alone.² The Christian, then, must rejoice, not in the performing of good works and the following of good customs, but in doing them for the love of God alone, without respect to aught else soever. For, inasmuch as good works that are done to serve God alone will have the greater reward in glory, the greater will be the confusion in the presence of God of those who have done them for other reasons.

5. The Christian, then, if he will direct his rejoicing to God with regard to moral good, must realize that the value of his good works, fasts, alms, penances, etc., is not based upon the number or the quality of them, but upon the love of God which inspires him to do them; and that they are the more excellent when they are performed with a purer and sincerer love of God, and when there is less in them of self-interest, joy, pleasure, consolation and praise, whether with reference to this world or to the next. Wherefore the heart must not be set upon pleasure, consolation and delight, and the other interests which good works and practices commonly bring with them, but it must concentrate its rejoicing upon God. It must desire to serve Him in its good works, and purge itself from this other rejoicing, remaining in darkness with respect to it and desiring that God alone shall have joy in its good works and shall take secret pleasure therein, without any other intention and delight than those relating to the honour and glory of God. And thus, with respect to this moral good, the soul will concentrate all the strength of its will upon God.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Of seven evils into which a man may fall if he set the rejoicing of his will upon moral good.

1. The principal evils into which a man may fall through vain rejoicing in his good works and habits I find to be seven; and they are very hurtful because they are spiritual.³

¹ E. p.: 'have and practise them.'

² E. p. adds: 'and His love above all things.'

³ A, B, e. p. add: 'These I shall here briefly describe.'

they are not detached from these human intentions and interests. For what other judgement can be formed of some of the actions which certain men perform, and of the memorials which they set up, when they will not perform these actions at all unless they are surrounded by human respect and honour, which are the vanity of life, or unless they can perpetuate in these memorials their name, lineage or authority, until they set up their emblems¹ and escutcheons in the very churches, as if they wished to set themselves, in the stead of images, in places where all bend the knee? In these good works which some men perform, may it not be said that they are worshipping² themselves more than God? This is certainly true if they perform them for the reason described and otherwise would not perform them at all.³ But leaving aside these, which are the worst cases, how many are there who fall into these evils in their good works in many ways? Some wish to be praised, others to be thanked, others enumerate their good works and desire that this person and that shall know of them, and indeed the whole world; and sometimes they wish an intermediary to present their alms, or to carry out other charitable deeds,⁴ so that more may be known of them; and some desire all these things. This is the sounding of the trumpet, which, says the Saviour in the Gospel, vain men do, for which reason they shall have no reward for their works from God.⁵

6. These persons, then, in order to flee from this evil, must hide their good works so that God alone may see them, and must not desire anyone to take notice of them. And they must hide them, not only from others, but even from themselves. That is to say that they must find no satisfaction in them, nor esteem them as if they were of some worth, nor derive pleasure from them at all. It is this that is spiritually indicated in those words of Our Lord: Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.⁶ Which is as much as to say: Esteem not with thy carnal and temporal eye the work that thou doest spiritually. And in this way the strength of the will is concentrated upon God, and a good deed bears fruit in His sight; so that not only will it not be lost, but it

¹ A, B: 'their names.'

² [*Lit.*, 'are adoring.'] E.p.: 'are esteeming.'

³ E.p. omits this entire sentence.

⁴ [*Lit.*, 'to present their alms or that which they do.']

⁵ S. Matthew vi, 2.

⁶ S. Matthew vi, 3.

to sense (like the places that some habitually contrive to find), for otherwise, instead of the recollection of the spirit in God, naught will be achieved save recreation and pleasure and delight of sense. Wherefore it is good to choose a place that is solitary, and even wild, so that the spirit may wholly and directly soar upward to God, and be not hindered or detained by visible things; for, although these sometimes help to raise up the spirit, it is better to forget them at once and to rest in God. For this reason Our Saviour used to choose solitary places for prayer, and such as occupied the senses but little, in order to give us an example. He chose places that lifted up the soul to God, such as mountains,¹ which are lifted up above the earth, and are ordinarily bare, thus offering no occasion for recreation of the senses.

3. The truly spiritual man, then, is never bound to a place of prayer which is in any way convenient, nor does he even consider this, for that would be to remain bound to sense. But, to the end that he may attain interior recollection, and forget everything, he chooses² the places most free from sensible objects and attractions, withdrawing his attention from all these, that he may be able to rejoice in his God and be far removed from all things created. But it is a remarkable thing to see some spiritual persons, who waste all their time in setting up oratories and furnishing places which please their temperaments or inclinations, yet make little account of interior recollection, which is the most important thing, but of which they have very little. If they had more of it, they would be incapable of taking pleasure in those methods and manners of devotion, which would simply weary them.

CHAPTER XL

Which continues to direct the spirit to interior recollection with reference to what has been said.

1. The reason, then, why some spiritual persons never enter perfectly into the true joys of the spirit is that they never succeed in raising their desire for rejoicing above these

¹ Alc. ends the paragraph here.

² E.p. abbreviates, from the beginning of the paragraph: 'Wherefore the truly spiritual man, considering only interior recollecting and forgetting everything, chooses.'

things that are outward and visible. Let such take note that, although the visible oratory and temple is a decent place set apart for prayer, and an image is a motive to prayer, the sweetness and delight of the soul must not be set upon the motive and visible temple, lest the soul should forget to pray in the living temple, which is the interior recollection of the soul. The Apostle, to remind us of this, said : See that your bodies are living temples of the Holy Spirit, Who dwelleth in you.¹ And this thought is suggested by the words of Christ which we have quoted, namely that they who truly adore God must needs adore Him in spirit and in truth.² For God takes little heed of your oratories and your places set apart for prayer if your desire and pleasure are bound to them, and thus you have little interior detachment, which is spiritual poverty and renunciation of all things that you may possess.

2. In order, then, to purge the will from vain desire and rejoicing in this matter, and to direct it to God in your prayer, you must see only to this, that your conscience is pure, and your will perfect with God, and your spirit truly set upon Him. Then, as I have said, you should choose the place that is the farthest withdrawn and the most solitary that you can find, and devote all the rejoicing of the will to calling upon God and glorifying Him ; and you should take no account of those whims about outward things, but rather strive to renounce them. For, if the soul be attached to the delight of sensible devotion, it will never succeed in passing onward to the power of spiritual delight, which is found in spiritual detachment coming through interior recollection.

CHAPTER XLI

Of certain evils into which those persons fall who give themselves to pleasure in sensible objects and who frequent places of devotion in the way that has been described.

1. Many evils, both interior and exterior, come to the spiritual person when he desires to follow after sweetness of sense in these matters aforementioned. For, with regard to

¹ 1 Corinthians iii, 16. E.p. adds : ' And Christ said through Luke : The kingdom of God is within you ' (S. Luke xvii, 21).

² S. John iv, 24.

DARK NIGHT¹

Exposition of the stanzas describing the method followed by the soul in its journey upon the spiritual road to the attainment of the perfect union of love with God, to the extent that is possible in this life. Likewise are described the properties² belonging to the soul that has attained to the said perfection, according as they are contained in the same stanzas.³

PROLOGUE⁴

In this book are first set down all the stanzas which are to be expounded ; afterwards, each of the stanzas is expounded separately, being set down before its exposition ; and then each line is expounded separately and in turn, the line itself also being set down before the exposition. In the first two stanzas are expounded the effects of the two spiritual purgations : of the sensual part of man and of the spiritual part. In the other six are expounded various and wondrous effects of the spiritual illumination and union of love with God.

STANZAS OF THE SOUL

1. On a dark night, Kindled in love with yearnings—oh, happy chance !—
I went forth without being observed, My house being now at rest.
2. In darkness and secure, By the secret ladder, disguised—oh, happy chance !—
In darkness and in concealment, My house being now at rest.
3. In the happy night, In secret, when none saw me,
Nor I beheld aught, Without light or guide, save that which burned in my heart.

¹ This title is lacking in all the MSS. except Mtr. and P.

² C [incorrectly] : ' prosperities.'

³ This sub-title is found in C, G, M, Mtr., which add some such words as ' by Fray Juan de la Cruz, Discalced Carmelite.' The *editio princeps* has both title and sub-title.

⁴ So M and G. Bz. has ' Proem ' and e.p. ' Argument.'

4. This light guided me More surely than the light of noonday
To the place where he (well I knew who !) was awaiting me—
A place where none appeared.
5. Oh, night that guided me, Oh, night more lovely than the dawn,
Oh, night that joined Beloved with lover, Lover transformed in
the Beloved !
6. Upon my flowery breast, Kept wholly for himself alone,
There he stayed sleeping, and I caressed him, And the fanning
of the cedars made a breeze.
7. The breeze blew from the turret As I parted his locks ;
With his gentle hand he wounded my neck And caused all my
senses to be suspended.
8. I remained, lost in oblivion ; My face I reclined on the Beloved.
All ceased and I abandoned myself, Leaving my cares for-
gotten among the lilies.

Begins the exposition of the stanzas which treat of the way and manner which the soul follows upon the road of the union of love with God.¹

Before we enter upon the exposition of these stanzas, it is well to understand here that the soul that utters them is now in the state of perfection, which is the union of love with God, having already passed through severe trials and straits, by means of spiritual exercise in the narrow way of eternal life whereof Our Saviour speaks in the Gospel, along which way the soul ordinarily passes in order to reach this high and happy union with God.² Since this road (as the Lord Himself says likewise) is so strait, and since there are so few that enter by it,³ the soul considers it a great happiness and good chance to have passed along it to the said perfection of love, as it sings in this first stanza,⁴ calling this strait road with full propriety 'dark night,' as will be explained hereafter in the lines of the said stanza. The soul, then, rejoicing at having passed along this narrow road whence so many blessings have come to it, speaks after this manner.

¹ Thus H, M and other authorities. Some (including H) add the author's name. Others omit the title. A, B have : 'Book the fifth of the Dark Night.' E.p. has : 'Exposition of the intent of the Stanzas.'

² Thus the Codices. E.p. and M read : 'along which the soul ordinarily passes in order to reach this high and Divine union with God.'

³ S. Matthew vii, 14.

⁴ Bz. : 'as it relates in this stanza.'

BOOK THE FIRST

*Which treats of the Night of Sense.*¹

STANZA THE FIRST

On a dark night, Kindled in love with yearnings—oh, happy chance !—

I went forth without being observed, My house being now at rest.

EXPOSITION

1. In this first stanza the soul relates the way and manner which it followed in going forth, as to its affection, from itself and from all things, and in dying to them all and to itself, in order to attain to living the sweet and delectable life of love with God ; and it says that this going forth from itself and from all things was a 'dark night,' by which, as will be explained hereafter, it here understands purgative contemplation, which causes passively² in the soul the negation of itself and of all things referred to above.

2. And this going forth it says here that it was able to accomplish in the strength and ardour which love for its Spouse gave to it for that purpose in the dark contemplation aforementioned. Herein it magnifies³ the great happiness which it found in journeying to God through this night with such signal success that none of the three enemies, which are world, devil and flesh (who are they that ever impede⁴ this road), could hinder it ; inasmuch as the aforementioned night of purgative⁵ contemplation lulled to sleep and morti-

¹ The Codices all begin with the stanza. The title belongs to the e.p. only.

² E.p. omits 'passively.'

³ V : 'desired to magnify.'

⁴ E.p., B : 'disturb.'

⁵ [More exactly : 'purificative.'] E.p. : 'purified.'

fied, in the house of sensuality, all the passions and desires with respect to their mischievous desires and motions.¹

The line, then, says :

On a dark night

CHAPTER I

*Sets down the first line and begins to treat of the imperfections of beginners.*²

1. Into this dark night souls begin to enter when God draws them forth from the state of beginners—which is the state of those that meditate upon the spiritual road—and begins to set them in the state of progressives³—which is that of those who are already contemplatives—to the end that, after passing through it, they may arrive at the state of the perfect, which is that of the Divine union of the soul with God. Wherefore, to the end that we may the better understand and explain what night is this through which the soul passes, and for what cause God sets it therein, it will be well here to touch first of all upon certain characteristics of beginners (which, although we treat them with all possible brevity, will not fail to be of service likewise to the beginners themselves),⁴ in order that, realizing the weakness of the state wherein they are, they may take courage, and may desire that God will bring them into this night, wherein the soul is strengthened and confirmed in the virtues, and made ready for the inestimable delights of the love of God. And, although we tarry here for a time, it will not be for longer than is necessary, so that we may go on to speak at once of this dark night.

2. It must be known, then, that the soul, after it has been definitely converted to the service of God, is, as a rule, spiritually nurtured and caressed by God, even as is the tender child by its loving mother, who warms it with the

¹ Thus B, C, G, H, M, Mtr. The other authorities and e.p. have : 'with respect to their mischievous motions.'

² From e.p.

³ Thus [*aprovechantes*] A, B, C, E, G, H, Mtr. The other authorities, and e.p., read : *aprovechados* ['proficient.']

⁴ E.p. omits this parenthesis, which, however, is found in all the Codices, except C and E.

heat of her bosom and nurtures it with sweet milk and soft and pleasant food, and carries it and caresses it in her arms ; but, as the child grows bigger, the mother gradually ceases caressing it, and, hiding her tender love, puts bitter aloes upon her sweet breast, sets down the child¹ from her arms and makes it walk upon its feet, so that it may lose the characteristics of a child and betake itself to greater and more substantial occupations. The loving mother is like the grace of God, for, as soon as the soul is regenerated by its new warmth and fervour for the service of God, He treats it in the same way ; He makes it to find spiritual milk, sweet and delectable, in all the things of God, without any labour of its own, and also great pleasure in spiritual exercises, for here God is giving to it the breast of His tender love, even as to a tender child.

3. Therefore, such a soul finds its delight in spending long periods—perchance whole nights—in prayer ; penances are its pleasures ; fasts its joys, and its consolations are to make use of the sacraments and commune of Divine things. In the which things spiritual persons (though taking part in them with great efficacy and persistence and using and treating them with great care), commonly find themselves, speaking spiritually, very weak and imperfect. For since they are moved to these things and to these spiritual exercises by the consolation and pleasure that they find in them, and since, too, they have not been prepared for them by the practice of earnest striving in the virtues, they have many faults and imperfections with respect to these spiritual actions of theirs ; for, after all, everyone's actions correspond to the habit of perfection attained by him. And as these persons have not had the opportunity of acquiring the said habits of strength, they have necessarily to work like feeble² children, feebly. In order that this may be seen more clearly, and likewise how much these beginners in the virtues lack³ with respect to the works in which they so readily engage with the pleasure aforementioned, we shall describe it by reference to the seven capital sins, each in its turn, indicating some of the many imperfections which they have under each heading ; wherein it will be clearly seen

¹ E.p. modifies these lines of the Codices, thus : 'and, hiding her tender breast, puts bitter aloes upon it, sets down the child.'

² E.p. and M omit 'feeble.'

³ Thus B, G, H, Mtr., P, V. The other Codices and e.p. have : 'how feeble are these beginners in the virtues.'

how like to children are these persons in all they do. And it will also be seen how many blessings the dark night of which we shall afterwards treat brings with it, since it cleanses the soul and purifies it from all these imperfections.

CHAPTER II

Of certain spiritual imperfections which beginners have with respect to the habit of pride.¹

1. As these beginners feel themselves to be very fervent and diligent in spiritual things and devout exercises, from this prosperity² (although it is true that holy things of their own nature cause humility) there often comes to them, through their imperfections, a certain kind of secret pride, whence they come to have some degree of satisfaction with their works and with themselves. And hence there comes to them likewise a certain desire, which is somewhat vain, and at times very vain, to speak of spiritual things³ before others, and sometimes even to teach such things rather than to learn them. They condemn others in their heart when they see that they have not the kind of devotion which they themselves desire; and sometimes they even say this in words, resembling herein the Pharisee, who boasted of himself, praising God for his own good works and despising the publican.⁴

2. In these persons the devil often increases the fervour that they have and the desire to perform these and other works more frequently, so that their pride and presumption may grow greater. For the devil knows quite well that all these works and virtues which they perform are not only valueless to them, but even become vices in them. And such a degree of evil are some of these persons wont to reach that they would have none appear good save themselves; and thus, in deed and word, whenever the opportunity occurs, they condemn them and slander them, beholding the mote in their brother's eye⁵ and not considering the beam

¹ This title is found in e.p. and also in all the Codices.

² M, H: 'from this property.'

³ E.p.: 'And hence there comes to them likewise a certain exceedingly vain desire to speak of spiritual things.'

⁴ S. Luke xviii, 11-12.

⁵ E.p.: 'in another's eye.'

which is in their own ;¹ they strain at another's gnat and themselves swallow a camel.²

3. Sometimes, too, when their spiritual masters, such as confessors and superiors, do not approve of their spirit and behaviour (for they are anxious that all they do may be esteemed and praised), they consider that they do not understand them, or that, because they do not approve of this and comply with that, they are themselves not spiritual. And so they immediately desire and contrive to find some one else who will fit in with their tastes ; for as a rule they desire to speak of spiritual matters with those who, as they understand, will praise and esteem what they do, and they flee, as they would from death, from those who disabuse them in order to lead them into a safe road—sometimes they even harbour ill-will against them. Presuming thus,³ they are wont to resolve much⁴ and accomplish very little. Sometimes they are anxious that others shall realize how spiritual and devout they are, to which end they occasionally give outward evidence thereof in movements, sighs and other ceremonies ; and at times they are apt to fall into⁵ certain ecstasies, in public rather than in secret, wherein the devil aids them, and they are pleased that this should be noticed, and are often eager that it should be noticed more.⁶

4. Many such persons desire to be favoured by their confessors and to be intimate with them⁷, whence there come to them continual occasions of envy and disquietude.⁸ They are too much embarrassed⁹ to confess their sins nakedly, lest their confessors should think less of them, so they palliate them and make them appear less evil, and thus it is to excuse themselves rather than to accuse themselves that they go to confession. And sometimes they seek another confessor to tell the wrongs that they have done, so that their own confessor shall think they have done nothing wrong at all, but only good ; and thus they always take pleasure in telling

¹ S. Matthew vii, 3.

² S. Matthew xxiii, 24.

³ [*Lit.*, 'Presuming.'] E.p. reads : 'Presuming upon themselves.'

⁴ A, B abbreviate : ' . . . who disabuse them in order to cause them fear. They are wont to resolve much.'

⁵ The words 'they are apt to fall into' are found in e.p. alone.

⁶ [The original merely has : 'and are often eager.'] E.p. modifies : 'that this about which they are so eager should be noticed.'

⁷ E.p. : 'Many such desire to be intimate with their confessors.' H has : 'desire to preach and to be intimate with their confessors,' which destroys the sense of the passage.

⁸ [*Lit.*, 'a thousand envies and disquietudes.']

⁹ Bz. : 'They are ashamed.'

him what is good,¹ and sometimes in such terms as make it appear to be greater than it is rather than less, desiring that he may think them to be good, when it would be greater humility in them, as we shall say, to depreciate it, and to desire that² neither he nor anyone else should consider them of account.

5. Some of these beginners, too, make little of their faults, and at other times become over-sad when they see themselves fall into them, thinking themselves to have been saints already ; and thus they become angry and impatient with themselves, which is another imperfection. Often they beseech God, with great yearnings,³ that He will take from them their imperfections and faults, but they do this that they may see themselves at peace, and may not be troubled by them, rather than for God's sake ; not realizing that, if He should take their imperfections from them, they would probably become prouder and more presumptuous⁴ still. They dislike praising others and love to be praised themselves ; sometimes they seek out such praise. Herein they are like the foolish virgins, who, when their lamps could not be lit, sought oil from others.⁵

6. From these imperfections some souls go on to develop⁶ many very grave ones, which do them great harm. But some have fewer and some more,⁷ and some, only the first motions thereof or little further ; and there are hardly any of these beginners who, at the time of these signs of fervour,⁸ fall not into some of these errors.⁹ But those who at this time are going on to perfection proceed very differently and with quite another temper of spirit ; for they progress by means of humility and are greatly edified, not only thinking naught of their own affairs,¹⁰ but having very little satisfaction with themselves ; they consider all others as far better, and usually have a holy envy of them, and an eagerness to serve God as these do. For the greater is their fervour, and the more numerous are the works that they perform, and the greater is the pleasure that they take in them, as they progress in

¹ A, B, M omit : ' and thus . . . is good.'

² E.p. : ' and to say naught, so that . . . '

³ E.p., M omit ' great.'

⁴ E.p., M omit : ' and more presumptuous.'

⁵ S. Matthew xxv, 8. [*Lit.*, ' who, having their lamps dead, sought oil from without. ']

⁶ [*Lit.*, ' to have. '] M, A omit this verb and read : ' go on to many . . . '

⁷ E.p. : ' and others more.'

⁸ [*Lit.*, ' these fervours. ']

⁹ [*Lit.*, ' into something of this. ']

¹⁰ E.p. : ' their own works.'

humility, the more do they realize how much God deserves of them, and how little is all that they do for His sake;¹ and thus, the more they do, the less are they satisfied. So great is that which they would gladly do from charity and love for Him, that all that they do seems to them naught; and so greatly are they importuned, occupied and absorbed² by this loving care, that they never notice what others do or do not; or if they do notice it, they always believe, as I say, that all others are far better than they themselves. Wherefore, holding themselves as of little worth, they are anxious that others too should thus hold them,³ and should despise and depreciate that which they do. And further, if men should praise and esteem them, they can in no wise believe what they say; it seems to them strange that anyone should say these good things of them.

7. Together with great tranquillity and humbleness, these souls have a deep desire to be taught by anyone who can bring them profit; they are the complete opposite of those of whom we have spoken above, who would fain be always teaching, and who, when others seem to be teaching them, take the words from their mouths as if they knew them already. These souls, on the other hand, being far from desiring to be the masters of any, are very ready to travel and set out on another road than that which they are actually following, if they be so commanded, because they never think that they are right in anything whatsoever. They rejoice when others are praised; they grieve only because they serve not God like them. They have no desire to speak of the things that they do, because they think so little of them that they are ashamed to speak of them even to their spiritual masters, since they seem to them to be things that merit not being spoken of. They are more anxious to speak of their faults and sins, or that these should be recognized rather than their virtues;⁴ and thus they incline to talk of their souls with those who account⁵ their actions and their spirituality of little value. This is a characteristic of the spirit which is simple, pure, genuine and very pleasing to God. For as the wise Spirit of God dwells in these humble

¹ H omits: 'and how . . . His sake.'

² Bz. has 'fascinated' for 'absorbed.' E.p.: 'importuned and occupied.'

³ A, B omit this clause [interrupting the sense of the passage].

⁴ E.p., M: 'or that it should be recognized that these [faults and sins] are not virtues.'

⁵ E.p.: 'esteem.'

souls, He moves them and inclines them to keep His treasures secretly within and likewise to cast out from themselves all evil. God gives this grace to the humble, together with the other virtues, even as He denies it to the proud.

8. These souls will give their hearts' blood to anyone that serves God, and will help others to serve Him as much as in them lies. The imperfections into which they see themselves fall they bear with humility, meekness of spirit¹ and a loving fear of God, hoping in Him. But souls who in the beginning journey with this degree of perfection are, as I understand, and as has been said, a minority, and we should be glad even if there were only a very few who fell not into contrary errors. For this reason, as we shall afterwards say, God leads into the dark night those whom He desires to purify from all these imperfections so that He may bring them farther onward.

CHAPTER III

Of some imperfections which some of these souls² are apt to have, with respect to the second capital sin, which is avarice,³ in the spiritual sense.

1. Many of these beginners have also at times great spiritual avarice. They will be found to be discontented with the spirituality which God gives them; and they are very disconsolate and querulous because they find not in spiritual things the consolation that they would desire. Many can never have enough of listening to counsels and learning⁴ spiritual precepts, and of possessing and reading many books which treat of this matter, and they spend their time on all these things rather than on works of mortification⁵ and the perfecting⁶ of the inward poverty of spirit which

¹ H: 'with humility and with humility of spirit.'

² E.p.: 'which some beginners.'

³ Bz.: 'which is pride and boasting.'

⁴ E.p., M omit 'learning.'

⁵ Bz., P insert here: 'and they have and read many spiritual books which treat of this vice and of gluttony, which generally lead them to attempt many kinds of exercise, either to make great use of their capital, from a craving for great profits or through mere pleasure and cupidity; whence comes inconstancy to them and lack of stability in their particular exercises, which are chiefly necessary in these beginnings; and this spoils their labour and makes it of none effect and vain, wasting their time in experiments and trials.'

⁶ E.p. reads: 'rather than on works, without the mortification and the perfecting.'

should be theirs. Furthermore, they burden themselves with images and rosaries which are very curious ;¹ now they put down one, now take up another ; now they change about, now change back again ; now they want this kind of thing, now that, preferring one kind of cross to another, because it is more curious.² And others you will see adorned with agnusdeis³ and relics and tokens,⁴ like children with trinkets. Here I condemn the attachment of the heart, and the affection which they have for the nature, multitude and curiosity of these things, inasmuch as it is quite contrary to poverty of spirit, which solely considers the substance of devotion, makes use only of what suffices for that end and grows weary of this other kind of multiplicity and curiosity. For true devotion must issue from the heart, and consists in the truth and substance⁵ alone of what is represented by spiritual things ; all the rest is affection and attachment proceeding from imperfection ; and in order that one may pass to any kind of perfection⁶ it is necessary for such desires to be killed.

2. I knew a person who for more than ten years made use of a cross roughly formed from a branch⁷ that had been blessed, fastened with a pin twisted round it ; he had never ceased using it, and he always carried it about with him until I took it from him ; and this was a person of no small sense and understanding. And I saw another who said his prayers using beads that were made of bones from the spine of a fish ; his devotion was certainly no less precious on that account in the sight of God, for it is clear that these things⁸ carried no devotion in their workmanship or value. Those, then, who start from these beginnings and make

¹ So H, P. A, B, C, G, Mtr., V have : ' which are sometimes very curious and showy.' So Bz., but with ' costly ' for ' showy.' E.p. and M : ' images and crosses which are very curious and costly.'

² Bz. adds : ' or costly.' Other authorities add : ' or valuable.'

³ The *agnusdei* was a wax medal with a representation of the Lamb stamped upon it, often blessed by the Pope ; at the time of the Saint such medals were greatly sought after, as we know from various references in S. Teresa's letters.

⁴ [The word *nómina*, translated ' token,' and normally meaning ' list ' or ' roll,' refers to a relic on which were written the names of saints. In modern Spanish it can denote a medal or amulet used superstitiously.]

⁵ E.p. alone modifies thus : ' from the heart, in truth alone, and must consider only the truth and substance.'

⁶ E.p. alone has : ' pass to the estate of perfection.'

⁷ [No doubt a branch of palm, olive or rosemary, blessed in church on Palm Sunday, like the English palm crosses of to-day.]

⁸ Thus e.p. alone. The other authorities have ' these.'

good progress, attach themselves to no visible instruments, nor do they burden themselves with such, nor desire to know more than is necessary in order that they may act well;¹ for they set their eyes only on being right with God and on pleasing Him, and therein consists their covetousness. And thus with great generosity they give away all that they have, and delight to know that they have it not, for God's sake and for charity to their neighbour,² no matter whether these be spiritual things or temporal. For, as I say, they set their eyes only upon the reality of interior³ perfection, which is to give pleasure to God and in naught to give pleasure to themselves.

3. But neither from these imperfections nor from those others can the soul be perfectly purified until God brings it into the passive purgation of that dark night whereof we shall speak presently. It befits the soul, however, in so far as it can, to contrive to labour, on its own account, to purge and perfect itself, so that it may merit being taken by God into that Divine care wherein it becomes healed of all things that it was unable of itself to cure. Because, however greatly the soul itself labours, it cannot⁴ actively purify itself so as to be in the least degree prepared for the Divine union of perfection of love, if God takes not⁵ its hand and purges it not in that dark fire, in the way and manner that we have to describe.⁶

CHAPTER IV

Of other imperfections which these beginners are apt to have with respect to the third sin, which is luxury.⁷

1. Many of these beginners have many other imperfections than those which I am describing with respect to each of the deadly sins, but these I set aside, in order to avoid prolixity, touching upon a few of the most important, which are, as it were, the origin and cause⁸ of the rest. And thus with

¹ M: 'neither do they desire to know much in order to act [well].'
[The word 'well' does not occur anywhere in the original.]

² E.p.: 'and for charity to their neighbour, ruling everything by the laws of this virtue.'

³ E.p., M omit 'interior.'

⁴ E.p.: 'it cannot by its industry.'

⁵ E.p., M: 'of love with God, if He takes not.'

⁶ E.p.: 'in the manner that we have to describe'; M: 'in the manner that we have described.'

⁷ E.p. adds: 'spiritually understood.'

⁸ Bz.: 'origin and head.'

dare not even look at anything or meditate upon anything, because they immediately stumble upon this temptation. And upon those who are inclined to melancholy this acts with such effect¹ that they become greatly to be pitied since they are suffering so sadly ; for this trial reaches such a point in certain persons, when they have this evil humour, that they believe it to be clear that the devil is ever present with them and that they have no power to prevent this, although some of these persons can prevent his attack by dint of great effort and labour.² When these impurities³ attack such souls through the medium of melancholy, they are not as a rule freed from them until they have been cured of that kind of humour, unless the dark night has entered the soul, and gradually rids them of all impurities.⁴

4. The third source whence these impure motions are apt to proceed in order to make war upon the soul is often the fear which such persons have conceived for these impure representations and motions ; for the fear which comes to them from a sudden remembrance of them, arising from something that they see or say or think, makes them suffer from them through no fault of their own.

5.⁵ There are also certain souls of so tender and frail a nature that, when there comes to them some spiritual consolation or delight in prayer, the spirit of luxury is with them immediately, inebriating⁶ and delighting their sensual nature in such manner that they are, as it were, plunged into the enjoyment and pleasure of this sin ; and the enjoyment remains with the consolation, passively, and sometimes they are able to see that they have committed certain impure and rebellious actions. The reason for this is that, since these natures are, as I say, frail and tender, their humours are stirred up and their blood is excited at the least disturbance.⁷ And hence come these motions ; and the same

¹ So H. A, B, Bz., G, Mtr., P, V have : 'with such effect and frequency.' E.p., M : 'with such effect and vehemence.'

² E.p. omits : 'since they are suffering . . . effort and labour.' C also omits these lines and a number of other passages in this chapter.

³ E.p. : 'these things.'

⁴ [Lit., 'of everything.] E.p. : 'and gradually purifies them altogether.'

⁵ E.p. omits the whole of this paragraph and C omits the greatest part of it.

⁶ M has 'hinderig' [*embarga*] for 'inebriating' [*embriaga*].

⁷ V : 'the least operation.'

not only does the one not aid the other, but the one which predominates quenches and confounds the other, and becomes strengthened in itself, as the philosophers say. Wherefore Our Saviour said in the Gospel : That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.¹ That is to say, the love which is born of sensuality ends in sensuality, and that which is of the spirit ends in the spirit of God and causes it to grow. This is the difference that exists between these two kinds of love, whereby we may know them.

8. When the soul enters the dark night, it brings these kinds of love under control. It strengthens and purifies the one, namely that which is according to God ; and the other it removes and brings to an end ;² and in the beginning it causes both to be lost sight of, as we shall say hereafter.

CHAPTER V

Of the imperfections into which beginners fall with respect to the sin of wrath.

1. By reason of the concupiscence which many beginners have for spiritual consolations, their experience of these consolations is very commonly accompanied by many imperfections proceeding from the sin of wrath ; for, when their delight and their pleasure in spiritual things come to an end, they naturally become embittered,³ and bear that lack of sweetness which they have to suffer with a bad grace, which affects all that they do ; and they very easily become irritated over the smallest matter—sometimes, indeed, none can tolerate them. This happens frequently after they have been very pleasantly recollected in prayer according to the senses ; when their pleasure and delight therein come to an end, their nature is naturally vexed and disappointed ; even so is the child when they take it from the breast of which it was enjoying the sweetness. There is no sin in this natural vexation,⁴ when it is not permitted to indulge itself, but only imperfection, which must be purged by the aridity and severity of the dark night.

¹ S. John iii, 6.

² E.p. : 'removes, brings to an end or mortifies.'

³ [*Desabridos*. Cf. note on *sinsabor*, p. 298, above.]

⁴ M : 'natural disillusion.'

2. There are other of these spiritual persons, again, who fall into another kind of spiritual wrath : this happens when they become irritated at the sins of others, and keep watch on those others with a sort of uneasy zeal. At times the impulse comes to them to reprove them angrily, and occasionally they go so far as to indulge it¹ and set themselves up as masters of virtue. All this is contrary to spiritual meekness.

3. There are others who are vexed with themselves when they observe their own imperfectness,² and display an impatience that is not humility ; so impatient are they about this that they would fain be saints in a day. Many of these persons purpose to accomplish a great deal and make grand³ resolutions ; yet, as they are not humble and have no misgivings about themselves,⁴ the more resolutions they make, the greater is their fall and the greater their annoyance, since they have not the patience to wait for that which God will give them when it pleases Him ; this likewise is contrary to the spiritual meekness⁵ aforementioned, which cannot be wholly remedied save by the purgation of the dark night. Some souls, on the other hand, are so patient⁶ in this matter of the progress which they desire, that God would gladly see them less so.

CHAPTER VI

Of imperfections with respect to spiritual gluttony

1. With respect to the fourth sin, which is spiritual gluttony, there is much to be said, for there is scarce one of these beginners who, however good his progress, falls not into some of the many imperfections which come to these beginners with respect to this sin, on account of the sweetness which they find at first in spiritual exercises. For many of these, lured by the sweetness and pleasure which they find in such exercises, strive more after spiritual sweetness than after spiritual purity and discretion,⁷ which is that which God

¹ [*Lit.*, 'they even do it.'] E.p. : 'they even carry it out.'

² M : 'impatience' for 'imperfectness.'

³ Some codices read : 'make many.'

⁴ So A, G, H, M, Mtr. The other authorities read : 'nor trust in themselves' [*confian* for *desconfian*].

⁵ All the MSS. have 'meekness.' H reads 'dishonour,' which a corrector has altered to 'misgivings' [*desconfianza*].

⁶ E.p. adds : 'and travel so slowly.'

⁷ E.p. : 'than after true devotion and purity.'

regards and accepts throughout the spiritual journey.¹ Therefore, besides the imperfections into which the seeking for sweetness of this kind makes them fall, the gluttony which they now have makes them continually go too far, so that they pass beyond the limits of moderation within which the virtues are acquired and wherein they consist. For some of these persons, attracted by the pleasure which they find therein, kill themselves with penances, and others weaken themselves with fasts, by performing more than their frailty can bear, without the order or advice of any,² but rather endeavouring to avoid those whom they should obey in these matters ; some, indeed, dare to do these things even though the contrary has been commanded them.

2. These persons are most imperfect and devoid of reason ; for they set bodily penance before subjection and obedience, which is penance of the reason and discretion, and therefore a sacrifice more acceptable and pleasing to God than any beside. But this, when the other side of it is disregarded, is no more than the penance of beasts, to which they are attracted, exactly like beasts, by the desire and pleasure which they find therein.³ Inasmuch as all extremes are sinful, and as in behaving thus such persons⁴ are working their own will, they grow in vice rather than in virtue ; for, at the least, they are acquiring spiritual gluttony and pride in this way, through not walking in obedience. And many of these the devil assails,⁵ stirring up this gluttony in them through the pleasures and desires which he increases within them, to such an extent that, since they can no longer help themselves, they either change or vary or add to that which is commanded them, since any obedience in this respect is so bitter⁶ to them. To such depravity have some persons fallen that, simply because it is through obedience that they engage in these exercises, they lose the desire and devotion to perform them, their only desire and pleasure being to do what they themselves are inclined to do,⁷ so that it would probably

¹ [Lit., 'spiritual road.']

² A, P : 'without any order or advice.' H : 'without order and advice.'

³ E.p. softens thus : 'This, disregarding this other side of it, is most imperfect, for they are attracted thereto only by the desire and pleasure which they find therein.'

⁴ [Lit., 'these persons.' E.p., M : 'all persons.']

⁵ E.p. : 'the devil deceives.'

⁶ E.p. : 'so severe and bitter.'

⁷ C, G, Mtr., V add : 'and not because it is commanded them.'

be more profitable for them not to engage in these exercises at all.

3. You will see many of these persons very insistent with their spiritual masters to be granted that which they desire, extracting it from them almost by force; if they be refused it they become as peevish as children and go about in great displeasure, thinking that they are not serving God when they are not allowed to do that which they would. For they go about clinging to their own will and pleasure, which they treat as though it came from God;¹ and immediately their directors² take it from them and try to subject them to the will of God, they become peevish, grow faint-hearted and fall away. These persons think that their own satisfaction and pleasure are the satisfaction and service of God.

4. There are others, again, who, because of this gluttony, know so little of their own unworthiness and misery and have thrust so far from them the loving fear and reverence which they owe to the greatness of God, that they hesitate not to insist continually that their confessors shall allow them to communicate³ often. And, what is worse, they frequently dare to communicate without the leave and consent⁴ of the minister and steward of Christ, merely acting on their own opinion, and contriving to conceal the truth from him. And for this reason, because they desire to communicate continually, they make their confessions⁵ carelessly,⁶ being more eager to eat than to eat cleanly and perfectly, although it would be healthier and holier for them had they the contrary inclination and begged their confessors not to command them to approach the altar so frequently: between these two extremes, however, the better way is that of humble resignation. But the boldness referred to is⁷ a thing that does great harm, and men may fear to be punished for such temerity.

5. These persons, in communicating, strive with every nerve to obtain some kind of sensible sweetness and pleasure, instead of humbly doing reverence and giving praise within

¹ [*Lit.*, 'and treat this as their God.'] This e.p. omits [softening the sense of the whole, as above (p. 365)].

² [The Spanish is impersonal: 'immediately this is taken from them,' etc.]

³ E.p., G, M: 'to confess and communicate.'

⁴ [*Lit.*, 'and opinion.']

⁵ H erroneously reads: 'their passions.'

⁶ [*Lit.*, 'anyhow.']

⁷ [*Lit.*, 'the other boldnesses are.'] A, e.p. read: 'the excessive boldnesses are.'

themselves to God. And in such wise do they devote themselves to this that, when they have received no pleasure or sweetness in the senses, they think that they have accomplished nothing at all. This is to judge God very unworthily ; they have not realized that the least of the advantages which comes from this Most Holy Sacrament is that which concerns the senses ; and that the invisible part of the grace that it bestows is much greater ; for, in order that they may look at it with the eyes of faith, God oftentimes withholds from them these other consolations and sweetnesses of sense.¹ And thus they desire to feel and taste God as though He were comprehensible by them and accessible to them, not only in this, but likewise in other spiritual exercises. All this is very great imperfection and completely opposed to the nature of God, since it is impurity in faith.²

6. These persons have the same defect as regards the practice of prayer, for they think that all the business of prayer consists in experiencing sensible pleasure and devotion and they strive to obtain this by great effort,³ wearying and fatiguing their faculties and their heads ; and when they have not found this pleasure they become greatly discouraged, thinking that they have accomplished nothing. Through these efforts they lose true devotion and spirituality, which consist in perseverance, together with patience and humility, and mistrust of themselves, that they may please God alone. For this reason, when they have once failed to find pleasure in this or some other exercise, they have great disinclination and repugnance to return to it, and at times they abandon it. They are, in fact, as we have said, like children, who are not influenced by reason, and who act, not from rational motives but from inclination.⁴ Such persons expend all their effort in seeking spiritual pleasure and consolation ; they never tire, therefore, of reading books ; and they begin, now one meditation, now another, in their pursuit of this pleasure which they desire to experience in the things of God. But God, very justly, wisely and lovingly, denies it to

¹ E.p., M : 'and favours of sense.' [The difference, in a Spanish MS., between *sabores* and *favores* would be of the slightest.]

² So the MSS. E.p. modifies the last clause and reads : 'Who demands the purest faith.'

³ [Lit., 'they strive to obtain this, as they say, by the strength of their arms.' The phrase is, of course, understood in the Spanish to be metaphorical, as the words 'as they say' clearly indicate.]

⁴ [Lit., 'who are not influenced, neither act by reason, but from pleasure.']

them, for otherwise this spiritual gluttony and inordinate appetite would breed innumerable evils. It is, therefore, very fitting that they should enter into the dark night, whereof we shall speak¹, that they may be purged from this childishness.

7. These persons who are thus inclined to such pleasures have another very great imperfection, which is that they are very weak and remiss in journeying upon the hard² road of the Cross ; for the soul that is given to sweetness naturally has its face set against all self-denial, which is devoid of sweetness.³

8. These persons have many other imperfections which arise hence, of which in time the Lord heals them by means of temptations, aridities and other trials, all of which are part of the dark night. All these I will not treat further here, lest I become too lengthy ; I will only say that spiritual temperance and sobriety lead to another and a very different temper, which is that of mortification, fear and submission in all things. It thus becomes clear that the perfection and worth of things consist not in the multitude and the pleasantness of one's actions,⁴ but in being able to deny oneself in them ; this such persons must endeavour to compass, in so far as they may, until God is pleased to purify them indeed, by bringing them⁵ into the dark night, to arrive at which I am hastening on with these imperfections.

CHAPTER VII

*Of imperfections with respect to spiritual envy and sloth.*⁶

1. With respect likewise to the other two sins, which are spiritual envy and sloth, these beginners fail not to have many imperfections. For, with respect to envy, many of them are wont to experience movements⁷ of displeasure at the spiritual good of others, which cause them a certain sensible grief at being outstripped upon this road, so that they

¹ [*Lit.*, 'which we shall give.'] E.p. omits : 'whereof we shall speak.' A, G, V : 'which we shall describe.'

² [*Aspero* : harsh, rough, rugged.]

³ [*Lit.*, 'against all the sweetnessness of self-denial.']

⁴ Bz., M : 'of one's things.' E.p. abbreviates : 'in the multitude of one's actions.'

⁵ [*Lit.*, 'causing them to enter.'] Bz. : 'putting them.'

⁶ Bz., H omit : 'and sloth.' ⁷ Bz. qualifies with 'many.'

would prefer not to hear others praised ; for they become displeased at others' virtues and sometimes they cannot refrain from contradicting what is said in praise of them, depreciating it as far as they can ; and their annoyance thereat grows¹ because the same² is not said of them, for they would fain be preferred in everything. All this is clean contrary to charity, which, as S. Paul says, rejoices in goodness.³ And, if charity has any envy, it is a holy envy, comprising grief at not having the virtues of others, yet also joy because others have them, and delight when others outstrip us in the service of God, wherein we ourselves are so remiss.

2. With respect also to spiritual sloth, beginners are apt to be wearied by the things that are most spiritual, from which they flee because these things are incompatible with sensible pleasure. For, as they are so much accustomed to sweetness in spiritual things, they are wearied by things in which they find no sweetness. If once they failed to find in prayer the satisfaction which their taste required (and after all it is well that God should take it from them to prove them), they would prefer not to return to it : sometimes they leave it ; at other times they continue it unwillingly. And thus because of this sloth they abandon the way of perfection (which is the way of the negation of their will and pleasure for God's sake) for the pleasure and sweetness of their own will, which they aim at satisfying in this way rather than the will of God.

3. And many of these would fain have God will that which they themselves will, and are fretful at having to will that which He wills, and find repugnance in accommodating their will to that of God.⁴ Hence it happens to them that oftentimes they think that that wherein they find not their own will and pleasure is not the will of God ; and that, on the other hand, when they themselves find satisfaction, God is satisfied. Thus they measure God by themselves and not themselves by God, acting quite contrarily to that which He

¹ [Lit., 'and, as they say, their eye (*el ojo*) grows'—a colloquial phrase expressing annoyance.] E.p. omits this phrase altogether. Bz., G read *enojo* for *el ojo* [destroying the metaphor but not altering the sense of this translation.]

² E.p. : 'and they greatly regret that the same.'

³ 1 Corinthians xiii, 6. The Saint here cites the sense, not the letter, of the epistle. B, H give the quotation correctly, as 'rejoiceth in the truth.'

⁴ E.p. : 'to the Divine will.'

Himself taught in the Gospel, saying : That he who should lose his will for His sake, the same should gain it ; and he who should desire to gain it, the same should lose it.¹

4. These persons likewise find it wearisome when they are commanded to do that wherein they take no pleasure. Because they aim at spiritual sweetness and consolation, they are too weak to have the fortitude and bear the trials of perfection.² They resemble those who are softly nurtured and who run fretfully away from everything that is hard, and take offence at the Cross, wherein consist the delights of the spirit. The more spiritual a thing is, the more wearisome they find it, for, as they seek to go about spiritual matters with complete freedom and according to the inclination of their will, it causes them great sorrow and repugnance to enter upon the narrow way, which, says Christ, is the way of life.³

5. Let it suffice here to have described these imperfections, among the many to be found in the lives of those that are in this first state of beginners, so that it may be seen how greatly they need God to set them in the state of proficients. This He does by bringing them into the dark night whereof we now speak ; wherein He weans them from the breasts of these sweetnesses and pleasures, gives them pure aridities and inward darkness, takes from them all these superficialities⁴ and puerilities, and by very different means causes them to win the virtues. For, however assiduously the beginner practises the mortification in himself of all these actions and passions of his, he can never completely succeed—very far from it—until God works it in him passively by means of the purgation of the said night. Of this I would fain speak in some way that may be profitable ; may God, then, be pleased to give me His Divine light, because this is very needful in a night that is so dark and a matter that is so difficult⁵ to describe and to expound.

The line, then, is :

In a dark night.

¹ S. Matthew xvi, 25.

² [*Lit.*, 'they are very weak for the fortitude and trial of perfection.']

³ S. Matthew vii, 14.

⁴ E.p., M, P : 'all these imperfections.'

⁵ E.p. and a number of MSS. omit all that follows the word 'difficult.'

CHAPTER VIII

*Wherein is expounded the first line of the first stanza, and a beginning is made of the explanation of this dark night.*¹

1. This night, which, as we say, is contemplation, produces in spiritual persons two kinds of darkness or purgation, corresponding to the two parts of man's nature—namely, the sensual and the spiritual. And thus the one night or purgation will be sensual, wherein the soul is purged according to sense, which is subdued to the spirit; and the other is a night or purgation which is spiritual; wherein the soul is purged and stripped² according to the spirit, and subdued and made ready for the union of love with God. The night of sense is common and comes to many; these are the beginners; and of this night³ we shall first speak. The night of the spirit is the portion of very few, and these are they that are already practised and proficient, of whom we shall treat hereafter.

2. The first purgation or night is bitter and terrible to sense, as we shall now show.⁴ The second bears no comparison with it, for it is horrible and awful⁵ to the spirit, as we shall show⁶ presently. Since the night of sense is first in order and comes first, we shall first of all⁷ say something about it briefly, since more is written of it, as of a thing that is more common; and we shall pass on to treat more fully of the spiritual night, since very little has been said of this, either in speech⁸ or in writing, and very little⁹ is known of it, even by experience.

3. Since, then, the conduct of these beginners upon the way of God is ignoble,¹⁰ and has much to do with their love of self and their own inclinations, as has been explained above, God desires to lead them farther. He seeks to bring them out of that ignoble kind of love to a higher degree of

¹ The title is taken from e.p. The Codices have no title.

² E.p.: 'wherein a soul is purged or stripped.'

³ E.p.: 'of whom.'

⁵ E.p.: 'for it is very awful.'

⁷ E.p. omits: 'first of all.'

⁴ [Lit., 'say.']

⁶ [Lit., 'say.']

⁸ [Plática: the word is frequently used in Spanish to denote an informal sermon or address.]

⁹ This 'very little' [which in the original comes in the emphatic final position] is omitted in e.p.

¹⁰ [Lit., 'low'; the same word recurs below and is similarly translated.]

love for Him, to free them from the ignoble exercises of sense and meditation (wherewith, as we have said, they go seeking God so unworthily and in so many ways that are unbefitting), and to lead them to a kind of spiritual exercise wherein they can commune with Him more abundantly and are freed more completely from imperfections. For they have now had practice for some time in the way of virtue and have persevered in meditation and prayer, whereby, through the sweetness and pleasure that they have found therein, they have lost their love of the things of the world and have gained some degree of spiritual strength in God ; this has enabled them to some extent to refrain from creature desires, so that for God's sake they are now able to suffer a light burden and a little aridity without turning back to a time¹ which they found more pleasant. When they are going about these spiritual exercises with the greatest delight and pleasure, and when they believe that the sun of Divine favour is shining most brightly upon them, God turns all this light of theirs into darkness, and shuts against them the door and the source of the sweet spiritual water which they were tasting in God whensoever and for as long as they desired. (For, as they were weak and tender, there was no door closed to them, as S. John says in the Apocalypse, iii, 8). And thus He leaves them so completely in the dark that they know not whither to go with their sensible imagination and meditation ; for they cannot² advance a step in meditation, as they were wont to do aforetime, their inward senses being submerged in this night, and left with such dryness that not only do they experience no pleasure and consolation in the spiritual things and good exercises wherein they were wont to find their delights and pleasures, but instead, on the contrary, they find insipidity and bitterness in the said things. For, as I have said, God now sees that they have grown a little, and are becoming strong enough to lay aside their swaddling clothes and be taken from the gentle breast ; so He sets them down from His arms and teaches them to³ walk on their own feet ; which they feel to be very strange, for everything seems to be going wrong with them.

4. To recollected persons this commonly happens sooner after their beginnings than to others, inasmuch as they are

¹ [Lit., 'to the better time.']

² E.p., M: 'for they know not how to.'

³ E.p., M: 'and shows them how to.'

freer from occasions of backsliding, and their desires turn more quickly from the things of the world, which is what is needful if they are to begin to enter this blessed¹ night of sense. Ordinarily no great time passes after their beginnings before they begin to enter this night of sense ; and the great majority of them do in fact enter it, for they will generally be seen to fall into these aridities.

5. With regard to this way of purgation of the senses, since it is so common, we might here adduce a great number of quotations from Divine Scripture, where many passages relating to it are continually found, particularly in the Psalms and the Prophets. However, I do not wish to spend time upon these, for he that cannot see them there will find the common experience of them to be sufficient.²

CHAPTER IX

Of the signs by which it will be known that the spiritual person is walking along the way of this night and purgation of sense.

1. But since these aridities might frequently proceed, not from the night and purgation of the sensual desires aforementioned, but from sins and imperfections, or from weakness and lukewarmness, or from some bad humour or indisposition of the body, I shall here set down certain signs by which it may be known if such aridity proceeds from the aforementioned purgation, or if it arises from any of the aforementioned sins. For the making of this distinction I find that there are three principal signs.

2. The first is whether, when a soul finds no pleasure or consolation in the things of God, it also fails to find it in any thing created ; for, as God sets the soul in this dark night to the end that He may quench and purge its sensual desire, He allows it not to find attraction or sweetness in anything whatsoever. Hence it may be laid down as very probable³ that this aridity and insipidity proceed not from recently committed sins or imperfections. For, if this were so, the soul would feel in its nature some inclination or desire to taste other things than those of God ; for, whenever the desire is

¹ E.p. has 'happy' for 'blessed.'

² E.p., C omit this entire sentence, substituting: 'And, to avoid prolixity, we omit them, albeit we shall adduce certain of them later.'

³ [Lit., 'And in this it is known very probably.'] E.p. omits 'very.'

allowed indulgence in any imperfection, it immediately feels inclined thereto, whether little or much, in proportion to the pleasure and the love that it had for it. Since, however, this lack of enjoyment in things above or below might proceed from some indisposition or melancholy humour, which oftentimes makes it impossible for the soul to take pleasure in anything, it becomes necessary to apply the second sign and condition.

3. The second sign whereby a man may believe himself to be experiencing the said purgation¹ is that ordinarily the memory is centred upon God, with painful care and solicitude, thinking that it is not serving God, but is backsliding, because it finds itself without sweetness in the things of God. And in such a case it is evident that this lack of sweetness and this aridity come not from weakness and lukewarmness; for it is the nature of lukewarmness not to care greatly or to have any inward solicitude for the things of God. There is thus a great difference between aridity and lukewarmness, for lukewarmness consists in great weakness and remissness in the will and in the spirit, without solicitude as to serving God; whereas purgative aridity is ordinarily accompanied by solicitude, with care and grief, as I say, because the soul is not serving God. And although this may sometimes be increased by melancholy or some other humour (as it frequently is) it fails not for this reason to produce a purgative effect upon the desire, since the desire is deprived of all pleasure,² and has its care centred upon God alone. For, when mere humour is the cause, it spends itself in displeasure and ruin of the physical nature, and there are none of those desires to serve God which belong to purgative aridity. When the cause is aridity, it is true that the sensual part of the soul has fallen low, and is weak and feeble in its actions, by reason of the little pleasure which it finds in them; but the spirit, on the other hand, is ready and strong.

4. For the cause of this aridity is that God transfers to the spirit the good things and the strength of the senses, which, since the soul's natural strength and senses are incapable of using them, remain barren, dry and empty. For the sensual part of a man has no capacity for that which is pure spirit, and thus, when it is the spirit that receives the pleasure, the flesh is left without savour and is too weak to perform any

¹ E.p.: 'The second sign and condition of this purgation.'

² A, B: 'since it is completely purged as to [its] pleasure.'

action. But the spirit, which all the time is being fed, goes forward in strength, and with more alertness and solicitude than before, in its anxiety not to fail God ; and if it is not immediately conscious of spiritual sweetness and delight, but only of aridity and lack of sweetness, the reason for this is the strangeness of the exchange ; for its palate has been accustomed to those other sensual pleasures upon which its eyes are still fixed, and, since the spiritual palate is not made ready or purged for such subtle pleasure, until it finds itself becoming prepared for it by means of this arid and dark night, it cannot experience spiritual pleasure and good, but only aridity and lack of sweetness, since it misses the pleasure which aforesaid it enjoyed so readily.

5. These souls whom God is beginning to lead through these solitary places of the wilderness are like to the children of Israel ; to whom in the wilderness God began to give food from Heaven, containing within itself all sweetness, and, as is there said,¹ it turned to the savour which each one of them desired. But withal the children of Israel felt the lack of the pleasures and delights of the flesh and the onions which they had eaten aforesaid in Egypt, the more so because their palate was accustomed to these and took delight in them, rather than in the delicate sweetness of the angelic manna ; and they wept and sighed for the fleshpots even in the midst of the food of Heaven.² To such depths does the vileness of our desires descend that it makes us to long for our own wretched food³ and to be nauseated by the indescribable⁴ blessings of Heaven.

6. But, as I say, when these aridities proceed from the way of the purgation of sensual desire, although at first the spirit feels no sweetness, for the reasons that we have just given, it feels that it is deriving strength and energy to act from the substance which this inward food gives it, the which food is the beginning of a contemplation that is dark and arid to the senses ; which contemplation is secret and hidden from the very person that experiences it ; and ordinarily, together with the aridity and emptiness which it causes in the senses, it gives the soul an inclination and desire to be alone and in quietness, without being able to think of any particular thing

¹ E.p. abbreviates : ' God began to give such delicious food from Heaven that, as is there said.'

² Numbers xi, 5-6.

³ [Lit., ' makes us to desire our miseries. ']

⁴ [Lit., ' incommunicable. '] E.p. has ' incommutable. '

or having the desire to do so. If those souls to whom this comes to pass knew how to be quiet at this time, and troubled not about performing any kind of action, whether inward or outward, neither had any anxiety about doing anything,¹ then they would delicately experience this inward refreshment in that ease and freedom from care. So delicate is this refreshment that ordinarily, if a man have desire or care² to experience it, he experiences it not; for, as I say, it does its work when the soul is most at ease and freest from care; it is like the air which, if one would close one's hand upon it, escapes.

7. In this sense we may understand that which the Spouse said to the Bride in the Songs, namely: Withdraw thine eyes from me, for they make me to soar aloft.³ For in such a way does God bring the soul into this state, and by so different a path does He lead it that, if it desires to work with its faculties,⁴ it hinders the work which God is doing in it rather than aids it; whereas aforetime it was quite the contrary. The reason is that, in this state of contemplation, which the soul enters when it forsakes meditation for the state of the proficient, it is God Who is now working in the soul; He binds⁵ its interior faculties, and allows it not to cling to the understanding, nor to have delight in the will, nor to reason with the memory. For anything that the soul can do of its own accord at this time serves only, as we have said, to hinder inward peace and the work which God is accomplishing in the spirit by means of that aridity of sense. And this peace, being spiritual and delicate, performs a work which is quiet and delicate, solitary, productive of peace and satisfaction⁶ and far removed from all those earlier pleasures, which were very palpable and sensual. This is the peace which, says David, God speaks in the soul to the end that He may make it spiritual.⁷ And we proceed hence to the third point.

¹ E.p. reads: '... [outward], which they strive with their labour and their reasoning to perform, and had no anxiety to do anything save to allow themselves to be led by God, to receive and to listen with loving interior attentiveness, then ...' etc.

² E.p.: 'if a man have superadded and particular desire and care.'

³ Canticles vi, 4 [A.V., vi, 5].

⁴ E.p.: 'that, if it will work of itself and by its own ability.'

⁵ Nearly all authorities read thus. E.p. and M, however, have: 'He seems to bind,' and V: 'He veils.'

⁶ [Lit., 'satisfactory and pacific.'] E.p. omits: 'solitary, productive of ... satisfaction.' H has 'solicitous' for 'solitary.' Comits 'solitary.' All other authorities read as in the text.

⁷ Psalm lxxxiv, 9 [A.V., lxxxv, 8].

8. The third sign whereby this purgation of sense may be recognized is that the soul can no longer meditate or reflect in its sense of the imagination, as it was wont,¹ however much it may of itself endeavour to do so. For God now begins to communicate Himself to it, no longer through sense, as He did aforetime, by means of reflections which joined and sundered its knowledge, but by pure spirit, into which consecutive reflections enter not; but He communicates Himself to it by an act of simple contemplation, to which neither the exterior nor the interior senses of the lower part of the soul can attain. From this time forward, therefore, imagination and fancy can find no support in any meditation,² and can gain no foothold by means thereof.

9. With regard to this third sign it is to be understood that this embarrassment and dissatisfaction of the faculties proceed not from indisposition, for, when this is the case, and the indisposition, which is never permanent,³ comes to an end, then the soul is able once more, by taking some care about the matter, to do what it did before, and the faculties find their wonted support. But in the purgation of the desire this is not so: when once the soul begins to enter therein, its inability to reflect with the faculties grows ever greater. For, although it is true that at first, and with some persons, it is not as continuous⁴ as this, so that occasionally they fail to abandon their pleasures and reflections⁵ of sense (for perchance⁶ by reason of their weakness it was not fitting to wean them from these immediately), yet this inability grows within them more and more and brings the workings of sense to an end, if indeed they are to make progress, for those who walk not in the way of contemplation act very differently. For this night of aridities is not usually continuous in their senses. At times they have these aridities; at others they have them not. At times they cannot meditate; at others they can. For God sets them in this night only to prove them and to humble them, and to reform their desires, so that they go not nurturing in themselves a sinful⁷ gluttony in spiritual things. He sets them not there in order

¹ E.p. is slightly more explicit: '... or reflect, making use of its sense of the imagination, that it may move it as it was wont.'

² E.p.: 'cannot find support or make a beginning with any meditation.'

³ [The original has: 'which is never permanent in a being.' The reference is evidently to transient distempers, whether moral or physical.]

⁴ Bz.: 'as continent.'

⁵ E.p.: 'and alleviations.'

⁶ E.p. omits 'perchance.'

⁷ E.p. omits: 'a sinful.'

to lead them in the way of the spirit, which is this contemplation ; for not all those who consciously walk in the way of the spirit are brought by God to contemplation, nor even the half of them¹—why, He best knows. And this is why He never completely weans the senses of such persons from the breasts of meditations and reflections, but only for short periods and at certain seasons, as we have said.

CHAPTER X

Of the way in which these souls are to conduct themselves in this dark night.

1. During the time, then, of the aridities of this night of sense (wherein God effects the change of which we have spoken above, drawing forth the soul from the life of sense to that of the spirit—that is, from meditation to contemplation—wherein it has no longer any power to work or to reason with its faculties concerning the things of God, as has been said) spiritual persons suffer great trials, by reason not so much of the aridities which they suffer, as of the fear which they have of being lost on the road, thinking that all spiritual blessing is over for them and that God has abandoned them since they find no help or pleasure in good things.² Then they grow weary, and endeavour (as they have been accustomed to do) to concentrate their faculties with some degree of pleasure upon some object of meditation, thinking that, when they are not doing this and yet are conscious of making an effort, they are doing nothing. This effort they make not without great inward repugnance and unwillingness on the part of their soul, which was taking pleasure in being in that quietness and ease, instead of working with its faculties.³ So they have abandoned the one pursuit,⁴ yet draw no profit from the other ; for, while they seek⁵ what is prompted by their own spirit,⁶ they lose the spirit of tranquillity and peace⁷ which they had before. And thus they are like to one

¹ E.p. reads ' to perfect contemplation ' and omits ' nor even the half of them.'

² H : ' no help whatever in good things.'

³ E.p. omits : ' instead . . . faculties.'

⁴ [*Lit.*, ' spoiling themselves in the one.'] E.p. has : ' turning aside in [*i.e.*, from] the one.'

⁵ A, B, M, e.p. have ' use.' Bz. : ' taste.'

⁶ [*Lit.*, ' for to seek their spirit.']

⁷ G, H, P omit : ' and peace.'

who abandons what he has done in order to do it over again, or to one who leaves a city only to re-enter it, or to one who is hunting and lets his prey go in order to hunt it once more. This is useless here, for the soul will gain nothing further by conducting itself in this way, as has been said.¹

2. These souls turn back at such a time if there is none who understands them ; they abandon the road or lose courage ; or, at the least, they are hindered from going farther by the great trouble which they take in advancing along the road of meditation and reasoning. Thus they weary and overwork their nature, imagining that they are failing through negligence or sin. But this trouble that they are taking is quite useless, for God is now leading them by another road, which is that of contemplation, and is very different from the first ; for the one is of meditation and reasoning, and the other belongs neither to imagination nor yet to reasoning.

3. It is well for those who find themselves in this condition to take comfort, to persevere in patience and to be in no wise afflicted. Let them trust in God, Who abandons not those that seek Him with a simple and right heart, and will not fail to give them what is needful for the road, until He bring them into the clear and pure light of love. This last He will give them by means of that other dark night, that of the spirit, if they merit that He should bring them thereto.

4. The way in which they are to conduct themselves in this night of sense is to devote themselves not at all to reasoning and meditation, since it is not the time for this, but to allow the soul to remain in peace and quietness, although it may seem clear² to them that they are doing nothing and are wasting their time, and although it may seem to them³ that it is because of their weakness that they have no desire in that state to think of anything. The truth is that they will be doing quite sufficient if they have patience and persevere in prayer without making any effort.⁴ What they must do is merely to leave the soul free and disencumbered and at rest from all knowledge and thought, troubling not themselves, in that state, about what they shall think or meditate, but contenting themselves with no more than a peaceful and loving

¹ G modifies and abbreviates the rest of the chapter considerably from this point onward.

² E.p. omits 'clear.'

³ E.p. omits : 'although it may seem to them.'

⁴ [*Lit.*, 'without doing anything themselves.'] E.p. abbreviates : 'persevere in prayer, only leaving the soul free,' etc.

attentiveness toward God, and in being without anxiety, without the ability and without desire¹ to have experience of Him or to perceive Him.² For all these yearnings disquiet and distract the soul from the peaceful quiet and sweet ease of contemplation which is here granted to it.

5. And although further scruples may come to them—that they are wasting their time, and that it would be well for them to do something else, because they can neither do nor think anything in prayer—let them suffer these scruples and remain in peace, as there is no question save of their being at ease and having freedom of spirit. For if such a soul should desire to make any effort of its own with its interior faculties, this means that it will hinder and lose the blessings which, by means of that peace and ease of the soul, God is instilling into it and impressing upon it. It is just as if some painter were painting or dyeing a face; if the sitter were to move because he desired to do something, he would prevent the painter from accomplishing anything and would disturb him in what he was doing. And thus, when the soul desires to remain in inward ease and peace, any operation and affection or attention³ wherein it may then seek to indulge⁴ will distract it and disquiet it and make it conscious of aridity and emptiness of sense. For the more a soul endeavours to find help in affection and knowledge, the more will it feel the lack of these, which cannot now be supplied to it upon that road.

6. Wherefore it behoves such a soul to pay no heed if the operations of its faculties become lost to it; it is rather to desire that this should happen quickly. For, by not hindering the operation of infused contemplation that God is bestowing upon it, it can receive this with more peaceful abundance, and cause⁵ its spirit to be enkindled and to burn with the love which this dark and secret⁶ contemplation brings with it and sets firmly in the soul.⁷ For contemplation

¹ E.p. alters to: 'without excessive desire.' [As on p. 379, n. 4, this edition is endeavouring to soften expressions which might be taken as quietistic.]

² E.p.: 'to perceive Him or to have experience of Him.' Bz.: 'to have experience of Him or delight itself in perceiving Him.' [The word rendered 'have experience of' is *gustar*: *lit.*, 'taste.']

³ E.p.: 'or anxious attention.'

⁴ [Lit., 'which it may then wish to have.']

⁵ E.p., M: 'and be refreshed and cause.'

⁶ V: 'and secure.'

⁷ E.p. here adds: 'I would not, however, have any general rule laid down here as to cessation from meditation or reflection; for such cessation should never come until meditation is no longer possible, and only when

is naught else than a secret, peaceful and loving infusion from God, which, if it be permitted, enkindles the soul with the spirit of love, according as the soul declares in the next line, namely :

Kindled in love with yearnings.¹

CHAPTER XI

Wherein are expounded the three lines of the stanza.²

1. This enkindling of love is not as a rule felt at the first, because it has not begun to take hold upon the soul, by reason of the impurity of human nature, or because the soul has not understood its own state, as we have said, and has therefore given it no peaceful abiding-place within itself. Yet sometimes, nevertheless, there soon begins to make itself felt a certain yearning toward God ; and the more this increases, the more is the soul affectioned and enkindled in love toward God, without knowing or understanding how and whence this love and affection come to it, but from time to time seeing this flame and this enkindling grow so greatly within it that it desires God with yearning of love ; even as David, when he was in this dark night, said of himself in these words,³ namely : Because my heart was enkindled (that is to say, in love of contemplation), my reins also were changed : that is, my desires for sensual affections were changed,⁴ namely from the way of sense to the way of the spirit, which is the aridity and cessation from all these things whereof we are speaking. And I, he says, was dissolved in nothing and annihilated, and I knew not ; for, as we have said, without knowing the way whereby it goes, the soul finds itself annihilated with respect to all things above and below which were accustomed to please it ; and it finds itself enamoured, without knowing how. And because at times the enkindling

the Lord sets a hindrance to it either in the form of purgation and torment, or in that of most perfect contemplation. At other times, and on other occasions, this help and resource must always be used, and, further [the soul must meditate upon] the life and cross of Christ, which is the best means to purgation and patience, and to security on the road, and a wondrous help to lofty contemplation.

¹ G departs freely from the text throughout the exposition of this line.

² Thus e.p.

³ Psalm lxxii, 21 [A.V., lxxiii, 21-2].

⁴ Thus C, G, H, Mtr., V. The other authorities have only : ' my reins also were changed.' E.p. reads : ' my tastes and affections also were changed,' and continues : ' namely, from the way of sense,' etc.

of love in the spirit grows greater, the yearnings for God become so great in the soul that the very bones seem to be dried up by this thirst, and the natural powers to be fading away, and their warmth and strength to be perishing through the intensity¹ of the thirst of love, for the soul feels that this thirst of love is a living thirst. This thirst David had and felt, when he said : My soul thirsted for the living God.² Which is as much as to say : Living was the thirst of my soul. Of this thirst, since it is living, we may say that it kills. But it is to be noted that the vehemence of this thirst is not continuous, but occasional, although as a rule the soul is accustomed to feel it to a certain degree.³

2. But it must be noted that, as I began to say just now, this love is not as a rule felt at first, but only the dryness and emptiness are felt whereof we are speaking. Then in place of this love which afterwards becomes gradually enkindled, what the soul experiences in the midst of these aridities and emptinesses of the faculties is an habitual care and solicitude with respect to God, together with grief and fear that it is not serving Him. But it is a sacrifice which is not a little pleasing to God that the soul should go about afflicted and solicitous for His love. This solicitude and care leads the soul into that secret contemplation, until, the senses (that is, the sensual part) having in course of time been in some degree purged of the natural affections and powers by means of the aridities which it causes within them, this Divine love begins to be enkindled in the spirit. Meanwhile, however, like one who has begun a cure, the soul knows only suffering in this dark and arid purgation of the desire ; by this means it becomes healed of many imperfections, and exercises itself in many virtues, in order to make itself meet for the said love, as we shall now say with respect to the line following :

Oh, happy chance!

3. When God leads the soul into this night of sense in order to purge the sense of its lower part and to subdue it, unite it and bring it into conformity with the spirit, by setting it in darkness and causing it to cease from meditation (as

¹ [*Lit.*, 'livingness' : cf. the quotation below.]

² Psalm xli, 3 [A.V., xlii, 2].

³ E.p. substitutes for this last sentence : ' although the vehemence of this thirst is not continuous, but only occasional ; howbeit this thirst is ordinarily felt to a certain degree.'

He afterwards does in order to purify the spirit to unite it with God, as we shall afterwards say¹), He brings it into the night of the spirit, and (although it appears not so to it) the soul gains so many advantages that it holds it to be a happy chance to have escaped from the bonds and restrictions of the senses of its lower self, by means of this night aforesaid;² and utters the present line, namely: Oh, happy chance! With respect to this, it behoves us here to note the advantages which the soul finds in this night, and because of which it considers it a happy chance to have passed through it; all of which advantages the soul includes in the next line, namely:

I went forth without being observed.

4. This going forth is understood of the subjection to its sensual part which the soul suffered when it sought God through operations so weak, so limited and so defective³ as are those of this lower part; for at every step it stumbled into numerous imperfections and ignorances, as we have noted above in writing of the seven capital sins. From all of these it is freed, when this night quenches within it all pleasures, whether from above or from below, and makes all meditation darkness to it, and grants it other innumerable blessings in the acquirement of the virtues, as we shall now show. For it will be a matter of great pleasure and great consolation, to one that journeys on this road, to see how that which seems to the soul so severe and adverse, and so contrary to spiritual pleasure, works in it so many blessings. These, as we say, are gained when the soul goes forth, as regards its affection and operation, by means of this night, from all created things, and when it journeys to eternal things,⁴ which is great happiness and good fortune:⁵ first, because of the great blessing which is in the quenching of the desire and affection with respect to all things; secondly, because they are very few that endure and persevere in entering by this strait gate and by the narrow way which leads to life, as says Our Saviour.⁶ The strait gate is this night of sense, and the soul detaches itself from sense and strips itself thereof that it may enter by

¹ E.p. omits: 'as we shall afterwards say.'

² E.p.: 'this happy night.'

³ E.p. omits: 'so . . . so . . . so . . .'

⁴ V: 'to invisible things.'

⁵ [Lit., 'and chance': the same word as in the verse-line above.]

⁶ S. Matthew vii, 14.

this gate, and establishes itself in faith,¹ which is a stranger to all sense, so that afterwards it may journey by the narrow way, which is the other night—that of the spirit—and this the soul afterwards² enters in order to journey to God in pure faith,³ which is the means whereby the soul is united to God. By this road, since it is so narrow, dark and terrible (for there is no comparison between this night of sense and that other,⁴ in its darkness and trials, as we shall say later), they are far fewer that journey, but its advantages are far greater without comparison than those of this night. Of this we shall now begin to say something, with such brevity as is possible, in order that we may pass to the other night.

CHAPTER XII

Of the benefits which this night⁵ causes in the soul.

1. This night and purgation of the desire, a happy one for the soul, works in it so many blessings and benefits (although to the soul it rather seems, as we have said, that blessings are being taken away from it) that, even as Abraham made a great feast when he weaned his son Isaac,⁶ even so is there joy in Heaven because God is now taking this soul from its swaddling clothes, setting it down from His arms, making it to walk upon its feet, and likewise taking from it the milk of the breast and the soft and sweet food proper to children, and making it to eat bread with crust, and to begin to enjoy the food of robust persons. This food, in these aridities and this darkness of sense, is now given to the spirit, which is dry and emptied of all the sweetness of sense. And this food is the infused contemplation whereof we have spoken.

2. This is the first and principal benefit caused by this arid and dark night of contemplation : the knowledge of oneself and of one's misery.⁷ For, besides the fact that all the favours which God grants to the soul are habitually granted to them enwrapped in this knowledge, these aridities and this emptiness

¹ E.p. : 'directing itself by faith.' Some codices have : 'uniting itself in faith.'

² E.p. : 'later.'

³ E.p. : 'in faith most pure.'

⁴ E.p. : 'and that of the spirit.'

⁵ E.p. : 'this night of sense.'

⁶ Genesis xxi, 8.

⁷ So H and the other codices. E.p. has : 'And this is the first and principal benefit which the soul gains here, and from which almost all the others are derived. Of these, the first benefit is the knowledge of oneself and of one's misery.'

of the faculties compared with the abundance which the soul experienced aforetime and the difficulty which it finds in good works, make it recognize its own lowliness and misery, which in the time of its prosperity it was unable to see. Of this there is a good illustration in the Book of Exodus, where God, wishing to humble the children of Israel and desiring that they should know themselves, commanded them to take away and strip off the festal garments and adornments wherewith they were accustomed to adorn themselves in the Wilderness, saying : Now from henceforth strip yourselves of festal ornaments and put on everyday working dress, that ye may know what treatment ye deserve.¹

This is as though He had said : Inasmuch as the attire that ye wear, being proper to festival and rejoicing, causes you to feel less humble concerning yourselves than ye should, put off from you this attire, in order that henceforth, seeing yourselves clothed with vileness, ye may know that ye merit no more, and may know who ye are. Wherefore the soul knows the truth that it knew not at first, concerning its own misery ; for, at the time when it was clad as for a festival and found in God much pleasure, consolation and help, it was somewhat more satisfied and contented, since it thought itself to some extent to be serving God. It is true that such souls may not have this idea explicitly in their minds ; but some suggestion of it at least is conveyed to them by the satisfaction which they find in their pleasant experiences. But, now that the soul has put on its other and working attire—that of aridity and abandonment—and now that its first lights have turned into darkness, it possesses these lights more truly in this virtue of self-knowledge, which is so excellent and so necessary,² considering itself now as nothing and experiencing no satisfaction in itself ; for it sees that it does nothing of itself neither can do anything. And the smallness of this self-satisfaction, together with the soul's affliction at not serving God, is considered and esteemed by God as greater than all the consolations which the soul formerly experienced and the works which it wrought, however great they were, inasmuch as they were the occasion of many imperfections and ignorances. And concerning this attire³ of aridity, there remains

¹ Exodus xxxiii, 5.

² E.p. : 'it more truly possesses and has this virtue of self-knowledge so excellent and so necessary.' Our reading is that of H.

³ H : 'this labour,' probably in error [*trabajo for traje*].

to be described, besides that which we have said already, the benefits which we shall now describe and many more which may be spoken of, as they proceed from their fount and source of self-knowledge.

3. In the first place, the soul learns to commune with God with more respect and more courtesy, such as one must ever observe in converse with the Most High. These it knew not in its prosperous times of pleasure and consolation, for that pleasant favour¹ which it experienced made its desire toward God somewhat bolder than was fitting, and discourteous and ill-considered.² Even so did it happen to Moses, when he felt that God was speaking to him; blinded³ by that pleasure and desire, without further consideration, he was making bold to go to Him, if God had not commanded him to stay and put off his shoes. By this incident we are shown the respect and discretion in detachment of desire wherewith a man is to commune with God. When Moses had obeyed in this matter, he became so discreet and so attentive that the Scripture says that not only did he not make bold to draw near to God, but that he dared not even look at Him.⁴ For, having taken off the shoes of his desires and pleasures, he became very conscious of his wretchedness in the sight of God, as befitted one about to hear the word of God. Even so likewise the preparation which God granted⁵ to Job in order that he might speak with Him consisted not in those delights and glories which Job himself reports that he was wont to have in his God, but in leaving him naked upon a dung-hill,⁶ abandoned and even persecuted by his friends, filled with anguish and bitterness, and the earth covered with worms. And then the Most High God, He that lifts up the poor man from the dung-hill, was pleased to come down and speak with him there face to face, revealing⁷ to him the depths and heights⁸ of His wisdom, in a way that He had never done in the time of his prosperity.

¹ E.p. omits 'pleasant.' Bz. has: 'that fervour and pleasure.' Mtr., V.: 'that favour and pleasure.'

² E.p. 'somewhat bolder and less courteous than was fitting.'

³ E.p. has 'carried away' for 'blinded.'

⁴ This is the reading of e.p. Cf. Exodus iii, 6. [P. Silverio reads, with] other authorities: 'dared not even reflect.'

⁵ E.p.: 'to hear the Divine words. The preparation likewise which God granted . . .'

⁶ [Job ii, 7-8.]

⁷ E.p.: 'the Most High God, Who lifts up the poor man from the dung-hill, was pleased to communicate Himself to him with greater abundance and sweetness, revealing . . .'

⁸ [Lit., 'the deep heights.']

4. And here we must note another excellent benefit which there is in this night and aridity of the desire of sense, since we have had occasion to speak of it. It is that, in this dark night of the desire (to the end that the words of the Prophet may be fulfilled, namely : Thy light shall shine in the darkness¹), God will enlighten the soul, giving it knowledge, not only of its lowliness and wretchedness, as we have said, but likewise of the greatness and excellence of God. For, as well as quenching the desires and pleasures and attachments of sense, He cleanses and frees the understanding that it may understand the truth ; for pleasure of sense and desire, even though it be for spiritual things, darkens and obstructs the spirit, and furthermore that straitness² and aridity of sense enlightens and quickens the understanding, as says Isaiah :³ Vexation makes us to understand how the soul that is empty and disencumbered, as is necessary for His Divine influence, is instructed supernaturally by God in His Divine wisdom, through this dark and arid night of contemplation,⁴ as we have said ; and this instruction God gave not in those first sweetnesss and joys.

5. This is very well explained by the same prophet Isaiah, where he says : Whom shall God teach His knowledge, and whom shall He make to hear that which He speaks ?⁵ To those, He says, that are weaned from the milk and drawn away from the breasts.⁶ Here it is shown that the first milk of spiritual sweetness is no preparation for this Divine influence, neither is there preparation in attachment to the breast of delectable meditations, belonging to the faculties of sense, which gave the soul pleasure ; such preparation consists rather in the lack of the one and withdrawal from the other. Inasmuch as, in order to listen to God, the soul needs to stand upright and to be detached, with regard to affection and sense, even as the Prophet says concerning himself, in these words : I will stand upon my watch (this is that detachment of desire) and I will make firm my step, (that is, I will

¹ Isaiah lviii, 10.

² A, B, Bz., C, H read 'appetite' [*apetito*] for 'straitness' [*aprieto*], presumably in error.

³ Isaiah xxviii, 19. [The author omits the actual text.]

⁴ [To translate this passage at all, we must read the *Dios cómo* of P. Silverio (p. 403, l. 20), which is also found in P. Gerardo and elsewhere, as *cómo Dios*.]

⁵ E.p. : 'to hear His word.' [The Spanish is *audición*, 'hearing, which is the rendering in A.V. margin. A.V. has 'doctrine'.]

⁶ Isaiah xxviii, 9.

not meditate with sense), in order to contemplate (that is, in order to understand that which may come to me from God).¹ So we have now arrived at this, that from this arid night comes first of all self-knowledge, whence, as from a foundation, rises this other knowledge of God. For which cause S. Augustine said to God : Let me know myself, Lord, and I shall know Thee.² For, as the philosophers say, one extreme can be well known by another.

6. And in order to prove more completely how efficacious is this night of sense, with its aridity and its desolation, in bringing the soul that light which, as we say, it receives there from God, we shall quote that passage of David, wherein he clearly describes the great power which is in this night for bringing the soul this lofty knowledge of God. He says, then, thus : In the desert land, waterless, dry and pathless, I appeared before Thee, that I might see Thy virtue and Thy glory.³ It is a wondrous thing that David should say here that the means and the preparation for his knowledge of the glory of God were not the spiritual delights and the many pleasures which he had experienced, but the aridities and detachments of his sensual nature, which is here understood by the dry and desert land. No less wondrous is it that he should describe as the road to his perception and vision of the virtue of God, not the Divine meditations and conceptions of which he had often made use, but his being unable to form any conception of God or to walk by meditation produced by imaginary consideration, which is here understood by the pathless land. So that the means to a knowledge of God and of oneself is this dark night with its aridities and voids, although it leads not to a knowledge of Him of the same plenitude and abundance that comes from the other night of the spirit, since this is only, as it were, the beginning of that other.

7. Likewise the soul draws from the aridities and voids of this night of the desire, spiritual humility, which is the contrary virtue to the first capital sin, which, as we said, is spiritual pride. Through this humility, which is acquired by the said knowledge of self, the soul is purged from all those imperfections whereinto it fell with respect to that sin of pride,⁴ in the time of its prosperity. For it sees itself so dry

¹ Habakuk ii, 1.

² S. Augustine: *Soliloq.*, Cap. ii.

³ Psalm lxii, 3 [A.V., lxiii, 1-2].

⁴ E.p. omits : 'with respect to that sin of pride.'

and miserable, that the idea never even occurs to it that it is making better progress than others, or outstripping them, as it believed itself to be doing before. On the contrary, it recognizes that others are making better progress than itself.

8. And hence arises the love of its neighbours, for it esteems them, and judges them not as it was wont to do aforetime, when it saw that itself had great fervour and others not so. It is aware only of its own wretchedness, which it keeps before its eyes to such an extent that it never forgets it, nor takes occasion to set its eyes on anyone else. This was described wonderfully by David, when he was in this night, in these words : I was dumb and was humbled and kept silence from good things and my sorrow was renewed.¹ This he says because it seemed to him that the good that was in his soul had so completely departed that not only did he neither speak nor find any language concerning it, but with respect to the good of others he was likewise dumb because of his grief at the knowledge of his misery.

9. In this condition, again, souls become submissive and obedient upon the spiritual road, for, when they see their own misery, not only do they hear² what is taught them, but they even desire that anyone soever may set them on the way and tell them what they ought to do. The affective³ presumption which they sometimes had in their prosperity is taken from them ; and finally, there are swept away from them on this road all the other imperfections which we noted above with respect to this first sin, which is spiritual pride.⁴

CHAPTER XIII

*Of other benefits which this night of sense causes in the soul.*⁵

1. With respect to the soul's imperfections of spiritual avarice, wherein it coveted this and that spiritual thing and found no satisfaction in this and that exercise because of its covetousness for the desire and pleasure which it found therein, this arid and dark night has now greatly reformed it. For, as it finds not the pleasure and sweetness which it was

¹ Psalm xxxviii, 3 [A.V., xxxix, 2].

² Bz. : 'do they obey.'

³ E.p. omits 'affective.'

⁴ E.p. : 'all the other imperfections are swept away from them which we touched on above when speaking of spiritual pride.' A, B add : 'as we have said.'

⁵ From e.p.

wont to find, but finds rather affliction and lack of sweetness, it has such moderate recourse to them that it might possibly now lose, through defective use, what aforetime it lost through excess ; although as a rule God gives to those whom He leads into this night humility and readiness, albeit with lack of sweetness, so that what is commanded them they may do for God's sake alone ; and thus they no longer seek profit in many things¹ because they find no pleasure in them.

2. With respect to spiritual luxury, it is likewise clearly seen that, through this aridity and lack of sensible sweetness which the soul finds in spiritual things, it is freed from those impurities which we there noted ; for we said that, as a rule, they proceeded from the pleasure which overflowed from spirit into sense.

3. But with regard to the imperfections from which the soul frees itself in this dark night with respect to the fourth sin, which is spiritual gluttony,² although they may be seen above, they have not all been described there, because they are innumerable ; and thus I will not detail them here, for I would fain make an end of this night in order to pass to the next, concerning which we have grave words and instructions.³ Let it suffice for the understanding of the innumerable benefits which, over and above those mentioned, the soul gains in this night with respect to this sin⁴ of spiritual gluttony, to say that it frees itself from all those imperfections which have there been described, and from many other and greater evils, and vile abominations⁵ which are not written above, into which fell many of whom we have had experience, because they had not reformed their desire with respect to this inordinate love of spiritual sweetness. For in this arid and dark night wherein He sets the soul, God has restrained its concupiscence and curbed its desire so that the soul cannot feed upon any pleasure or sweetness of sense,⁶ whether from above or from below ; and this He continues to do⁷ after such manner that the soul is subjected, reformed and repressed with respect to concupiscence and desire. It loses the strength of its passions and concupiscence

¹ E.p. : ' and thus they detach themselves from many things.'

² H erroneously reads : ' spiritual pleasure.'

³ E.p. : ' grave instructions.'

⁴ E.p. : ' against this sin.'

⁵ E.p. omits : ' and vile abominations.'

⁶ E.p. : ' so that it can hardly feed at all upon sweetneses or pleasures of sense.'

⁷ H omits : ' and this He continues to do.'

and it becomes sterile, because it no longer consults its likings. Just as, when none is accustomed to take milk from the breast, the courses of the milk¹ are dried up, so the desires of the soul are dried up. And besides² these things there follow admirable benefits from this spiritual sobriety, for, when desire and concupiscence are quenched, the soul lives in spiritual tranquillity and peace; for, where desire and concupiscence reign not, there is no disturbance, but peace and consolation of God.

4. From this there arises another and a second benefit, which is that the soul habitually has remembrance of God, with fear and dread of backsliding upon the spiritual road, as has been said. This is a great benefit, and not one of the least that results from this aridity and purgation of the desire, for the soul is purified and cleansed of the imperfections that were clinging to it because of the desires and affections, which of their own accord debilitate and darken the soul.

5. There is another very great benefit for the soul in this night, which is that it practises the virtues jointly, as, for example, patience and longsuffering, which are well tried in these times of emptiness and aridity, when the soul endures and perseveres in its spiritual exercises without consolation and without pleasure. It practises the charity of God, since it is not now moved by the pleasure of attraction and sweetness which it finds in its work, but only by God. It likewise practises here the virtue of fortitude, because, in these difficulties and insipidities which it finds in its work, it brings strength out of weakness and thus becomes strong. All the virtues, in short—the theological and also the cardinal and moral—both in body and in spirit,³ are practised by the soul in these times of aridity.

6. And that in this night the soul obtains these four benefits which we have here described (namely, delight of peace, habitual remembrance and thought of God, cleanliness and purity of soul and the practice of the virtues which we have just described), David tells us, having experienced it himself when he was in this night, in these words :

¹ A : ' of the breast of the milk ' ; Mtr. : ' of the veins of the milk. '

² E.p. omits freely, reading : ' and this He continues to do after such manner that the soul is gradually correcting, mortifying and controlling itself, according to concupiscence and desire, so that it seems to be losing the strength of its passions ; and besides . . . '

³ E.p. reads : ' in all the virtues, the cardinal, and also the theological and moral, ' and omits : ' both in body and in spirit. '

My soul refused consolations, I had remembrance of God, I found consolation and was exercised and my spirit failed.¹ And he then says : And I meditated by night with my heart and was exercised, and I swept and purified my spirit—that is to say, from all the affections.²

7. With respect to the imperfections of the other three spiritual sins which we have described above, which are wrath, envy and sloth, the soul is purged hereof likewise in this aridity of the desire and acquires the virtues opposed to them ; for, softened and humbled by these aridities and hardships and other temptations and trials wherein God exercises it during this night, it becomes meek with respect to God, and to itself, and likewise with respect to its neighbour. So that it is no longer angry with itself and disturbed because of its own faults, nor with its neighbour because of his faults, neither is it displeased with God, nor does it utter unseemly complaints because He does not quickly make it holy.

8. Then, as to envy, the soul has charity toward others in this respect also ; for, if it has any envy, this is no longer a vice as it was before, when it was grieved because others were preferred to it and given greater advantage. Its grief now comes from seeing how great is its own misery, and its envy (if it has any) is a virtue, since it desires to imitate others, which is great virtue.

9. Neither are the sloth and the weariness which it now has concerning spiritual things vicious as they were before ; for in the past these sins proceeded from the spiritual pleasures which the soul sometimes experienced and sought after when it found them not. But this new weariness proceeds not from this insufficiency of pleasure, because God has taken from the soul pleasure in all things in this purgation of the desire.

10. Besides these benefits which have been mentioned, the soul attains innumerable others by means of this arid contemplation. For often, in the midst of these times of aridity and hardship, God communicates to the soul, when it is least expecting it, the purest spiritual sweetness and love, together with a spiritual knowledge which is sometimes very delicate, each manifestation of which is of greater benefit and worth than those which the soul enjoyed aforetime ; although in its beginnings the soul thinks that this is not so, for the

¹ Psalm lxxvi, 4 [A.V., lxxvii, 3-4].

² [A.V., Psalm lxxvii, 6.]

the three enemies aforementioned being able to keep me from it. These enemies, as we have said, bind the soul as with bonds,¹ in its desires and pleasures, and prevent it from going forth from itself to the liberty of the love² of God ; and without these desires and pleasures they cannot give battle to the soul, as has been said.

15. When, therefore, the four passions of the soul—which are joy, grief, hope and fear—are calmed through continual mortification ; when the natural desires have been lulled to sleep, in the sensual nature of the soul, by means of habitual times of aridity ; and when the harmony of the senses and the interior faculties causes a suspension of labour and a cessation from the work of meditation, as we have said (which is the dwelling and the household of the lower part of the soul), these enemies cannot obstruct this spiritual liberty, and the house remains at rest and quiet, as says the following line :

My house being now at rest.³

CHAPTER XIV

Expounds this last verse of the first stanza.⁴

1. When this house of sensuality was now at rest—that is, was mortified—its passions being quenched and its desires put to rest and lulled to sleep by means of this blessed night of the purgation of sense, the soul went forth, to set out upon the road and way of the spirit, which is that of progressives and proficients,⁵ and which, by another name, is called the way of illumination or of infused contemplation, wherewith God Himself feeds and refreshes the soul, without meditation, or the soul's active help.⁶ Such, as we have said,

¹ E.p. omits : 'as with bonds.'

² E.p. : 'of the perfect love.'

³ [So e.p., which completes the sense of the paragraph. The other versions, which P. Silverio follows, leave it unfinished, reading : ' . . . of the soul), which is that which the Lord (*sic*) here calls His house, she says : "My house being now at rest."]

⁴ The title is from e.p. In the first four lines of the first paragraph the Codices show considerable variations in secondary matters. We here follow H.

⁵ [*de los aprovechantes y aprovechados.*] E.p., Bz. omit : 'progressives and.'

⁶ H : 'or the soul's active way.' The 1630 edition reads as in the text above, but adds : 'with labour.'

is the night and purgation of sense in the soul.¹ In those who have afterwards to enter the other and more serious night of the spirit, in order to pass to the Divine union of love of God (for not all, but only the smallest number, pass habitually thereto), it is wont to be accompanied by grave trials and temptations of sense, which last for a long time, albeit longer in some than in others. For to some the angel of Satan presents himself—namely, the spirit of fornication—that he may buffet their senses with abominable and violent temptations, and may trouble their spirits with vile considerations and representations which are most² visible to the imagination, which things at times are a greater affliction to them than death.³

2. At other times in this night there is added to these things the spirit of blasphemy, which roams abroad, setting in the path of all the conceptions and thoughts of the soul intolerable blasphemies. These it sometimes suggests to the imagination with such violence that the soul almost utters them, which is a grave torment to it.

3. At other times another abominable spirit, which Isaiah calls *Spiritus vertiginis*,⁴ is allowed to molest them, not in order that they may fall, but that it may try them. This spirit darkens their senses in such a way that it fills them with numerous scruples and problems, so perplexing, as they judge, that they can never, by any means, be satisfied concerning them, neither can they find any help for their judgement⁵ in counsel or thought. This is one of the severest goads and horrors of this night, very closely akin to that which passes in the night of the spirit.

4. As a rule these storms and trials are sent by God in this night and purgation of sense to those whom afterwards He purposes to lead into the other night (though not all reach it), to the end that, when they have been chastened and buffeted, they may in this way continually exercise and prepare themselves, and continually accustom their senses and faculties to the union of wisdom which is to be bestowed upon them in that other night. For, if the soul be not tempted, exercised and proved with trials and temptations, it cannot

¹ E.p. omits: 'in the soul.'

² Ep., B.z.: 'are very.'

³ The next paragraph is lacking in V.

⁴ [The 'perverse spirit' of A.V., Isaiah xix, 14.] E.p. adds: 'is allowed to try them,' and omits: 'not in order that they may fall, but.'

⁵ So A. The other authorities [and P. Silverio] read: 'for the judgement.'

quicken¹ its senses for wisdom. For this reason it is said in Ecclesiasticus : He that has not been tempted, what does he know ? And he that has not been proved, what are the things that he recognizes ?² To this truth Jeremiah bears good witness, saying : Thou didst chastise me, Lord, and I was instructed.³ And the most proper form of this chastisement, for one who will enter into Wisdom, is that of the interior trials which we are here describing, inasmuch as it is these which most effectively purge sense of all favours and consolations to which it was affected with natural weakness, and by which the soul is truly humiliated in preparation for the exaltation which it is to experience.

5. For how long a time the soul will be held in this fasting and this penance of sense, cannot be told with any certainty ; for all do not experience it after one manner, neither do all encounter the same temptations. For this is meted out by the will of God, in conformity with the greater or the smaller degree of imperfection which each soul has to purge away. In conformity, likewise, with the degree of love of union⁴ to which God is pleased to raise it, He will humble it with greater or less intensity or in greater or less time. Those who have the disposition and greater strength to suffer, He purges with greater intensity and more quickly. But those who are very weak are kept for a long time in this night, and these He purges very gently and with slight temptations. Habitually, too, He gives them refreshments of sense so that they may not fall away, and only after a long time do they attain to purity of perfection in this life, some of them never attaining to it. Such are neither properly in the night nor properly out of it ; for, although they pass on no farther, yet, in order that they may be preserved in humility and self-knowledge, God exercises them for certain periods and at certain times⁵ in those temptations and aridities ; and at other times and seasons He aids them with consolations, lest they should grow faint and return to seek the consolations of the world. Other souls, which are weaker, God Himself accompanies, first appearing,⁶ and then passing to another place, that He may

¹ So Bz., H, Mtr., P, V. E.p., A, B, C, M read : ' arrive ' [which involves a retranslation : ' its senses cannot arrive at wisdom '—this is not a natural reading in the Spanish].

² Ecclesiasticus xxxiv, 9-10.

⁴ E.p. : ' of union of love.'

⁶ E.p. : ' now disappearing.'

³ Jeremiah xxxi, 18.

⁵ [Lit., ' for certain days.]

exercise them in His love ; for without such turnings away they would not learn to reach God.

6. But the souls which are to pass on to so happy and high an estate as is the union of love are wont as a rule to remain for a long time in these aridities and temptations,¹ however quickly God may lead them, as has been seen by experience. It is time, then, to begin to treat of the second night.²

¹ E.p. omits : 'and temptations.'

² So end the MSS. A and B add : 'wherein God places the soul.' E.p. substitutes for the last sentence : 'Bringing here, then, this book to a close, let us begin to treat of the second night.' G ends : '... aridities and temptations, until God set it in the second night of the spirit, whereof we have next to treat.' Bz. has : 'End of the Night. End of the first night and purgation which is of sense. Laus Deus (*sic*). That which God wills.' P has : 'Finis. Laus Deo Optimo et Maximo. Es (*sic*) Deus in nobis agitante calescimus ipso.'

BOOK THE SECOND

*Of the Dark Night of the Spirit.*¹

CHAPTER I

Which begins to treat of the dark night² of the spirit and says at what time it begins.

1. The soul which God is about to lead onward is not led by His Majesty into this night of the spirit³ as soon as it goes forth from the aridities and trials of the first purgation and night of sense ; rather it is wont to pass a long time, even years, after leaving the state of beginners, in exercising itself in that of proficients. In this latter state it is like to one that has come forth from a rigorous imprisonment ;⁴ it goes about the things of God with much greater freedom and satisfaction of the soul, and with more abundant and inward delight than it did⁵ at the beginning before it entered the said night. For its imagination and faculties are no longer bound, as they were before, by meditation and anxiety of spirit, since it now very readily finds in its spirit the most serene and loving contemplation and spiritual sweetness without the labour of meditation ; although, as the purgation of the soul is not complete (for the principal part thereof, which is that of the spirit, is wanting, without which, owing to the communication that exists between the one part and the other,⁶ since the subject is one only, the purgation of sense, however violent it may have been, is not yet complete and perfect), it is never without certain occasional necessities, aridities,⁷ darknesses and perils which are sometimes much more intense than those of the past, for these were as tokens and heralds of the

¹ The MSS. vary as to the title ; some have none. B begins : ' Book the Second of the Purgation of the Spirit called Dark Night.'

² Thus the Codices. E.p. has : ' the second night.'

³ So H, P. Bz. has : ' into this night and purgation of the spirit.' E.p. : ' into the union of love.'

⁴ [*Lit.*, ' from a narrow prison.'

⁵ E.p. : ' than it had.'

⁶ [i.e., between sense and spirit.]

⁷ E.p. omits : ' occasional necessities.'

coming night of the spirit, and are not lasting, as will be the night which is to come. For, having passed through a period, or periods, or days of this night and tempest, the soul soon returns to its wonted serenity ; and after this manner God purges certain souls which think not to rise to so high a degree of love as do others, bringing them at times, and for short periods, into this night of contemplation and purgation of the spirit, causing night to come upon them¹ and then dawn, and this frequently, so that the words of David may be fulfilled, that He sends His crystal—that is, His contemplation—like the morsels ;² although these morsels of dark contemplation are never as intense as is that terrible night of contemplation which we are to describe, into which, of set purpose, God brings the soul that He may lead it to Divine union.

2. This sweetness, then, and this interior pleasure which we are describing, and which these progressives find and experience in their spirits so easily and so plentifully, is communicated to them in much greater abundance than aforetime, overflowing into their senses more than was usual previously to this purgation of sense ; for, inasmuch as the sense is now purer, it can more easily feel the pleasures of the spirit after its manner. As, however, this sensual part of the soul is weak and incapable of experiencing the strong things of the spirit, hence these proficients, by reason of this spiritual communication which is made to their sensual part, endure therein many frailties and sufferings and weaknesses of the stomach, and in consequence are fatigued in spirit. For, as the Wise Man says : The corruptible body presseth down the soul.³ Hence comes it that the communications that are granted to these souls cannot be very strong or very intense or very spiritual, as is required for Divine union with God, by reason of the weakness and corruption of the sensual nature which has a part in them. Hence arise the raptures and trances and dislocations of the bones which always happen when the communications are not purely spiritual—that is, are not given to the spirit alone, as are those of the perfect who are purified by the second night of the spirit, and in whom these raptures and torments of the body no longer exist, since they are enjoying liberty of spirit, and their senses are now neither clouded nor transported.

¹ E.p., A, B, M omit : ' upon them.'

² Psalm cxlvii, 17 [Vulgate and A.V.].

³ Wisdom ix, 15.

3. And in order that the necessity for such souls to enter this night of the spirit may be understood, we will here note certain imperfections and perils which belong to these proficientes.

CHAPTER II

Describes other imperfections¹ which belong to these proficientes.

1. These proficientes have two kinds of imperfection : the one kind is habitual ; the other actual. The habitual imperfections are the imperfect habits and affections which have remained all the time in the spirit, and are like roots, to which the purgation of sense has been unable to penetrate. The difference between the purgation of these and that of this other kind is the difference between the root and the branch, or between the removing of a stain which is fresh and one which is old and of long standing. For, as we said, the purgation of sense is only the entrance and beginning of contemplation leading to the purgation of the spirit, which, as we have likewise said,² serves rather to accommodate sense to spirit than to unite spirit with God. But there still remain in the spirit the stains of the old man, although the spirit thinks not that this is so, neither can it perceive them ; if these stains be not removed with the soap and strong lye of the purgation of this night, the spirit will be unable to come to the purity of Divine union.

2. These souls have likewise the *hebetudo mentis*³ and the natural roughness which every man contracts through sin, and the distraction and outward clinging of the spirit, which must be enlightened, refined and recollected by the afflictions and perils of that night. These habitual imperfections belong to all those who have not passed beyond this state of the proficient ; they cannot coexist, as we say,⁴ with the perfect state of union through love.

3. To actual imperfections all are not liable in the same way. Some, in whom these spiritual blessings⁵ are so superficial and so readily affected by sense, fall into greater⁶ difficulties and dangers, which we described at the beginning

¹ [*Lit.*, 'Continues with other imperfections.'] The Codices read as in the text ; but e.p. has : 'Of certain imperfections.'

² E.p. omits : 'as we have likewise said.'

³ [*i.e.*, 'deadening of the mind.']

⁴ Bz. : 'these spiritual pleasures.'

⁵ E.p. omits : 'as we say.'

⁶ E.p. : 'into certain.'

of this treatise. For, as they find so many and such abundant spiritual¹ communications and apprehensions, both in sense and spirit, wherein they oftentimes see imaginary and spiritual visions (for all these things, together with other delectable feelings, come to many souls in this state, wherein the devil and their own fancy very commonly practise deceptions on them), and, as the devil is apt to take such pleasure in impressing upon the soul and suggesting to it the said apprehensions and feelings, he fascinates and deludes it with great facility,² when it takes not the precaution of resigning itself to God, and of protecting itself strongly, by means of faith, from all these visions and feelings. For in this state the devil causes many to believe in vain visions³ and false prophecies; and strives⁴ to make them presume that God and the saints are speaking with them; and they often trust their own fancy. And the devil is also accustomed, in this state, to fill them with presumption and pride, and, attracted by vanity and arrogance, they allow themselves to be seen performing outward acts which appear to be holy, such as raptures and other manifestations. Thus they become bold with God, and lose holy fear, which is the key and the custodian of all the virtues; and in some of these souls so many falsehoods and deceits are apt to be multiplied, and so persistent do they become, that it is very doubtful if such souls will return⁵ to the pure road of virtue and true spirituality. Into these miseries they fall because they are beginning to give themselves over to spiritual feelings and apprehensions with too great security, when they were beginning to make some progress upon the way.⁶

4. There is so much that I might say of these imperfections and of how they are the more incurable because such souls consider them to be more spiritual than the others, that I will leave this subject. I only say, in order to prove how necessary is the night of the spirit, which is purgation, for him that would go farther, that none of these proficients, however greatly he may have exerted himself, is free, at best, from many of those natural affections and imperfect habits,

¹ E.p. omits 'spiritual.'

² A, M: 'with great difficulty': presumably a copyist's error.

³ E.p., A, B, M: 'causes to be believed many visions.'

⁴ So e.p. The Codices [and P. Silverio, rather meaninglessly] read: 'here, in this place, he strives.'

⁵ Bz.: 'it is very difficult for such to return.'

⁶ E.p.: 'the spiritual way.'

the purification¹ whereof we said is necessary if a soul is to pass to Divine union.

5. And over and above this (as we have said already), inasmuch as the lower part of the soul still has a share in these spiritual communications, they cannot be as intense, as pure and as strong as is needful for the aforesaid union; wherefore, in order to come to this union, the soul must needs enter into the second night of the spirit, wherein it must strip sense and spirit perfectly from all these apprehensions and from all sweetness, and be made to walk in dark and pure faith, which is the proper and adequate means whereby the soul is united with God, according as Hosea says, in these words: I will betroth thee—that is, I will unite thee—with Me through faith.²

CHAPTER III

Annotation for that which follows.

1. These souls, then, have now become proficient, because of the time which they have spent in feeding the senses with sweet communications,³ so that their sensual part, being thus attracted and delighted by spiritual pleasure, which came to it from the spirit, may be united with the spirit and made one with it; each part after its own manner eating of one and the same spiritual food and from one and the same dish, from one individuality and being, so that thus they may in a certain way be united and brought into agreement, and, thus united, may be prepared for the endurance of the stern and severe purgation of the spirit which awaits them. In this purgation these two parts of the soul, the spiritual and the sensual, must be completely purged, since the one is never truly purged without the other, the purgation which is effective for sense coming when that of the spirit begins.⁴ Wherefore the night which we have called that of sense may and should be called a kind of correction and restraint of the desire rather than purgation. The reason

¹ Bz.: 'the mortification.'

² Hosea ii, 20. E.p. has: 'I will betroth thee with Me through faith.'

³ E.p. begins: 'These [souls], then, have now become proficient [or made progress] because of the time which they have spent in experiencing these sweet communications.'

⁴ [The original adds 'purposely,' which seems meaningless in its context.]

is that all the imperfections and disorders of the sensual part have their strength and root in the spirit, where all habits, both good and bad, are brought into subjection,¹ and thus, until these are purged, the rebellions and depravities of sense cannot be purged thoroughly.²

2. Wherefore, in this night following, both parts of the soul are purged together, and it is for this end that it is well to have passed through the corrections of the first night, and the period of tranquillity³ which proceeds from it, in order that, sense⁴ being united with spirit, both may be purged after a certain manner and may then suffer with greater fortitude. For very great fortitude⁵ is needful for so violent and severe a purgation, since, if the weakness of the lower part has not first been corrected and fortitude has not been gained from God through the sweet and delectable communion which the soul has afterwards enjoyed with Him, its nature will not have the strength or the disposition to bear it.

3. Therefore, since these proficients are still at a very low stage of progress, and follow their own nature closely⁶ in the intercourse and dealings which they have with God, because the gold of their spirit is not yet purified and refined, they still think of God as little children, and speak of God as little children, and feel and experience God as little children, even as S. Paul says,⁷ because they have not reached perfection, which is the union of the soul⁸ with God. In the state of union, however, they will work great things in⁹ the spirit, even as grown men, and their works and faculties will then be Divine rather than human, as will afterwards be said. To this end God is pleased to strip them of this old man and clothe them with the new man, who is created according to God, as the Apostle says,¹⁰ in the newness of sense. He strips their faculties, affections and feelings, both spiritual and sensual, both outward and inward,

¹ E.p. omits: 'where . . . subjection.'

² E.p.: 'until the bad habits are purged, the rebellions and depravities of sense cannot be purged thoroughly.'

³ E.p.: 'and to have attained to the period of tranquillity' [*lit.*, 'the fair weather'].

⁴ Only Bz., H, Mtr., V have the word 'sense.'

⁵ Most authorities omit 'fortitude' [which however, the context supplies]. Bz. gives it explicitly; A. has: 'great preparation.'

⁶ E.p. omits: 'and . . . closely.'

⁷ 1 Corinthians xiii, 11.

⁸ E.p.: 'the union of love.'

⁹ E.p., A, B, M have 'with' for 'in.'

¹⁰ [Ephesians iv, 24.]

leaving the understanding dark, the will dry, the memory empty and the affections in the deepest affliction, bitterness and straitness, taking from the soul the pleasure and experience of spiritual blessings which it had aforetime, so that this privation may be one of the principles which are required in the spirit that the spiritual form of the spirit may be introduced into it and united with it, which is the union of love. All this the Lord works in the soul by means of a pure and dark contemplation,¹ as the soul explains in the first stanza. This, although in the beginning² it was interpreted with reference to the first night of sense, is principally understood by the soul of this second night of the spirit, since this is the principal part of the purification of the soul. And thus we shall set it down and expound it here again in this sense.

CHAPTER IV

*Sets down the first stanza and the exposition thereof.*³

On a dark night, Kindled⁴ in love with yearnings—oh, happy chance!—

I went forth without being observed, My house being now at rest.

EXPOSITION⁵

1. Interpreting this stanza now with reference to purification, contemplation or detachment or poverty of spirit, which here are almost one and the same thing, we can expound it after this manner and make the soul speak thus: In poverty, and without protection⁶ and support in all the apprehensions of my soul—that is, in the darkness of my understanding and the constraint of my will, in affliction and anguish with respect to memory, remaining in the dark in pure faith, which is dark night for the said natural faculties, the will alone being touched by grief and afflictions and yearnings for the love of God—I went forth from myself—that is, from my low manner of understanding, from my weak mode of loving and from my poor and limited manner of experiencing God, without being hindered therein by sensuality or the devil.

¹ Bz.: 'of a dark and clean contemplation.'

² Only e.p. has: 'in the beginning.'

³ So e.p. The Codices have only 'Stanza the First' or no title at all. V reads: 'Stanza for the third part.'

⁴ B, G, H, M: 'afire.'

⁵ Omitted by e.p., A, B.

⁶ E.p. omits: 'protection and.'

2. This was a great happiness and a good chance for me ; for, when the faculties had been perfectly annihilated and calmed, together with the passions, desires¹ and affections of my soul, wherewith I had experienced and tasted God after a lowly manner, I went forth from my own human way and operation to the operation and way of God.² That is to say, my understanding went forth from itself, turning from the human and natural to the Divine ; for, when it is united with God by means of this purgation, its understanding no longer comes through its natural light and vigour,³ but through the Divine Wisdom wherewith it has become united. And my will went forth from itself, becoming Divine ; for, being united with Divine love, it no longer loves with its natural strength after a lowly manner,⁴ but with strength and purity from the Holy Spirit ;⁵ and thus the will, which is now near to God, acts not after a human manner, and similarly the memory has become transformed into eternal apprehensions of glory. And finally, by means of this night and purgation of the old man, all the energies and affections of the soul are wholly renewed into a Divine temper and Divine delight.

There follows the line :

On a dark night.

CHAPTER V

*Sets down the first line and begins to explain how this dark contemplation is not only night for the soul but is also grief and purgation.*⁶

1. This dark night is an inflowing of God into the soul, which purges it from its ignorances and imperfections, habitual, natural and spiritual, and which is called by contemplatives infused contemplation, or mystical theology. Herein God secretly teaches the soul and instructs it in perfection of love, without its doing anything, or understanding of

¹ E.p. omits ' desires.'

² E.p. : ' I went forth from the way and limited operation aforementioned to the operation and way of God.'

³ E.p. : ' it no longer has understanding after the narrow and limited manner that it had aforetime.'

⁴ E.p. : ' with the limited vigour and strength that it had aforetime.'

⁵ E.p. : ' from the Divine Spirit.'

⁶ So e.p. The Codices have no title.

what manner is this infused contemplation.¹ Inasmuch as it is the loving wisdom of God, God produces striking effects² in the soul, for, by purging and illumining it, He prepares it for the union of love with God. Wherefore the same loving wisdom that purges³ the blessed spirits and enlightens them is that which here purges the soul and illumines it.

2. But the question arises : Why is the Divine light (which, as we say, illumines and purges the soul from its ignorances) here called by the soul a dark night ? To this the answer is that for two reasons⁴ this Divine wisdom is not only night and darkness for the soul, but is likewise affliction and torment. The first is because of the height of Divine Wisdom, which transcends the talent of the soul, and in this way is darkness to it ; the second, because of its vileness and impurity, in which respect it is painful and afflictive to it, and is also dark.

3. In order to prove the first point, we must here assume a certain doctrine of the philosopher, which says that, the clearer and more manifest are Divine things in themselves, the darker and more hidden are they to the soul naturally ; just as, the clearer is the light, the more it blinds and darkens the pupil of the owl, and, the more directly we look at the sun, the greater is the darkness which it causes in our visual faculty, overcoming and overwhelming it through its own weakness. In the same way, when this Divine light of contemplation assails the soul which is not yet wholly enlightened, it causes spiritual darkness in it ; for not only does it overcome it, but likewise it overwhelms it and darkens the act of its natural intelligence. For this reason S. Dionysius and other mystical theologians call this infused contemplation a ray of darkness—that is to say, for the soul that is not enlightened and purged—for the natural strength of the intellect is transcended and overwhelmed by its great supernatural light. Wherefore David likewise said : That near to God and round about Him are darkness and cloud ;⁵ not that this is so in fact, but that it is so to our weak understanding, which is blinded and darkened by so vast a light,

¹ E.p. : ' without its doing any more than wait lovingly upon God, hear Him and receive His light, though it understand not of what manner is this infused contemplation.'

² E.p. : ' . . . of God, it produces special effects.'

³ A, B, M : ' Wherefore the same wisdom, as a thing that purges.'

⁴ So A, B, Bz. The other authorities have : ' for two things.'

⁵ Psalm xcvi, 2 [A.V., xcvi, 2].

to which it cannot attain.¹ For this cause the same David then explained himself, saying : Through the great splendour of His presence passed clouds²—namely, between God and our understanding. And it is for this cause that, when God sends it out from Himself to the soul that is not yet transformed, this illumining ray³ of His secret wisdom causes⁴ thick darkness in the understanding.

4. And it is clear that this dark contemplation is in these its beginnings painful likewise to the soul ; for, as this Divine infused contemplation has many excellences that are extremely good, and the soul that receives them, not being purged, has many miseries that are likewise extremely bad,⁵ hence it follows that, as two contraries cannot coexist in one subject—the soul—it must of necessity have pain and suffering, since it is the subject wherein these two contraries war against each other, working the one against the other, by reason of the purgation of the imperfections of the soul which comes to pass through this contemplation. This we shall prove inductively in the manner following.

Purity

5. In the first place, because the light and wisdom of this contemplation is most bright and pure, and the soul which it assails is dark and impure, it follows that the soul suffers great pain when it receives it in itself, just as, when⁶ the eyes are dimmed by humours, and become impure and weak, they suffer pain through the assault of the bright light. And when the soul is indeed assailed by this Divine light, its pain, which results from its impurity, is immense ; because, when this pure light assails the soul, in order to expel its impurity, the soul feels itself to be so impure and miserable that it believes God to be against it, and thinks that it has set itself up against God. This causes it so much grief and pain (because it now believes that God has cast it away) that one of the greatest trials which Job felt when God sent him this experience, was as follows, when he said : Why hast Thou set me against Thee, so that I am grievous and burdensome to myself?⁷ For, by means of this pure light,⁸ the soul now

¹ [*Lit.*, 'not attaining.'] B, Bz. : 'not attaining to it.' E.p. : 'not attaining to so great a height.'

² Psalm, xvii 13 [A.V., xviii, 12].

³ H has 'kingdom' for 'ray' [*reino* for *rayo*], an evident error.

⁴ So e.p. The other authorities [and P. Silverio] read : 'produces.'

⁵ E.p. omits : 'that . . . bad.'

⁶ E.p. : 'it follows that to receive it afflicts the soul greatly, even as when,' etc.

⁷ Job vii, 20.

⁸ Thus the Codices, except A, B, P, which read : 'this clear light.' E.p. has : 'this clear and pure light.'

sees its impurity clearly (although darkly), and knows clearly that it is unworthy of God or of any creature. And what gives it most pain is that it thinks that it will never be worthy¹ and that its good things are all over for it. This is caused by the profound immersion of its spirit in the knowledge and realization of its evils and miseries; for this Divine and dark light now reveals them all to the eye, that it may see clearly how in its own strength it can never have aught else. In this sense we may understand that passage from David, which says: For iniquity Thou hast corrected man and hast undone his soul: he consumes away as the spider.²

2-
the strength.
6. The second way in which the soul suffers pain is by reason of its weakness, natural, moral and spiritual; for, when this Divine contemplation assails the soul with some strength, in order to strengthen it and subdue it, it suffers such pain in its weakness that it nearly swoons away. This is especially so at certain times when it is assailed with somewhat greater violence; for sense and spirit, as if beneath some immense and dark load, are in such great pain and agony that the soul would find advantage and relief in death. This had been experienced by the prophet Job, when he said: I desire not that He should have intercourse with me in great strength, lest He oppress me with the weight of His greatness.³

7. Beneath the power of this oppression and weight the soul feels itself so far from being favoured that it thinks, and correctly so, that even that wherein it was wont to find some help has vanished with everything else, and that there is none who has pity upon it. To this effect Job says likewise: Have pity upon me, have pity upon me,⁴ at least ye my friends, because the hand of the Lord has touched me.⁵ A thing of great wonder and pity is it that the soul's weakness and impurity should now be so great that, though the hand of God is of itself so light and gentle, the soul should now feel it to be so heavy and so contrary,⁶ though it neither weighs it down nor rests upon it, but only touches it, and that mercifully, since He does this in order to grant the soul favours and not to chastise it.

¹ E.p.: 'is the fear that it will never be worthy.'

² Psalm xxxviii, 12 [A.V., xxxix, 11].

³ Job xxiii, 6.

⁴ Job xix, 21.

⁵ [This is the word translated '(set) against,' as in A.V., in § 5, above.]

⁶ Some codices do not repeat this phrase.

CHAPTER VI

*Of other kinds of pain that the soul suffers in this night.*¹

1. The third kind of suffering and pain that the soul endures in this state results from the fact that two other extremes meet here in one, namely, the Divine and the human. The Divine is this purgative contemplation, and the human is the subject—that is, the soul. The Divine assails the soul in order to renew it² and thus to make it Divine; and, stripping it of the habitual affections and attachments of the old man, to which it is very closely united, knit together and conformed, destroys and consumes its spiritual substance,³ and absorbs it in deep and profound darkness. As a result of this, the soul feels itself to be perishing and melting away, in the presence and sight of its miseries, by a cruel spiritual death, even as if it had been swallowed by a beast and felt itself being devoured in the darkness of its belly, suffering such anguish as was endured by Jonah in the belly of that beast of the sea.⁴ For in this sepulchre of dark death it must needs abide until the spiritual resurrection which it hopes for.

2. A description of this suffering and pain, although in truth it transcends all description, is given by David, when he says: The lamentations of death compassed me about; the pains of hell surrounded me; I cried in my tribulation.⁵ But what the sorrowful soul feels most in this condition is its clear perception, as it thinks, that God has abandoned it, and, in His abhorrence of it, has flung it into darkness; it is a grave and piteous grief for it to believe that God has forsaken it. It is this that David also felt so much in a like case, saying: After the manner wherein the wounded are dead in the sepulchres,⁶ being now abandoned by Thy hand, so that Thou rememberest them no more, even so have they set me in the deepest and lowest lake, in dark places and in the shadow of death, and Thy fury is confirmed upon

¹ So e.p. The other authorities have no title.

² So H, V. A, B: 'purge it and renew it.' M: 'make it and renew it.' C, P: 'take it and renew it.' Bz.: 'cut it and renew it.' E.p.: 'season it and renew it.' As will be seen, there is a reading for every preference. We cannot be sure which is the true one.

³ E.p. omits: 'its spiritual substance' and reads: 'breaks it up and bruises it.' The two verbs are greatly varied by the different authorities but their general sense remains much as in the text above, which gives the reading of H, Mtr., V.

⁴ Jonah ii, 1.

⁵ Psalm xvii, 5-7 [A.V., xviii, 4-5]. ⁶ H omits: 'in the sepulchres.'

me and all Thy waves Thou hast discharged upon me.¹ For indeed, when this purgative contemplation is most severe, the soul feels very keenly the shadow of death and the lamentations of death² and the pains of hell, which consist in its feeling itself to be without God, and chastised and cast out, and unworthy of Him;³ and it feels that He is wroth with it. All this is felt by the soul in this condition—yea, and more, for it believes⁴ that it is so with it for ever.

3. It feels, too, that all creatures have forsaken it, and that it is contemned by them, particularly by its friends. Wherefore David presently continues, saying: Thou hast put far from me my friends and acquaintances; they have counted me an abomination.⁵ To all this will Jonah testify, as one who likewise experienced it in the belly of the beast, both bodily and spiritually. Thou hast cast me (he says) into the deep, into the heart of the sea, and the flood came nigh unto me; all its billows and waves passed over me. And I said, 'I am cast away from the presence of Thine eyes, but I shall once again see Thy holy temple' (which he says, because God purifies the soul in this state that it may see His temple); the waters⁶ came nigh unto me, even unto my soul, the depth closed me round about, the ocean covered my head; I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the bars of the earth shut me up⁷ for ever.⁸ By these bars are here understood, in this sense, imperfections of the soul, which have impeded it from enjoying this delectable contemplation.

4. The fourth kind of pain is caused in the soul by another excellence of this dark contemplation, which is its majesty and greatness,⁹ from which arises in the soul a consciousness of the other extreme which is in itself—namely, that of the deepest poverty and wretchedness: this is one of the chiefest pains that it suffers in this purgation. For it feels within itself a profound emptiness and impoverishment of three

¹ Psalm lxxxvii, 6-8 [A.V., lxxxviii, 5-7].

² E.p. omits: 'of death.'

³ E.p.: 'and He is angered with it.'

⁴ E.p. adds: 'with a fearful apprehension,' but no MS. has this addition.

⁵ Psalm lxxxvii, 9 [A.V., lxxxviii, 8].

⁶ Bz.: 'the afflictions.'

⁷ V.: 'surrounded me.'

⁸ Jonah ii, 4-7 [A.V., ii, 3-6].

⁹ So Bz., C, G, H, Mtr., V. A, B, M omit this phrase. E.p. has: 'which is the majesty and greatness of God.' The Saint may mean that the soul acquires in this contemplation a greater knowledge of its own excellence, and in consequence has the greater obligation to God, in Whose image and likeness it is made.

kinds of good, which are ordained for the pleasure of the soul, which are the temporal, the natural and the spiritual; and finds itself set in the midst of the evils contrary to these, namely, miseries of imperfection, aridity and emptiness of the apprehensions of the faculties and abandonment of the spirit in darkness. Inasmuch as God here purges the soul according to the substance of its sense and spirit, and according to the interior and exterior faculties, the soul must needs be in all respects¹ reduced to a state of emptiness, poverty and abandonment and must be left dry and empty and in darkness.² For the sensual part is purified in aridity, the faculties are purified in the emptiness of their apprehensions, and the spirit is purified in thick darkness.

5. All this God brings to pass by means of this dark contemplation; wherein the soul not only suffers this emptiness and the suspension of these natural supports and apprehensions, which is a most afflictive suffering (as if a man were suspended or held in the air so that he could not breathe), but likewise He is purging the soul, annihilating it, emptying it or consuming in it (even as fire consumes the mouldiness and the rust of metal) all the affections and imperfect habits which it has contracted in its whole life. Since these are deeply rooted in the substance of the soul, it is wont to suffer great undoing³ and inward torment, besides the said poverty and emptiness, natural and spiritual, so that there may here be fulfilled that passage from Ezekiel which says: Heap together the bones and I will burn them in the fire; the flesh shall be consumed and the whole composition shall be burned and the bones shall be destroyed.⁴ Herein is understood the pain which is suffered in the emptiness and poverty of the substance of the soul⁵ both in sense and spirit. And concerning this he then says: Set it also empty upon the coals, that its metal may become hot and molten, and its uncleanness may be destroyed within it, and its rust may be consumed.⁶ Herein is described the grave suffering which the soul here endures in the purgation of the fire of this contemplation, for the prophet says here that, in order for the rust of the affections which are within the soul to be purified and destroyed, it is needful that, in a certain

¹ [The original shows that the reference is to the 'parts' detailed in the next sentence.]

² Bz.: 'and in black darkness.'

³ A, B, M: 'great burdens and undoing'; Bz.: 'great sorrow.' The text follows e.p., H, Mtr., P, V.

⁴ Ezekiel xxiv, 10.

⁵ E.p.: 'and poverty of the soul.'

⁶ Ezekiel xxiv, 11.

manner, the soul itself should be annihilated and destroyed, since these passions and imperfections have become natural to it.¹

6. Wherefore, because the soul is purified in this furnace and is like the gold in the crucible, as says the Wise Man,² it is conscious of this complete undoing of itself in its very substance, together with the direst poverty, wherein it is, as it were, coming to an end, as may be seen by that which David says of himself in this respect, in these words : Save me, Lord (he cries to God), for the waters have come in even unto my soul ; I am made fast in the mire of the depth and there is no place where I can stand ; I came to the depth of the sea and the tempest overwhelmed me ; I laboured crying, my throat³ has become hoarse, mine eyes have failed whilst I hope in my God.⁴ Here God greatly humbles the soul in order that He may afterwards greatly exalt it ; and if He ordained not that these feelings should be quickly lulled to sleep when they arise within the soul, it would die⁵ in a very few days ; but at intervals there occur times when it is not conscious of their greatest intensity. At times, however, they are so keen that the soul seems to be seeing hell and perdition opened. Of such are they that in truth go down alive into hell, for here on earth they are purged in the same manner as there,⁶ since this purgation is that which would have to be accomplished there.⁷ And thus the soul that passes through this⁸ either enters not that place at all, or tarries there but for a very⁹ short time ; for one hour of purgation here is more profitable than are many there.

CHAPTER VII

*Continues the same matter and considers other afflictions and trials of the will.*¹⁰

1. The afflictions and trials of the will are now very great likewise, and of such a kind that they sometimes pierce the

¹ Bz. : ' eradicated from it.'

² Wisdom iii, 6.

³ So e.p. The other authorities use the plural form of ' throat ' (*gargantas*).

⁴ Psalm lxxviii, 2-4 [A.V., lxix, 1-3].

⁵ E.p. : ' it would forsake the body.'

⁶ E.p. : ' they are purged here in a kind of purgatory.'

⁷ E.p. adds : ' when it is for sins, even though they be venial.'

⁸ E.p. adds : ' and is thoroughly purged.'

⁹ E.p. omits ' very.'

¹⁰ So e.p. The Codices have no title.

soul with a sudden remembrance of the evils in the midst of which it finds itself, and with the uncertainty of finding a remedy for them. And to this is added the remembrance of times of prosperity now past ; for as a rule souls that enter this night have had many consolations¹ from God, and have rendered Him many services, and it causes them the greater grief to see that they are far removed from that happiness, and unable to enter into it. This was also described by Job, who had had experience of it, in these words : I, who was wont to be wealthy and rich, am suddenly undone and broken asunder ; He hath taken me by my neck ; He hath broken me and set me up for His mark² to wound me ; He hath compassed me round about with His spears ; He hath wounded all my loins ; He hath not pardoned ; He hath scattered my bowels on the ground ; He hath broken me with wound upon wound ;³ He hath assailed me as a strong giant ; I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin and covered my flesh with ashes ; my face has become swollen with weeping and mine eyes are blinded.⁴

2. So many and so grievous⁵ are the afflictions of this night, and so many passages of Scripture are there which could be cited to this purpose, that time and strength would fail us to write of them, for all that can be said thereof is certainly less than the truth. Through the passages already quoted some idea may be gained of them. And, that we may bring the exposition of this line to a close and explain more fully what is worked in the soul by this night, I shall repeat what Jeremiah felt about it, which, since there is so much of it, he describes and bewails in many words after this manner : I, the man that see my poverty in the rod of His indignation ; He hath threatened me and brought me into darkness and not into light. So far hath He turned against me and hath converted His hand upon me all the day ! He hath made my skin and my flesh old ; He hath broken my bones ; He hath made a fence around me and compassed me with gall and trial ; He hath set me in dark places, as the everlasting dead. He hath made a fence around me and against me, that I may not go out ; He hath aggravated my captivity. Yea, and when I have cried⁶ and have entreated, He

¹ The noun occurs only in e.p.

² E.p. : ' for His target.'

³ E.p. : ' He hath broken me and added wounds upon wounds.'

⁴ Job xvi, 13-17 [A.V., xvi, 12-16].

⁵ E.p., A, B: ' and so great.'

⁶ E.p. : ' when I am calling and have.'

hath shut out my prayer. He hath enclosed my ways and exits with square stones; He hath thwarted my steps. He hath set ambushes¹ for me; He hath become to me a lion in a secret place. He hath turned aside my steps and broken me in pieces, He hath made² me desolate; He hath bent His bow and set me as a mark for His arrow. He hath shot in my reins the daughters of His quiver. I have become a derision to all the people, and laughter and scorn for them all the day. He hath filled me with bitterness and hath made me drunken with wormwood. He hath broken my teeth by number;³ He hath fed me with ashes. My soul is cast out from peace; I have forgotten good things. And I said: 'Mine end is frustrated and cut short, together with my desire and my hope from the Lord. Remember my poverty and my excess, the wormwood and the gall. I shall be mindful with remembrance and my soul shall be undone within me in pains.'⁴

3. All these complaints Jeremiah makes about these pains and trials, and by means of them he most vividly depicts the sufferings of the soul in this spiritual night and purgation.⁵ Wherefore the soul that God sets in this tempestuous⁶ and horrible night is deserving of great compassion. For, although it experiences much happiness by reason of the great blessings that must arise on this account within it, when, as Job says, God raises up profound blessings in the soul out of darkness, and brings out to light the shadow of death,⁷ so that, as David says, His light comes to be as was His darkness;⁸ yet notwithstanding, by reason of the dreadful pain which the soul is suffering, and of the great uncertainty which it has concerning the remedy for it, since it believes,⁹ as this prophet says here, that its evil will never end, and it thinks, as David says likewise, that God set it in dark places like those that are dead,¹⁰ and for this reason brought its spirit into anguish within it and troubled its heart,¹¹ it suffers great pain and grief, since there is added to all this (because of the solitude and abandonment caused in it by this dark night), the fact that it finds no consolation or

¹ H, M read: 'bear [*sic*] ambushes' [cf. Lamentations iii, 10, A.V.].

² E.p.: 'hath left.' ³ E.p.: 'one by one.' ⁴ Lamentations iii, 1-20.

⁵ E.p.: 'wherein this spiritual night and purgation sets it.'

⁶ E.p.: 'fearful.'

⁷ Job xii, 22.

⁸ Psalm cxxxviii, 12 [A.V., cxxxix, 12].

⁹ E.p.: 'it thinks.'

¹⁰ [Lit., 'like to the dead of the world (or of the age).']

¹¹ Psalm cxlii, 3 [A.V., cxliii, 3-4].

support in any instruction nor in a spiritual master. For, although in many ways its director may show it good cause for being comforted in the blessings which are contained in these afflictions, it cannot believe him. For it is so greatly absorbed and immersed in the realization of those evils wherein it sees its own miseries so clearly, that it thinks that, as its director observes not that which it sees and feels, he is speaking in this manner because he understands it not; and so, instead of comfort, it rather receives fresh affliction, since it believes that its director's advice contains no remedy for its troubles. And, in truth, this is so; for, until the Lord shall have completely purged it after the manner that He wills, no means or remedy is of any service or profit for the relief of its affliction; the more so because the soul is as powerless in this case as one who has been imprisoned in a dark dungeon, and is bound hand and foot, and can neither move nor see, nor feel any favour whether from above or from below, until the spirit is humbled, softened and purified, and grows so keen and delicate and pure that it can become one with the Spirit of God, according to the degree of union of love which His mercy is pleased to grant it; in proportion to this the purgation¹ is of greater or less severity and of greater or less duration.

4. But, if it is to be really effectual, it will last for some years, however severe it be; since the purgative process allows intervals of relief,² wherein, by the dispensation of God, this dark contemplation ceases to assail the soul in the form and manner of purgation, and assails it after an illuminative and a loving manner, wherein the soul, like one that has gone forth from this dungeon and imprisonment, and is brought into the recreation of spaciousness and liberty, feels and experiences great sweetness of peace and loving friendship with God, together with ready abundance of spiritual communication. This is to the soul a sign of the health which is being wrought within it by the said purgation and a foretaste of the abundance for which it hopes. Occasionally this is so great that the soul believes its trials to be at last over. For spiritual things in the soul have this characteristic, when they are most purely spiritual, that, when they are trials, the soul believes that it will never escape from them, and that all its blessings are now over, as

¹ A, B, H, M, P, V have: 'the union.'

² E.p., A, V: 'intervals and reliefs.'

has been seen in the passages quoted ; and, when they are spiritual blessings, the soul believes in the same way that its troubles are now over, and that blessings will never fail it. This was so with David, when he found himself in the midst of them, as he confesses in these words : I said in my abundance : ' I shall never be moved.'¹

5. This happens because the actual possession by the spirit of one of two contrary things, itself makes impossible the actual possession and realization of the other contrary thing ; this is not the case,² however, in the sensual part of the soul, because its apprehension is weak. But, as the spirit is not yet completely purged and cleansed from the affections that it has contracted from its lower part, although it changes not in so far as it is spirit, it can be moved to further afflictions in so far as these affections sway it.³ In this way, as we see, David was afterwards moved, and experienced many ills and afflictions, although in the time of his abundance he had thought and said that he would never be moved. It is just so with the soul in this condition, when it sees itself moved by that abundance of spiritual blessings, and, being unable to see the root of the imperfection and impurity which still remain within it, thinks that its trials are over.

6. This thought, however, comes to the soul but seldom, for, until spiritual purification is complete and perfected, the sweet communication is very rarely so abundant as to conceal from the soul the root which remains hidden, in such a way that the soul can cease to feel that there is something within itself that it lacks or that it has still to do. Thus it cannot completely enjoy that relief, but feels as if one of its enemies were within it, and although this enemy is, as it were, hushed and asleep, it fears that he will come to life again and attack it.⁴ And this is what indeed happens, for, when the soul is most secure and least alert,⁵ it is dragged down and immersed again in another and a worse⁶ degree of affliction which is severer and darker and more grievous than that which is past ; and this new affliction will continue for a further period of time, perhaps longer than the first. And

¹ Psalm xxix, 7 [A.V., xxx, 6].

² E.p. : ' which is not so much the case.'

³ E.p. : ' the affections that its lower part has contracted, although it has greater consistency and firmness ; but, in so far as it is affected by them, it is liable to further sufferings.'

⁴ [Lit., ' and play his tricks upon it.']

⁵ E.p. omits : ' and least alert.'

⁶ E.p. omits : ' and a worse.'

the soul once more comes to believe¹ that all its blessings are over for ever. Although it had thought during its first trial that there were no more afflictions which it could suffer and yet, after the trial was over, it enjoyed great blessings, this experience is not sufficient to take away its belief, during this second degree of trial, that all is now over for it and that it will never again be happy as in the past. For, as I say, this belief, of which the soul is so sure, is caused in it by the actual apprehension of the spirit, which annihilates within it all that is contrary to it.²

7. This is the reason why those who lie in purgatory suffer great misgivings as to whether they will ever go forth from it and whether their pains will ever be over.³ For, although as a rule they have the three theological virtues—faith, hope and charity—the present realization which they have of their afflictions and of their deprivation of God allows them not to enjoy the present blessing and consolation of these virtues. For, although they are able to realize that they have a great love for God, this is no consolation to them, since they cannot think that God loves them or that they are worthy that He should do so; rather, as they see that they are deprived of Him, and left in their own miseries, they think that there is that in themselves which provides a very good reason why they should with perfect justice be abhorred and cast out by God for ever.⁴ And thus, although the soul in this purgation

¹ E.p.: 'to persuade itself.' H omits: 'than the first. And then the soul once more comes to [believe that].'

² E.p. has: 'which annihilates in it [*the soul, not the spirit, as the gender of the Spanish noun shows*] all that can cause it joy.' It then omits the next paragraph as far as the words 'cast out by God for ever.' A, V also make this omission, but not B, as P. Gerardo mistakenly asserts. G omits almost the whole of this chapter.

³ M, probably in error [*desean for de que se han*]: 'and desire their pains to be over.' B reads very similarly [certainly with intention]. P omits: 'and . . . over.'

⁴ B, Bz., C, H, Mtr. all have this long passage on the suffering of the soul in Purgatory. It would be rash, therefore, to deny that S. John of the Cross is its author, [or to suppose, as P. Gerardo did, that he deleted it during a revision of his works]. An admirably constructed synthesis of these questions will be found in B. Belarmino, *De Purgatorio*, Bk. II, chaps. iv, v. He asks if souls in Purgatory are sure of their salvation. This was denied by Luther, and by a number of Catholic writers, who held that, among the afflictions of these souls, the greatest is this very uncertainty; some maintain that, though they have in fact such certainty, they are unaware of it. Belarmino quotes among other authorities Denis the Carthusian, *De quattuor novissimis*, Gerson (Lect. I *De Vita Spirituali*) and John of Rochester (against Luther's 32nd article); these writers claim that, as sin which is venial is only so through the Divine mercy, it may with perfect justice be rewarded by eternal punishment, and thus

is conscious that it desires to have a great love for God and to give a thousand lives for Him (which is the truth, for in these trials such souls love their God very earnestly), yet this is no relief to it, but rather brings it greater affliction. For it loves Him so much that it retains naught that will cause Him anxiety; when, therefore, it sees itself to be so miserable that it cannot believe that God loves it, nor that there is or will ever be reason why He should do so, but rather¹ that there is reason why it should be abhorred, not only by Him, but by all creatures for ever, it is grieved to see in itself reasons for deserving to be cast out by Him Whom it loves and desires so greatly.

CHAPTER VIII

*Of other pains which afflict the soul in this state.*²

1. But there is another thing here³ which afflicts and distresses the soul greatly, which is that, as this dark night has hindered its faculties and affections in this way, it is unable to raise⁴ its affection or its mind to God, neither can it pray to Him, thinking, as Jeremiah thought concerning himself, that God has set a cloud before it through which its prayer cannot pass.⁵ For it is this that is meant by that which is said in the passage referred to, namely: He hath shut and

souls that have committed venial sin cannot be confident of their salvation. He also shows, however, that the common opinion of theologians is that the souls in Purgatory are sure of their salvation, and considers various degrees of certainty, adding very truly that, while these souls experience no fear, they experience hope, since they have not yet the Beatific vision.

Uncertainty as to their salvation, it is said, might arise from ignorance of the sentence passed upon them by the Judge or from the deadening of their faculties by the torments which they are suffering. Belarmino refutes these and other suppositions with great force and effect. S. John of the Cross seems to be referring to the last named when he writes of the realization of their afflictions and their deprivation of God not allowing them to enjoy the blessings of the theological virtues. It is not surprising if the Saint, not having examined very closely this question, of which he would have read treatments in various authors, thought of it principally as an apt illustration of the purifying and refining effects of passive purgation; and an apt illustration it certainly is.

¹ E.p.: 'when it sees itself to be so miserable, suspecting that God loves it not, and having then no certainty that there is anything in it worthy of love but rather . . .'

² So e.p. The Codices have no title.

³ E.p.: 'There is in this state another thing.'

⁴ E.p. adds here: 'as before.'

⁵ Lamentations iii, 44.

enclosed my ways with square stones.¹ And if it sometimes prays it does so with such lack of strength and of sweetness² that it thinks that God neither hears it nor pays heed to it, as this prophet likewise declares in the same passage, saying : When I cry and entreat, He hath shut out my prayer.³ In truth this is no time for the soul to speak with God ; it should rather put its mouth in the dust, as Jeremiah says, so that perchance there may come to it some present hope,⁴ and it may endure its purgation with patience.⁵ It is God Who is passively⁶ working here in the soul ; wherefore the soul can do nothing. Hence it can neither pray nor be present at the Divine offices and pay attention to them,⁷ much less can it attend to other things and affairs which are temporal. Not only so, but it has likewise such distractions and times of such profound forgetfulness of the memory, that frequent periods pass by without its knowing what it has been doing or thinking, or what it is that it is doing or is going to do, neither can it pay attention, although it desire to do so, to anything that occupies it.⁸

2. Inasmuch as not only is the understanding here purged of its light,⁹ and the will of its affections, but the memory is also purged of meditation and knowledge, it is well that it be likewise annihilated with respect to all these things, so that that which David says of himself in this purgation may be fulfilled, namely : I was annihilated and I knew not.¹⁰ This unknowing refers¹¹ to these follies and forgetfulnesses of the memory, which distractions and forgetfulnesses are caused by the interior recollection wherein this contemplation absorbs the soul. For, in order that the soul may be divinely prepared and tempered with its faculties for the Divine union of love, it would be well for it to be first of all absorbed, with all its faculties, in this Divine and dark spiritual light of contemplation, and thus to be withdrawn from all the affections and apprehensions of the creatures,

¹ [Lamentations iii, 9.] E.p. omits 'shut and' and reads 'roads' for 'ways.'

² E.p. : 'with such aridity and lack of sweetness.'

³ Lamentations iii, 8.

⁴ Lamentations iii, 29.

⁵ E.p. : 'In truth, this is the time to put, as Jeremiah says, its mouth in the dust, enduring its purgation with patience.'

⁶ E.p. omits 'passively.'

⁷ [Lit., 'at the Divine things.'] Thus A, B, C, G, Mtr., P. E.p., M : 'pay great attention.' H : 'be present at the Divine things.' Bz. : 'be present with devotion at the Divine things.'

⁸ E.p. : 'nor can it be very attentive, although it desire to be so, to anything that it is doing.'

⁹ E.p. : 'of its imperfect knowledge.'

¹⁰ Psalm lxxii, 22 [A.V., lxxiii, 22].

¹¹ E.p. : 'extends.'

which condition ordinarily¹ continues in proportion to its intensity. And thus, the simpler and the purer is this Divine light in its assault upon the soul, the more it darkens it, voids it and annihilates it according to its particular apprehensions and affections, with regard both to things above and to things below ; and similarly, the less simple and pure is it in this assault, the less deprivation it causes it and the less dark is it. Now this is a thing that seems incredible, to say that, the brighter and purer is supernatural and Divine light, the more it darkens the soul, and that, the less bright and pure is it, the less dark it is to the soul. Yet this may well be understood² if we consider what has been proved above by the dictum of the philosopher—namely, that the brighter and the more manifest in themselves are supernatural things the darker are they to our understanding.³

X 3. And to the end that this may be understood the more clearly, we shall here set down a similitude referring to common and natural light. We observe that a ray of sunlight which enters through the window is the less clearly visible according as it is the purer and freer from specks, and the more of such specks and motes there are in the air, the brighter is the light to the eye. The reason is that it is not the light itself that is seen ; the light is but the means whereby the other things that it strikes are seen, and then it is also seen itself, through its having struck them ; had it not struck them, neither it nor they would have been seen. Thus if the ray of sunlight entered through the window of one room and passed out through another on the other side, traversing the room, and if it met nothing on the way, or if there were no specks in the air for it to strike, the room would have no more light than before, neither would the ray of light be visible. In fact, if we consider it carefully, there is more darkness in the path of the ray of sunlight, because it overwhelms and darkens any other light, and yet it is itself invisible, because, as we have said, there are no visible objects which it can strike.

4. Now this is precisely what this Divine ray of contemplation does in the soul. Assailing it with its Divine light,

¹ So e.p., M. The Codices have 'singularly.'

² The words 'this may well be understood,' which are necessary to complete the sense of the passage, are only found in e.p. and Mtr.

³ E.p. omits the next paragraph, doubtless because the same comparison has already been used in the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Bk. II, chap. xiv, § 9 (p. 122, above).

emptiness.

it transcends the natural power of the soul, and herein it darkens it and deprives it of all natural affections and apprehensions which it apprehended aforetime by means of natural light; and thus it leaves it¹ not only dark, but likewise empty, according to its faculties and desires, both spiritual and natural. And, by thus leaving it empty and in darkness, it purges and illumines it with Divine spiritual light even when the soul thinks not that it has this light, but believes itself to be in darkness, even as we have said of the ray of light, which, although it be in the midst of the room, yet, if it be pure and meet nothing on its path, is not visible. With regard, however, to this spiritual light by which the soul is assailed, when it has something to strike—that is, when something spiritual presents itself to be understood, however small a speck it be and whether of perfection or imperfection, or whether it be a judgement of the falsehood or the truth of a thing²—it then sees and understands much more clearly than before it was in these dark places. And exactly in the same way it discerns the spiritual light which it has in order that it may readily discern the imperfection which is presented to it; even as, when the ray of which we have spoken, within the room, is dark and not itself visible, if one introduce³ a hand or any other thing into its path, the hand is then seen and it is realized that that sunlight is present.

5. Wherefore, since this spiritual light is so simple,⁴ pure and general, not appropriated or restricted to any particular thing that can be understood, whether natural or Divine (since with respect to all these apprehensions the faculties of the soul are empty and annihilated), hence it follows that⁵ with great comprehensiveness and readiness the soul discerns and penetrates whatsoever thing presents itself to it,

¹ E.p. greatly modifies the first part of this paragraph, thus:

'And thus, the ray of this lofty contemplation assails the soul with its Divine light, and, since it transcends the natural power of the soul itself, darkens it and deprives it of all the natural apprehensions and affections which it apprehended aforetime by means of natural light. Whereby it leaves it,' etc.

² E.p. has: ' . . . even as we have said. But even as the ray of light, if it be pure and have nothing to strike or to meet, is hardly perceived, and when it strikes or reflects is the better seen, even so this spiritual light whereby the soul is assailed, since it is so pure, is not in itself observed or perceived; but when it has something to strike—that is, when some particular thing presents itself to be understood, of perfection or judgement of the falsehood or truth of a thing,' etc.

³ E.p.: 'even as when the ray is in itself not perceived, yet, if one introduce,' etc.

⁴ H: 'so sensible.'

⁵ E.p. omits: 'hence it follows that.'

whether it come from above or from below ; for which cause the Apostle said : That the spiritual man searches all things, even the deep things of God.¹ For by this general and simple wisdom is understood that which the Holy Spirit says through the Wise Man, namely : That it reaches wheresoever it wills by reason of its purity ;² that is to say, because it is not restricted to any particular object of the intellect or affection. And this is the characteristic of the spirit that is purged and annihilated with respect to all particular affections and objects of the understanding, that in this state wherein it has pleasure in nothing and understands nothing³ in particular, but dwells in its emptiness, darkness and obscurity, it embraces everything with great adaptability, to the end that those words of S. Paul may be fulfilled⁴ in it : *Nihil habentes, et omnia possidentes.*⁵ For such poverty of spirit as this would deserve such happiness.

CHAPTER IX

*How, although this night brings darkness to the spirit, it does so in order to illumine it and give it light.*⁶

1. It now remains to be said that, although this happy night brings darkness to the spirit, it does so only to give it light in everything ; and that, although it humbles it and makes it miserable, it does so only to exalt it and to raise it up ; and, although it impoverishes it and empties it of all natural affection and attachment, it does so only that it may enable it to stretch forward, divinely, and thus to have fruition and experience of all things, both above and below, yet to preserve its unrestricted liberty of spirit in them all. For just as the elements, in order that they may have a part in every natural being and composition, must have no particular colour, odour or taste, in order that they may combine with all tastes, odours and colours, just so must the spirit be simple, pure and detached from all kinds of natural affection, whether actual or habitual, to the end that it may be able freely to take its part in the breadth of spirit of the Divine Wisdom, wherein, through its purity, it has experi-

¹ 1 Corinthians ii, 10. [*Lit.*, 'penetrates all things.']

² Wisdom vii, 24.

³ H omits : 'and understands nothing.'

⁴ E.p., A, M add 'mystically.'

⁵ 2 Corinthians vi, 10.

⁶ So e.p. The Codices have no title.

ence of all the sweetness of all things in a certain pre-eminently excellent way.¹ And without this purgation it will be wholly unable to feel or experience the satisfaction of all this abundance of spiritual sweetness. For one single affection remaining in the spirit, or one particular thing to which, actually or habitually, it clings, suffices to hinder it from feeling or experiencing or communicating the delicacy and intimate sweetness of the spirit of love, which contains within itself all sweetness to a most pre-eminent degree.²

2. For, even as the children of Israel, solely because they retained one single affection and remembrance—namely, with respect to the fleshpots and the meals which they had tasted in Egypt,³—could not relish the delicate bread of angels, in the desert, which was the manna, which, as the Divine Scripture says, held sweetness for every taste and turned to the taste that each one desired ;⁴ even so the spirit cannot succeed in enjoying the delights of the spirit of liberty, according to the desire of the will, if it be still affectioned to any desire, whether actual or habitual, or to particular objects of understanding, or to any other apprehension.⁵ The reason for this is that the affections, feelings and apprehensions of the perfect spirit, being Divine,⁶ are of another kind and of a very different order from those that are natural and pre-eminent,⁷ so that, in order to possess the one both actually and habitually, it is needful to expel and annihilate the other, as with two contrary things, which cannot exist together in one person.⁸ Therefore it is most fitting and necessary, if the soul is to pass to these great things, that this dark night of contemplation should first of all annihilate and undo it in its meannesses, bringing it into darkness, aridity, affliction and emptiness ; for the light which is to be given to it is a Divine light of the highest kind, which transcends all natural light, and which of its nature can find no place in the understanding.

3. And thus it is fitting that, if the understanding is to be united with that light and become Divine in the state of perfection, it should first of all be purged and annihilated as to

¹ [*Lit.*, 'with a certain eminence of excellence.'] So C, H, M, Mtr., P, V. E.p., A, B : 'certain kind of excellence.' Bz. omits a line or so here.

² [*Lit.*, '... sweetness, with great eminence.']

³ Exodus xvi, 3.

⁴ Wisdom xvi, 21.

⁵ Thus the Codices. E.p. has : 'any other limited apprehension.'

⁶ E.p. : 'being so high and very specially Divine.'

⁷ E.p. omits the last two words. ⁸ E.p. omits : 'as with . . . person.'

its natural light, and, by means of this dark contemplation, be brought actually into darkness. This darkness should continue for as long as is needful in order to expel and annihilate the habit which the soul has long since formed in its manner of understanding, and the Divine light and illumination will then take its place. And thus, inasmuch as that power of understanding which it had aforetime is natural, it follows that the darkness which it here suffers is profound and horrible and most painful, for this darkness, being felt in the deepest substance of the spirit, seems to be substantial darkness.¹ Similarly, since the affection of love which is to be given to it in the Divine union of love is Divine, and therefore very spiritual, subtle and delicate, and very intimate, transcending every affection and feeling² of the will, and every desire thereof, it is fitting that, in order that the will may be able to attain to this Divine affection and most lofty delight, and to feel it and experience it³ through the union of love, since of its nature it can find no place in the will,⁴ it be first of all purged and annihilated in all its affections and feelings, and left in a condition of aridity and affliction, proportionate to the habit of natural affections which it had before, with respect both to Divine things and to human. Thus, being exhausted, withered and thoroughly tried⁵ in the fire of this dark contemplation, and having driven away every kind⁶ of evil spirit (as with the heart of the fish which Tobias set on the coals⁷), it may have a simple and pure disposition, and its palate may be purged and healthy, so that it may feel the rare and lofty touches of Divine love, wherein it will see itself divinely transformed, and all the contrarieties, whether actual or habitual, which it had aforetime, will be expelled, as we are saying.

¹ E.p. reads: ' . . . painful, for it touches, and is felt in, the depths of the spirit.'

² E.p.: 'every natural and imperfect affection and feeling.'

³ E.p. omits: 'feel it and.'

⁴ E.p. omits: 'since . . . will.'

⁵ So H. There are many variants. A: 'that it may be dry and withered and well proved.' B: 'that it may be dry, withered and well entangled (*sic*). [Probably a copyist's error: *entrecada* for *extricada*, wrung.] Bz.: 'that it may be withered and well bruised.' C, M, P: 'Thus, exhausted and withered and well wrung.' Mtr.: 'that it may be withered and well wrung.' V: 'that it may be clean and withered and well wrung.' E.p.: 'Thus, exhausted, withered and deprived (of every kind, etc.).'

⁶ [*Lit.*, 'from every kind.' But see Tobit viii, 2. The 'deprived' of e.p. gives the best reading of this phrase, but the general sense is clear from the Scriptural reference].

⁷ Tobit viii, 2.

4. Moreover, in order to attain the said union to which this dark night is disposing and leading it, the soul must be filled and endowed with a certain glorious magnificence in its communion with God, which includes within itself innumerable blessings springing from delights which exceed all the abundance that the soul can naturally possess. For by nature the soul is so weak and impure that it cannot receive all this. As Isaiah says : Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, that which God hath prepared, etc.¹ It is meet, then, that the soul be first of all brought into emptiness and poverty of spirit and purged from all help, consolation and natural apprehension with respect to all things, both above and below. In this way, being empty, it is able indeed to be poor in spirit and freed from the old man, in order to live that new and blessed life which is attained by means of this night, and which is the state of union with God.

5. And because the soul is to attain to the possession of a sense, and of a Divine knowledge, which is very generous and full of sweetness, with respect to things Divine and human, which fall not within the common experience and natural knowledge of the soul (because it looks on them with eyes as different from those of the past, as spirit is different from sense² and the Divine from the human), the spirit must be humbled³ and inured to hardships as regards its common and natural experience, and be brought by means of this purgative contemplation into great anguish and affliction, and the memory must be borne far from all agreeable and peaceful knowledge, and have an intimate⁴ sense and feeling that it is making a pilgrimage and being a stranger to all things, so that it seems to it that all things are strange and of a different kind from that which they were wont to be. For this night is gradually drawing the spirit away from its ordinary and common experience of things and bringing it nearer the Divine sense, which is a stranger and an alien to all human ways. It seems now to the soul that it is going forth from its very self, with much affliction.⁵ At other times

¹ Isaiah lxiv, 4 [1 Corinthians ii, 9]. E.p. adds : 'for those that love Him.'

² E.p. : 'as the light and grace of the Holy Spirit differ from sense.'

³ [Lit., 'be made thin.']

⁴ E.p. : 'a very intimate.'

⁵ E.p., A : '... human ways ; so much so that it seems to the soul that it is going out from its very self.' So M, omitting the words 'much so.' B, Bz., C, H, V read as in the text.

it wonders if it is under a charm or a spell, and it goes about marvelling at the things that it sees and hears, which seem to it very strange and rare, though they are the same that it was accustomed to experience aforetime. The reason of this is that the soul is now becoming alien and remote from common sense and knowledge of things, in order that, being annihilated in this respect, it may be informed with the Divine—which belongs rather to the next life than to this.

6. The soul suffers all these afflictive purgations¹ of the spirit to the end that it may be begotten anew in spiritual life by means of this Divine inflowing, and in these pangs may bring forth the spirit of salvation, that the saying of Isaiah may be fulfilled: In Thy sight, O Lord, we have conceived, and we have been as in the pangs of labour, and we have brought forth the spirit of salvation.² Moreover, since by means of this contemplative night the soul is prepared for the attainment of inward peace and tranquillity, which is of such a kind and so delectable that, as the Scripture³ says, it passes all understanding,⁴ it behoves the soul to abandon all its former peace. This was in reality no peace at all, since it was involved in imperfections; but to the soul aforementioned it appeared to be so, because it was following its own inclinations, which were for peace. It seemed, indeed, to be a twofold peace—that is, the soul believed that it had already acquired the peace of sense and that of spirit, for it found itself to be full of the spiritual abundance of this peace of sense and of spirit—as I say, it is still imperfect. First of all, then, it must be purged of that former peace and disturbed in it and withdrawn from it.⁵ Even so was Jeremiah when, in the passage which we quoted from him, he felt and lamented⁶ thus, in order to express the calamities of this night that is past, saying: My soul is withdrawn and removed from peace.⁷

¹ A, B, M, Mtr., P: 'all these afflictions and purgations.' C: 'affective purgations.'

² Isaiah xxvi, 17-18.

³ [P. Silverio reads, with] A, B, M: 'the gloss.' [This was probably what the Saint actually wrote.] Bz., C, H, Mtr., P [not understanding it] have: 'the Church' [*la Iglesia for la Glosa*]. E.p. and V give [the correct sense by reading]: 'the Scripture.'

⁴ [Philippians iv, 7.]

⁵ [We have here split up a parenthesis of about seventy words.] E.p. abbreviates: '[It seemed to be] a twofold peace, that is, of sense and spirit. First of all it must be purged that it may be disturbed in that imperfect peace, and withdrawn from it.'

⁶ [Lit., 'and wept.']

⁷ Lamentations iii, 17.

7. This is a painful disturbance, involving many misgivings, imaginings and strivings which the soul has within itself, wherein, with the apprehension and realization of the miseries in which it sees itself, it fancies that it is lost and that its blessings have gone for ever. Wherefore the spirit experiences¹ pain and sighing so deep that they cause it vehement spiritual groans and cries, to which at times it gives vocal expression ; when it has the necessary strength and power it dissolves into tears, although this relief comes but seldom. David² describes this very aptly, in a Psalm, as one who has had experience of it, where he says : I was exceedingly afflicted and humbled ; I roared by reason of the groaning of my heart.³ This roaring implies great pain ; for at times, with the sudden and acute remembrance of these miseries wherein the soul sees itself, pain and affliction rise up and surround it, and I know not how the affections of the soul could be expressed⁴ save in the similitude of holy Job, when he was in the same trials, and uttered these words : Even as the avenues of the waters, even so is my roaring.⁵ For just as at times the waters make such inundations that they overwhelm and fill everything, so at times this roaring and this affliction of the soul grow to such an extent that they overwhelm it and penetrate it completely, filling it with spiritual pain and anguish in all its deep affections and energies, to an extent surpassing all possibility of exaggeration.

8. Such is the work wrought in the soul by this night that hides the hopes of the light of day. With regard to this the prophet Job says likewise : In the night my mouth is pierced with sorrows and they that feed upon me sleep not.⁶ Now here by the mouth is understood the will, which is pierced with these pains that tear the soul to pieces, neither ceasing nor sleeping, for the doubts and misgivings which pierce the soul in this way never cease.⁷

9. Deep is this warfare and this striving, for the peace which the soul hopes for will be very deep ; and the spiritual

¹ So C, H, Mtr., P, V. The other codices and e.p. read : ' Wherefore there has entered into the spirit.'

² E.p. : ' The royal prophet David.'

³ Psalm xxxvii, 9 [A.V., xxxviii, 8].

⁴ [Lit., ' . . . sees itself, it arises and is surrounded with pain and affliction, the affections of the soul, that I know not how it could be expressed.' A confused, ungrammatical sentence, of which, however, the general meaning is not doubtful.] E.p. has : ' . . . sees itself, the affections of the soul feels [sic] such pain and affliction.'

⁵ Job iii, 24.

⁶ Job xxx, 17.

⁷ H : ' never sleep.'

pain is intimate and delicate,¹ for the love which it will possess will likewise be very intimate and refined. The more intimate and the more perfect the finished work is to be and to remain, the more intimate, perfect and pure must be the labour; the firmer the edifice, the harder the labour.² Wherefore, as Job says, the soul is fading within itself, and its vitals are being consumed without any hope.³ Similarly, because in the state of perfection toward which it journeys by means of this purgative night the soul will attain to the possession and fruition of innumerable blessings, of gifts and virtues, both according to the substance of the soul and likewise according to its faculties, it must needs⁴ see and feel itself withdrawn from them all and deprived of them all and be empty and poor without them;⁵ and it must needs believe itself to be so far from them that it cannot persuade itself that it will ever reach them, but rather it must be convinced that all its good things are over. The words of Jeremiah have a similar meaning in that passage already quoted, where he says: I have forgotten good things.⁶

10. But let us now see the reason why this light of contemplation, which is so sweet and blessed to the soul that there is naught more desirable (for, as has been said above, it is the same wherewith the soul must be united and wherein it must find all the good things in the state of perfection that it desires), produces, when it assails the soul, these beginnings which are so painful and these effects which are so disagreeable, as we have here said.

11. This question is easy for us to answer, by explaining, as we have already done in part, that the cause of this is that, in contemplation and the Divine inflowing, there is naught that of itself can cause affliction, but that they rather cause great sweetness and delight, as we shall say hereafter.⁷ The cause is rather the weakness and imperfection from which the soul then suffers, and the dispositions which it has in itself and which make it unfit for the reception of them. Wherefore, when⁸ the said Divine light assails the soul, it must needs cause it to suffer after the manner aforesaid.

¹ E.p. adds: 'and refined.'

² Some MSS. omit the words 'the labour,' but the meaning is evidently the same.

³ Job xxx, 16.

⁴ E.p.: 'thus, according to the substance of the soul, it must needs,' etc.

⁵ E.p. omits: 'and be empty . . . them.'

⁶ Lamentations iii, 17.

⁷ So Bz., C, H, Mtr. A, B, M: 'as was [sic] afterwards given it.' E.p.: 'as will afterwards be given it.' V: 'as was said before.'

⁸ E.p.: 'unfit [lit., 'contrary': this also applies to our text] for the reception of that sweetness. And thus, when,' etc.

CHAPTER X

Explains this purgation fully by a comparison.¹

1. For the greater clearness of what has been said, and of what has still to be said, it is well to observe at this point that this purgative and loving knowledge or Divine light whereof we here speak acts upon the soul which is purged and prepared for perfect union with it in the same way as fire acts upon a log of wood in order to transform it into itself; for material fire, acting upon wood, first of all begins to dry it,² by driving out its moisture and causing it to shed the water which it contains within itself. Then it begins to make it black, dark and unsightly, and even to give forth a bad odour,³ and, as it dries it little by little, it brings out and drives away all the dark and unsightly accidents which are contrary to the nature of fire. And, finally, it begins to kindle it externally and give it heat, and at last transforms it into itself and makes it as beautiful as fire. In this respect, the wood has neither passivity nor activity of its own,⁴ save for its weight, which is greater, and its substance, which is denser, than that of fire, for it has in itself⁵ the properties and activities of fire. Thus it is dry and it dries; it is hot and heats; it is bright and gives brightness; and it is much less heavy than before. All these properties and effects are caused in it by the fire.

2. In this same way we have to philosophize with respect to this Divine fire of contemplative love, which, before it unites and transforms the soul in itself, first purges it of all its contrary accidents. It drives out its unsightliness, and makes it black and dark, so that it seems worse than before and more unsightly and abominable than it was wont to be.⁶ For this Divine purgation is removing⁷ all the evil and vicious humours which the soul has never perceived because they have been so deeply rooted and grounded in it; it has never realized, in fact, that it has had so much evil within itself. But now that they are to be driven forth and annihilated, these humours reveal themselves, and become visible to the

¹ So e.p. The Codices have no title.

² E.p.: 'to dry it up.'

³ E.p. omits: 'and . . . odour.'

⁴ E.p. has 'proper to wood' for 'of its own.'

⁵ E.p.: 'which is less subtle than that of fire; it has in itself.'

⁶ E.p. omits: 'and more . . . to be.'

⁷ V: 'is consuming and removing.'

soul because it is so brightly illumined by this dark light of Divine contemplation (although it is no worse than before, either in itself or in relation to God) ; and, as it sees in itself that which it saw not before, it is clear to it that it is not only unfit for God to see it, but that it deserves His abhorrence and that He does indeed abhor it. By this comparison¹ we can now understand many things concerning what we are saying and purpose to say.

3. First, we can understand how the very light and the loving wisdom which are to be united with the soul and to transform it are the same that at the beginning purge and prepare it : even as the very fire which transforms the log of wood into itself, and makes it part of itself, is that which at the first was preparing it for that same purpose.

4. Secondly, we shall be able to see how these afflictions are not felt by the soul as coming from the said Wisdom, since, as the Wise Man says, all good things together come to the soul with her.² They are felt as coming from the weakness and imperfection which belong to the soul ; without such purgation, the soul cannot receive its Divine light, sweetness and delight, even as the log of wood, when the fire acts upon it, cannot immediately be transformed until it be made ready ; wherefore the soul is greatly afflicted.³ This statement is fully supported by the Preacher, where he describes all that he suffered in order that he might attain to union with wisdom and to the fruition of it, saying thus : My soul hath wrestled with her and my bowels were moved in acquiring her ; therefore it shall possess⁴ a good possession.⁵

5. Thirdly, we can learn here incidentally in what manner souls are afflicted in purgatory. For the fire would have no power over them, even though they came into contact with it, if they had no imperfections for which to suffer.⁶ These are the material upon which the fire of purgatory seizes ; when that material is consumed there is naught else

¹ Bz., H, V erroneously read : ' By this contemplation.'

² Wisdom vii, 11.

³ E.p. : ' wherefore the soul suffers greatly.'

⁴ A, B : ' therefore shall I acquire.'

⁵ Ecclesiasticus li, 29 [A.V., li, 19-21].

⁶ E.p. : ' would have no power over them, if they were completely made ready to reign and be united with God in glory and had no faults for which to suffer.'

that can burn. So here, when the imperfections are consumed, the affliction of the soul ceases and its fruition remains.¹

6. The fourth thing that we shall learn here is the manner wherein the soul, as it becomes purged and purified by means of this fire of love, becomes ever more enkindled in love,² just as the wood grows hotter in proportion as it becomes the better prepared by the fire. This enkindling of love, however, is not always felt by the soul, but only at times when contemplation assails it less vehemently, for then it has occasion to see, and even to enjoy, the work which is being wrought in it, and which is then revealed to it. For it seems that the worker takes his hand from the work, and draws the iron out of the furnace, in order that something of the work which is being done may be seen; and then there is occasion for the soul to observe in itself the good which it saw not while the work was going on. In the same way, when the flame ceases to attack the wood, it is possible to see how much of it has been enkindled.

7. Fifthly, we shall also learn from this comparison what has been said above—namely, how true it is that after each of these periods of relief the soul suffers once again, more intensely and keenly than before. For after that revelation just referred to has been made, and after³ the more outward imperfections of the soul have been purified, the fire of love once again attacks that which is to be consumed and purified more inwardly. The suffering of the soul now becomes more intimate, subtle and spiritual, in proportion as it refines away the more intimate, subtle⁴ and spiritual imperfections, and those which are most deeply rooted in its inmost parts. And it is here just as with the wood, which, when the fire begins to penetrate it more deeply, acts with more force and vehemence⁵ in preparing its most inward part to possess it.

8.⁶ Sixthly, we shall likewise learn here the reason why it seems to the soul that all its good is over, and that it is full of evil, since naught comes to it at this time but bitterness; it is like the burning⁷ wood, which is touched by no air nor by

¹ E.p. adds: 'of the kind that in this life is possible.'

² E.p.: 'enkindled therein.'

³ E.p.: 'and when at last.'

⁴ [Lit., 'delicate.']

⁵ [Lit., 'fury.']

⁶ This paragraph is only found in the Codices.

⁷ Several codices omit 'burning.'

ought else than by consuming fire. But when there occur other periods of relief like the first, the rejoicing of the soul will be more interior because the purification has been more interior also.

9. Seventhly,¹ we shall learn that, although the soul has most ample² joy at these periods (so much so that, as we said, it sometimes thinks that they³ can never return again, although it is certain that⁴ they will return quickly), it cannot fail to realize, if it is aware (and at times it is made aware) of a root of imperfection which remains, that its joy is incomplete, because a new assault seems to be threatening it;⁵ when this is so it happens quickly. Finally, that which still remains to be purged and enlightened most inwardly cannot well be concealed from the soul in view of its experience of its former purification;⁶ even as also in the wood it is the most inward part that remains longest unkindled,⁷ and the difference between it and that which has already been purged is clearly perceptible; and when this purification once more assails it most inwardly, it is no wonder if it seems to the soul once more that all its good is gone, and that it never expects it to return, since in its most inward sufferings all outward goodness is over for it.⁸

10. Keeping this comparison, then, before our eyes, together with what has already been said upon the first line of the first stanza concerning this dark night and its terrible properties, it will be well to leave these sad experiences of the soul and to begin to speak of the fruit of its tears and their blessed properties, whereof the soul begins to sing from this second line :

Kindled in love⁹ with yearnings.

¹ E.p. : 'Sixthly.'

² E.p. : 'intense.'

³ E.p. clarifies the sense of the passage by substituting for 'they' 'the trials.'

⁴ Thus e.p. The other authorities have : 'yet when' [probably in the sense, however, of 'nevertheless,' as in our text].

⁵ [The sudden change of metaphor is the author's. The 'assault' is, of course, the renewed growth of the 'root.']

⁶ [Lit., '... from the soul, with regard to that which has already been purified.']

⁷ [Lit., 'not enlightened': the word is the same as that used just above.]

⁸ [The word translated 'over' is rendered 'gone' just above.] So A, B, M. [P. Silverio reads, with] Bz., C, H, Mtr., V : 'blinded' [i.e., 'is shut off from it']. E.p. : 'is hidden from it.'

⁹ [Lit., 'in loves'; and so throughout the exposition of this line.]

CHAPTER XI

Begins to explain the second line of the first stanza. Describes how, as the fruit of these rigorous afflictions, the soul finds itself with the vehement passion of Divine love.¹

1. In this line the soul describes the fire of love which, as we have said, like the material fire acting upon the wood, begins to take hold upon the soul in this night of painful contemplation. This enkindling, although in a certain way it resembles that which we described above as coming to pass in the sensual part of the soul, is in some ways as different from this which is now described as is the soul from the body or the spiritual part from the sensual. For this is an enkindling of love in the spirit, where, in the midst of these dark afflictions, the soul feels itself to be keenly and acutely wounded in strong Divine love, and to have a certain realization and foretaste of God, although it understands nothing definitely, for, as we say, the understanding is in darkness.

2. The spirit feels itself here to be deeply and passionately in love, for this spiritual enkindling produces the passion of love. And, inasmuch as this love is infused, it is passive rather than active,² and thus it begets in the soul a strong passion of love. This love has in it something of union with God, and thus to some degree partakes of its properties, which are actions of God rather than of the soul, these being subdued to it passively. What the soul does here is to give its consent; the warmth and strength³ and temper and passion of love—or enkindling, as the soul here calls it—belong⁴ only to the love of God which enters increasingly into union with it. This love finds in the soul more occasion and preparation to unite itself with it and to wound it, according as all the soul's desires are the more recollected,⁵ and are the more withdrawn from and disabled for the enjoyment of aught either in Heaven or in earth.

3. This takes place to a great extent, as has already been

¹ So e.p. The Codices make no division here.

² E.p.: ' . . . is infused, the soul here concurs rather with its passive aspect.'

³ E.p.: ' which are more especially actions of God received in the soul than of the soul itself, the soul giving them its simple and loving consent. Yet the warmth and strength,' etc.

⁴ [*Lit.*, 'cling,' 'adhere.']

⁵ [*Lit.*, 'shut up.']

said, in this dark purgation, for God has so weaned all the inclinations¹ and caused them to be so recollected² that they cannot find pleasure in anything they may wish. All this is done by God to the end that, when He withdraws them and recollects them in Himself, the soul may have more strength and fitness to receive this strong union of love of God, which He is now beginning to give it through this purgative way, wherein the soul must love with great strength and with all its desires and powers both of spirit and of sense ; which could not be if they were dispersed in the enjoyment of aught else. For this reason David said to God, to the end that he might receive the strength of the love of this union with God : I will keep my strength for Thee ;³ that is, all the capacity and desires and energies of my faculties, nor will I apply their operation or pleasure to aught else than Thyself.

4. In this way it can be realized in some measure how great and how strong may be this enkindling of love in the spirit, where God keeps in recollection all the energies, faculties and desires of the soul, both of spirit and of sense, so that all this harmony may employ its energies and virtues in this love, and may thus attain to a true fulfilment of the first commandment, which sets aside nothing pertaining to man nor excludes from this love anything that is his, but says : Thou shalt love thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind, with all thy soul and with all thy strength.⁴

5. When all the desires and energies of the soul, then, have been recollected in this enkindling of love, and when the soul itself has been touched and wounded in them all, and has been inspired with passion, what shall we understand the movements and digressions⁵ of all these energies and desires to be, if they find themselves enkindled and wounded with strong love and without the possession and satisfaction thereof, in darkness and doubt ? They will doubtless be suffering hunger, like the dogs of which David speaks as running about the city ; finding no satisfaction in this love, they keep howling and groaning. For the touch⁶ of this

¹ A, B, M have 'unbound' for 'weaned.' E.p. reads : 'for God has so weaned all the faculties.'

² [Here, and below, the original has *recogidos*, the word normally translated 'recollected.']

³ Psalm lviii, 10 [A.V., lix, 9].

⁴ Deuteronomy vi, 5.

⁵ E.p. : 'and affections.'

⁶ E.p. : '... and without satisfaction thereof, in darkness thereof and doubt ? Suffering greater hunger, doubtless, as they have greater experience of God. For the touch.'

love and Divine fire dries up the spirit and enkindles its desires,¹ in order to satisfy its thirst for this Divine love, so much so that it turns upon itself a thousand times and desires God in a thousand ways and manners, with the eagerness and desire of the appetite. This is very well explained by David in a psalm, where he says : My soul thirsted for Thee : in how many manners does my soul long for Thee :² that is, in desires. And another version reads : My soul thirsted for Thee, my soul is lost (*or* perishes) for Thee.

6. It is for this reason that the soul says in this line that it was ' kindled in love with yearnings.'³ For in all the things and thoughts that it revolves within itself, and in all the affairs and matters that present themselves to it, it loves in many ways, and also desires and suffers in the desire in many ways, at all times and in all places, finding rest in naught, and feeling this yearning in its enkindled wound,⁴ even as the prophet Job declares, saying : As the hart⁵ desireth the shadow, and as the hireling desireth the end of his work, so I also had vain months and numbered to myself wearisome and laborious nights. If I lie down to sleep, I shall say : ' When shall I arise ? ' And then I shall await the evening and shall be full of sorrows even until the darkness of night.⁶ Everything becomes insufficient for this soul : it finds no pleasure either in Heaven or on earth ; and it is filled with griefs even unto the darkness to which Job here refers, speaking spiritually and in the sense of our interpretation. What the soul here endures is affliction⁷ and suffering without the consolation of a certain hope of any light and spiritual good. Wherefore the yearning and the grief of this soul in this enkindling of love are greater because it is multiplied in two ways : first, by the spiritual darkness wherein it finds itself, which afflicts it with its doubts and misgivings ; and then by the love of God, which enkindles and stimulates it, and, with its loving wound, causes it a wondrous

¹ E.p. : ' its affections.'

² Psalm lxii, 2 [A.V., lxiii, 1].

³ [Lit., as in the verses, ' in loves.] Bz. adds : ' and says not " kindled in love with yearning." ' H has : ' and says not " kindled in love and with yearning." '

⁴ Thus the Codices. E.p. has : ' feeling this yearning enkindled and wounded.'

⁵ [For *ciervo*, hart, read *siervo*, servant, and we have the correct quotation from Scripture. The change, however, was evidently made by the Saint knowingly. In P. Gerardo's edition, the Latin text, with *cervus*, precedes the Spanish translation, with *ciervo*.]

⁶ Job vii, 2-4.

⁷ B, H, M : ' is expectation.'

fear.¹ These two kinds of suffering at such a season are well described by Isaiah, where he says : My soul desired Thee in the night²—that is, in misery.

7. This is one kind of suffering which proceeds from this dark night ; but, he says, with my spirit, in my bowels, until the morning, I will watch for thee. And this is the second way of grieving in desire and yearning which comes from love in the bowels of the spirit, which are the spiritual affections. But in the midst of these dark and loving afflictions the soul feels within itself a certain companionship and strength, which bears it company and strengthens it so greatly that, if this burden of grievous darkness be taken away, it often feels itself to be alone, empty and weak. The cause of this is that, as the strength and efficacy of the soul was derived and communicated passively from the dark fire of love which assailed it, it follows that, when that fire ceases to assail it, the darkness and power and heat of love cease in the soul.³

CHAPTER XII

*Shows how this horrible night is purgatory, and how in it the Divine wisdom illumines men on earth with the same illumination that purges and illumines the angels in Heaven.*⁴

1. From what has been said we shall be able to see how this dark night of loving fire, as it purges in the darkness, so also in the darkness enkindles the soul. We shall likewise be able to see that, even as spirits⁵ are purged in the next life with dark material fire, so in this life they are purged and cleansed with the dark spiritual fire of love. The difference is that in the next life they are cleansed with fire, while here below they are cleansed and illumined with love only. It was this love that David entreated, when he said : *Cor mundum crea in me, Deus*, etc.⁶ For cleanness of heart is

¹ *Atemoriza* [evidently having puzzled the editor] is changed in e.p. into *atiza* ['stirs up'—the word used for poking the fire. I cannot think that the emendation, which repeats the idea of *estimula* above and finds no support in any MS., is worth adopting].

² Isaiah xxvi, 9.

³ H reads only : 'the darkness ceases.'

⁴ Chapter-heading and title are from e.p. The Codices make no division here.

⁵ E.p. : 'even as the predestinate.' A, B : 'even as sins.'

⁶ Psalm l, 12 [A.V., li, 10].

nothing less than the love and grace of God. For the clean of heart are called by our Saviour 'blessed'; which is as if He had called them 'enkindled with love'¹, since blessedness is given by nothing less than love.

2. And Jeremiah well shows how the soul is purged when it is illumined with this fire of loving wisdom (for God never grants mystical wisdom without love, since love itself infuses it), where he says: He hath sent fire into my bones, and hath taught me.² And David says that the wisdom of God is silver tried in fire³—that is, in purgative fire of love. For this dark contemplation infuses into the soul love and wisdom jointly, to each one according to his capacity and need, enlightening the soul and purging it, in the words of the Wise Man, from its ignorances, as he said was done to himself.

3. From this we shall also infer that the very wisdom of God which purges these souls and illumines them⁴ purges the angels from their ignorances, giving them knowledge, enlightening them as to that which they know not,⁵ and flowing down from God through the first hierarchies even to the last, and thence to men.⁶ All the works, therefore, which are done by the angels, and all their inspirations, are said in the Scriptures, with truth and propriety, to be the work of God and of themselves; for ordinarily these inspirations come through the angels, and they receive them likewise one from another without any delay—as quickly as a ray of sunshine is communicated through many windows arranged in order. For although it is true that the sun's ray itself passes through them all, still each one passes it on and infuses it into the next, in a modified form, according to the nature of the glass, and with rather more or rather less power and brightness, according as it is nearer to the sun or farther from it.

4. Hence it follows that, the nearer to God are the higher spirits and the lower,⁷ the more completely are they purged and enlightened with more general purification; and that the lowest of them will receive this illumination⁸ very much

¹ [*Lit.*, 'enamoured.']

² Lamentations i, 13.

³ Psalm xi, 7 [A.V., xii, 6].

⁴ The Codices omit the words 'purges . . . them' which are supplied by e.p.

⁵ E.p. omits: 'giving . . . know not.'

⁶ The Schoolmen frequently assert that the lower angels are purged and illumined by the higher. Cf. S. Thomas, *Summa*, I, q. 106, a. 1, ad 1.

⁷ So e.p. The MSS. have: 'and those below.'

⁸ E.p.: 'this enlightenment.'

less powerfully and more remotely. Hence it follows that man, who is the lowest of all those to whom this loving contemplation flows down continually from God, will, when God desires to give it him, receive it perforce after his own manner in a very limited way and with great pain.¹ For when the light of God illumines an angel, it enlightens him and enkindles² him in love, since, being pure spirit, he is prepared for that infusion. But, when it illumines man, who is impure and weak, it illumines him, as has been said above, according to his nature. It plunges him into darkness and causes him affliction and distress, as does the sun to the eye that is weak;³ it enkindles him⁴ with passionate yet afflictive love, until he be spiritualized and refined by this same fire of love; and it purifies him until he can receive with sweetness the union⁵ of this loving infusion after the manner of the angels, being now purged, as by the help of the Lord we shall explain later.⁶ But meanwhile he receives this contemplation and loving knowledge in the distress and yearning of love of which we are here speaking.

5. This enkindling and yearning of love are not always perceived by the soul. For in the beginning, when this spiritual purgation commences, all this Divine fire is used in drying up and making ready the wood (which is the soul) rather than in giving it heat. But, as time goes on,⁷ the fire begins to give heat to the soul, and the soul then very commonly feels this enkindling and heat of love. Further, as the understanding is being more and more purged by means of this darkness, it sometimes comes to pass that this mystical and loving theology, as well as enkindling the will, strikes and illumines the other faculty also—that of the understanding—with a certain Divine light and knowledge, so delectably and delicately⁸ that it aids the will to conceive a marvellous fervour, and, without any action of its own,⁹ there burns in it this Divine fire of love, in living flames, so that it now appears

¹ E.p. modifies thus: 'Hence it follows that, since man is lower than the angels, when God will give him this contemplation, he will perforce receive it after his manner, in a more limited way and with greater pain.'

² [*Lit.*, 'and softens.']

³ [More literally, 'is sick.'] So most MSS. and e.p. Bz.: 'impure and sick.' H.: 'bleared and sick.'

⁴ E.p., A: 'it enlightens him.'

⁵ A, B, M: 'the infusion.'

⁶ E.p. adds: 'For there are souls who in this life have received more perfect illumination than the angels.'

⁷ E.p. omits: 'as time goes on.'

⁸ E.p.: 'and divinely.'

⁹ E.p. omits: 'without . . . its own.'

to the soul a living fire by reason of the living understanding which is given to it. It is of this that David speaks in a Psalm, saying : My heart grew hot within me, and, as I meditated, a certain fire was enkindled.¹

6. This enkindling of love, which accompanies the union of these two faculties, the understanding and the will, which are here united,² is a thing of great wealth and delight for the soul ; for it is a certain touch of the divinity and is already the beginning³ of the perfection of the union of love for which it hopes. Now the soul attains not to this touch of so sublime a sense and love of God, save when it has passed through many trials and a great part of its purgation. But for other touches which are much lower than these, and which are of ordinary occurrence, so much purgation is not needful.

7.⁴ From what we have said it may here be inferred how in these spiritual blessings, which are passively infused by God into the soul, the will may very well love even though the understanding understand not ; and similarly the understanding may understand and the will love not. For, since this dark night of contemplation consists of Divine light and love, just as fire contains light and heat, it is not unbefitting that, when this loving light is communicated, it should strike the will at times more effectively by enkindling it with love and leaving the understanding in darkness instead of striking it with light ; and, at other times, by enlightening it with light, and giving it understanding, but leaving the will in aridity (as it is also true that the heat of the fire can be received without the light being seen, and also the light of it can be seen without the reception of heat) ; and this is wrought by the Lord, Who infuses as He wills.⁵

¹ Psalm xxxviii, 4 [A.V., xxxix, 3].

² E.p. omits : ' which are here united.'

³ [Lit., ' the beginnings. '] E.p. : ' for it is certain that in this darkness it already has the beginnings.'

⁴ The whole of this paragraph is omitted in e.p.

⁵ The Saint here treats a question often debated by philosophers and mystics—that of love and knowledge. Cf. also *Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza XVII (See Vol. II), and *Living Flame*, Stanza III (See Vol. III). Philosophers generally maintain that it is impossible to love without knowledge, and equally so to love more of an object than what is known of it. Mystics have, however, their own solutions of the philosophers' difficulty and the speculative Spanish mystics have much to say on the matter. (Cf., for example, the *Médula Mística*, Trat. V, Chap. iv, and the *Escuela de Oración*, Trat. XII, Duda 5.)

CHAPTER XIII

*Of other delectable effects which are wrought in the soul by this dark night of contemplation.*¹

1. This type of enkindling will explain to us certain of the delectable effects which this dark night of contemplation works in the soul. For at certain times, as we have just said, the soul becomes enlightened in the midst of all this darkness, and the light shines in the darkness;² this mystical intelligence flows down into the understanding and the will remains in dryness—I mean, without actual union of love, with a serenity³ and simplicity which are so delicate and delectable to the sense of the soul that no name can be given to them. Thus the presence of God is felt, now after one manner, now after another.

2. Sometimes, too, as has been said, it wounds the will at the same time, and enkindles love sublimely, tenderly and strongly; for we have already said that at certain times these two faculties, the understanding and the will, are united, when, the more they see,⁴ the more perfect and delicate is the purgation of the understanding. But before this state is reached, it is more usual for the touch of the enkindling of love to be felt in the will than for the touch of intelligence⁵ to be felt in the understanding.

3.⁶ But one question arises here, which is this: Why, since these two faculties are being purged together, are the enkindling and the love of purgative contemplation at first more commonly felt in the will than the intelligence thereof is felt in the understanding? To this it may be answered that this passive love does not now directly strike the will, for the will is free, and this enkindling of love is a passion of love rather than the free act of the will; for this heat of love strikes the substance of the soul and thus moves the affections passively. And thus, this is called passion of love rather than a free act of the will; for this is only called an act of the will in so far as it is free. But, since these passions and affections come into the sphere of the will, it is said therefore that if the

¹ So e.p. The Codices make no division.

² S. John i, 5.

³ E.p.: 'this mystical intelligence flows directly into the understanding and the will to some extent partakes of it, with a serenity,' etc.

⁴ E.p. omits these four words, which are found in A, M. B, Bz., C, H. Mtr., V have: 'the more they go.' P: 'the more this is so.' [P. Gerardo follows P, which certainly best agrees with the general sense of the passage.]

⁵ E.p.: 'of perfect intelligence.'

⁶ E.p. omits this paragraph.

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soul conceives passion with a certain affection, the will conceives passion ; and this is indeed so, for in this manner the will is taken captive and loses its liberty, according as the impetus and power of its passion carries it away with it. And therefore we can say that this enkindling of love is in the will—that is, it enkindles the desire of the will ; and thus, as we say, this is called passion of love rather than the free work of the will. And because the receptive passion of the understanding can only receive intelligence in a detached and passive way (and this is impossible without its having been purged) therefore until this happens the soul feels the touch of intelligence less frequently than that of the passion of love. For it is not necessary to this end that the will should be so completely purged with respect to the passions, since these very passions help it to feel impassioned love.

4. This enkindling and thirst of love, which now belongs to the spirit, is very different from that other which we described in writing of the night of sense. For, although the sense has also its part here, since it fails not to take a part in the work of the spirit, yet the most radical and living part of the thirst of love is felt in the superior part of the soul—that is, in the spirit. It feels, and understands what it feels and its lack of what it desires, in such a way that all its affliction of sense, although greater without comparison than in the first night of sense, is as naught to it, because it recognizes within itself the lack of a great good which can in no way be measured.¹

5. But here we must note that although, at the beginning, when this spiritual night commences, this enkindling of love is not felt, because this fire of love has not begun to take a hold,² God gives the soul, in place of it, an estimative love of Himself so great that, as we have said, the greatest sufferings and trials of which it is conscious in this night are the anguished thoughts that it³ has lost God and the fears that He has abandoned it. And thus we may always say that from the very beginning of this night the soul is touched with yearnings of love, which is now that of estimation,⁴ and now again, that of enkindling. And it is evident that the greatest

¹ E.p., Bz. : ' be remedied.'

² E.p. : ' has not acted.'

³ [Lit., ' the yearning to think if it. ']

⁴ [The word translated ' estimation ' might also be rendered ' reverent love.' The ' love of estimation,' which has its seat in the understanding, is contracted with the ' enkindling ' or the ' love of desire,' which has its seat in the will. So elsewhere in this paragraph.]

passion which it feels in these trials is this misgiving ; for, if it could be certified at that time that all is not lost and over, but that what is happening to it is for the best—as it is—and that God is not wroth, it would care naught for all these afflictions, but would rejoice to know that God is making use of them for His good pleasure. For the love of estimation which it has for God is so great, even though it may not realize this and may be in darkness, that it would be glad,¹ not only to suffer in this way, but even to die many times over in order to give Him satisfaction. But when once the flame has enkindled the soul, it is wont to conceive, together with the estimation that it already has for God, such power and energy, and such yearning for Him, when He communicates to it the heat of love, that, with great boldness, it disregards everything and ceases to pay respect to anything, such are the power and the inebriation of love and desire. It regards not what it does, for² it would do strange and unusual things in whatever way and manner may present themselves, if thereby its soul may find Him Whom it loves.

6. It was for this reason that Mary Magdalene, though as greatly esteemed in herself as she was aforetime, took no heed³ of the multitude of men who were at the feast,⁴ whether they were of little or of great importance ; neither did she consider that it was not seemly, and that it looked ill, to go and weep and shed tears among the guests, provided that, without delaying an hour or waiting for another time and season, she could reach Him for love of Whom her soul was already wounded and enkindled. And such is the inebriating power and the boldness⁵ of love, that, though she knew that her Beloved was enclosed in the sepulchre by the great sealed stone, and surrounded by soldiers who were guarding Him lest His disciples should steal Him away,⁶ she allowed none of these things to impede her, but went before daybreak with the ointments to anoint Him.

7. And finally, this inebriating power and yearning of love caused her to ask one whom she believed to be a gardener and to have stolen Him away from the sepulchre, to tell her,

¹ E.p. : ' it would be very glad,' etc.

² E.p. omits : ' such are the power . . . what it does, for.'

³ E.p. : ' noble as she was, took no heed.'

⁴ E.p. : ' at the feast which was given at the house of the Pharisee, as Saint Luke says.'

⁵ H : ' and the superfluity.'

⁶ S. John xx, 1 [S. Matthew xxvii, 62-6].

if he had taken Him, where he had laid Him, that she might take Him away;¹ considering not that such a question, according to independent judgement and argument, was foolish;² for it was evident that, if the other had stolen Him away, he would not say so, still less would he allow Him to be taken. It is a characteristic of the power and vehemence of love that all things seem possible to it, and it believes all men to be of the same mind as itself. For it thinks that there is naught wherein one may be employed, or which³ one may seek, save that which it seeks itself and that which it loves; and it believes that there is naught else to be desired, and naught wherein it may be employed, save that one thing, which is pursued by all.⁴ For this reason, when the Bride went out to seek her Beloved, through streets and squares,⁵ thinking that all others were doing the same, she begged them that, if they found him, they would speak to him and say⁶ that she was pining for love of him.⁷ Such was the power of the love of this Mary that she thought that, if the gardener would tell her where he had hidden Him, she would go and take Him away, however difficult it might be made for her.

8. Of this manner, then, are the yearnings of love of which this soul becomes conscious when it has made some progress in this spiritual purgation. For it rises up by night (that is, in this purgative darkness) according to the affections of the will. And with the yearnings and vehemence of the lioness or the she-bear going to seek her cubs when they have been taken away from her and she finds them not, does this wounded soul go forth to seek its God. For, being in darkness, it feels itself to be without Him and to be dying of love for Him. And this is that impatient love wherein the soul cannot long subsist without gaining its desire or dying. Such was Rachel's desire for children when she said to Jacob: Give me children, else shall I die.⁸

9. But we have now to see how it is that the soul which feels itself so miserable and so unworthy of God, here⁹ in this purgative darkness, has nevertheless energy both bold and daring to journey towards union with God. The reason is that, as love continually gives it strength wherewith it may

¹ S. John xx, 15.

² E.p.: 'or no other thing which.'

³ [Lit., 'outskirts,' 'suburbs.']

⁴ Canticles v, 8.

⁵ E.p. has 'as it feels itself' for 'here.'

⁶ E.p.: 'was not prudent.'

⁷ E.p. omits: 'which . . . all.'

⁸ E.p., 'they would say of her.'

⁹ Genesis xxx, 1.

love indeed, and as the property of love is to desire to be united, joined and made equal and like to the object of its love, that it may perfect itself in love's good things, hence it comes to pass that, when this soul is not perfected in love, through not having as yet attained to union, the hunger and thirst that it has for that which it lacks (which is union) and the strength set by love in the will which has caused it to become impassioned, make it bold and daring by reason of the enkindling of its will, although in its understanding, which is still dark and unenlightened,¹ it feels itself to be unworthy and knows itself to be miserable.

10. I will not here omit to mention the reason why this Divine light, which is always light to the soul, illumines it not as soon as it strikes it, as it does afterwards, but causes it the darkness and the trials of which we have spoken. Something has already been said concerning this, but the question must now be answered directly. The darkness and the other evils of which the soul is conscious when this Divine light strikes it are not darkness or evils caused by this light, but pertain to the soul itself, and the light illumines it so that it may see them. Wherefore it does indeed receive light from this Divine light ; but the soul cannot see at first, by its aid, anything beyond what is nearest to it, or rather, beyond what is within it—namely, its darknesses or its miseries, which it now sees through the mercy of God, and saw not aforetime, because this supernatural light illumined it not. And this is the reason why at first it is conscious of nothing beyond darkness and evil ; after it has been purged, however, by means of the knowledge and realization of these, it will have eyes to see, by the guidance of this light, the blessings of the Divine light ; and, once all these darknesses and these imperfections² have been driven out from the soul, it seems³ that the benefits and the great blessings which the soul is gaining in this blessed night of contemplation become clearer.⁴

11. From what has been said, it is clear that God grants the soul in this state the favour of purging it and healing it with this strong lye of bitter purgation, according to its

¹ E.p. omits : 'and unenlightened.'

² Bz., H, Mtr., P have 'impressions.' The other authorities read 'imperfections.'

³ E.p. : 'it will have eyes to be shown the blessings of this Divine light, and once all these darknesses and these imperfections of the soul are driven out and taken away, it seems,' etc.

⁴ E.p. : 'become known.'

spiritual and its sensual part, of all the imperfect habits and affections which it had within itself with respect to temporal things and to natural, sensual¹ and spiritual things, its inward faculties being darkened, and voided of all these, its spiritual and sensual affections being straitened and dried up, and its natural energies being attenuated and weakened with respect to all this (a condition which it could never attain of itself, as we shall shortly say). In this way God makes it to die to all that is not naturally² God, so that, once it is stripped and denuded of its former skin, He may begin to clothe it anew. And thus its youth is renewed like the eagle's and it is clothed with the new man, which, as the Apostle says, is created according to God.³ This is naught else but His illumination of the understanding with supernatural light, so that it is no more a human understanding but becomes Divine through union with the Divine. In the same way the will is informed⁴ with Divine love, so that it is a will that is now no less than Divine, nor does it love otherwise than divinely, for it is made and united in one with the Divine will and love. So, too, is it with the memory; and likewise the affections and desires are all changed and converted⁵ divinely, according to God. And thus this soul will now be a soul of heaven, heavenly, and more Divine than human. All this, as we have been saying, and because of what⁶ we have said, God continues to do and to work in the soul by means of this night, illumining and enkindling it divinely with yearnings for God alone and for naught else whatsoever. For which cause the soul then very justly and reasonably adds the third line to the song, which says :⁷

. . . oh, happy chance !
I went forth without being observed.

CHAPTER XIV

Wherein are set down and explained the last three lines of the first stanza.⁸

1. This happy chance was the reason for which the soul speaks, in the next lines, as follows :

I went forth without being observed, My house being now at rest.

¹ H adds 'speculative.'

³ Ephesians iv, 24.

⁵ E.p. omits : 'and converted.'

⁶ E.p. : 'as will have been clearly seen from what.'

⁷ E.p. : ' . . . to the song, which, with the other lines, we shall set down and explain in the chapter following.'

² E.p. omits 'naturally.'

⁴ E.p., Mtr., V : 'enkindled.'

⁸ Thus e.p.

It takes the metaphor¹ from one who, in order the better to accomplish something, leaves his house by night and in the dark, when those that are in the house are now at rest, so that none may hinder him. For this soul had to go forth to perform a deed so heroic and so rare—namely to become united with its Divine Beloved—and it had to leave its house because the Beloved is not found save alone and without, in solitude. It was for this reason that the Bride desired to find Him alone, saying : Who would give thee to me, my brother,² that I might find thee alone, without, and that my love might be communicated to thee.³ It is needful for the enamoured soul, in order to attain to its desired end, to do likewise, going forth at night, when all the inmates of its house are sleeping and at rest—that is, when the low operations, passions and desires of the soul (who are the people of the house) are sleeping and at rest because of this night. When these are awake, they invariably hinder the soul from seeking its good, since they are opposed to its going forth in freedom. These are they of whom Our Saviour speaks in the Gospel, saying that they are the enemies of man.⁴ And thus it would be meet that their operations and motions should be put to sleep in this night, to the end that they may not hinder the soul from attaining the supernatural blessings of the union of love of God, for, while these are alive and active, this cannot be.⁵ For all their work and their natural⁶ motions hinder, rather than aid, the soul's reception of the spiritual blessings of the union of love, inasmuch as all natural ability is impotent with respect to the supernatural blessings that God, by means of His own infusion, bestows upon the soul passively, secretly and in silence. And thus it is needful that all the faculties should receive this infusion, and that, in order to receive it, they should remain passive,⁷ and not interpose their own base acts and vile inclinations.

2. It was a happy chance for this soul that on this night God should put to sleep all the inmates⁸ of its house—that is, all the faculties, passions, affections and desires which live in the soul, both sensually and spiritually. For thus it went

¹ E.p. modifies thus : 'The happy chance whereof the soul sings in the first of these three lines was the reason for which it says in the two following . . . taking the metaphor,' etc.

² A, B, M have : 'my spouse, my brother.'

³ Canticles viii, 1.

⁴ E.p. : 'this cannot be attained.'

⁵ S. Matthew x, 36.

⁶ E.p. omits 'natural.'

⁷ E.p. omits : 'and . . . passive.'

⁸ [*Lit.*, 'all the domestic people.'] E.p. omits 'domestic.'

any risk of being lost. On the contrary, it says, in the darkness of this night it has gained itself. For it has freed itself in the night and escaped subtly from its enemies, who were continually hindering its progress. For in the darkness of the night it changed its garments and disguised itself with three liveries and colours which we shall describe hereafter ; and went forth by a very secret ladder, which none in the house knew, the which ladder, as we shall observe likewise in the proper place, is living faith. By this ladder the soul went forth in such complete hiding and concealment, in order the better to execute its purpose, that it could not fail to be in great security ; above all since in this purgative night the desires, affections and passions of the soul are put to sleep, mortified and quenched, which are they that, when they were awake and alive, consented not to this.¹

The first line, then, runs thus :²

In darkness and secure.

CHAPTER XVI

*Explains how, though in darkness, the soul walks securely.*³

1. The darkness which the soul here describes relates, as we have said, to the desires and faculties, sensual, interior and spiritual, for all these are darkened in this night as to their natural light, so that, being purged in this respect, they may be illumined with respect to the supernatural. For the spiritual and the sensual desires are put to sleep and mortified so that they can experience⁴ nothing, either Divine or human; the affections of the soul are oppressed and constrained so that they can neither move nor find support in anything ; the imagination is bound and can make no useful reflection ; the memory is gone ; the understanding is in darkness, unable to understand anything ;⁵ and hence the soul likewise is arid and constrained and all the faculties are void and useless ;⁶ and in addition to all this a thick and heavy cloud

¹ Thus Bz., H, P. The other MSS. and e.p. have : ' they that, were they awake and alive, would not consent to this.'

² [Lit., ' The line, then, continues, and says thus.' In fact, however, the author is returning to the first line of the stanza.]

³ So e.p.

⁴ [Lit., ' taste.' E.p. adds ' delectably.']

⁵ E.p. omits : ' unable to understand anything.'

⁶ E.p. omits : ' and useless.'

is upon the soul, keeping it in affliction, and, as it were, far away from God.¹ It is in this kind of 'darkness' that the soul says here² it travelled 'securely.'

2. The reason for this has been clearly expounded ; for ordinarily the soul never strays save through its desires or its tastes or its reflections or its understanding or its affections ; for as a rule it has too much or too little of these, or they vary or go astray, and hence the soul becomes inclined to that which behoves it not. Wherefore, when all these operations and motions are hindered, it is clear that the soul is secure against straying because of them ; for it is free, not only from itself, but likewise from its other enemies, which are the world and the devil. For when the affections and operations of the soul are quenched, these enemies cannot make war upon it by any other means or in any other manner.

3. It follows from this that, the greater is the darkness wherein the soul journeys and the more completely is it voided of its natural operations, the greater is its security. For, as the Prophet says,³ perdition comes to the soul from itself alone—that is, from its sensual and interior desires and operations ;⁴ and good, says God, comes from Me alone. Wherefore, when it is thus hindered from following the things that lead it into evil, there will then come to it forthwith the blessings of union with God in its desires and faculties, which in that union He will make Divine and celestial. Hence, at the time of this darkness, if the soul considers the matter, it will see very clearly how little its desire and its faculties are being diverted to things that are useless and harmful ; and how secure it is⁵ from vainglory and pride and presumption, vain and false rejoicing and many other things. It follows clearly, then, that, by walking in darkness, not only is the soul not lost, but it has even greatly gained, since it is here gaining the virtues.

¹ Some have considered this description exaggerated, but it must be borne in mind that all souls are not tested alike and the Saint is writing of those whom God has willed to raise to such sanctity that they drain the cup of bitterness to the dregs. We have already seen (Bk. I, chap. xiv, § 5) that 'all do not experience (this) after one manner . . . for (it) is meted out by the will of God, in conformity with the greater or the smaller degree of imperfection which each soul has to purge away, (and) in conformity, likewise, with the degree of love of union to which God is pleased to raise it' (p. 396, above).

² E.p. : 'It is in this kind of darkness that it says.'

³ Hosea xiii, 9.

⁴ E.p. adds : 'not harmonized.'

⁵ E.p. : 'to things that are useless and vain ; and that it is secure', etc.

4. But there is a question which at once arises here—namely, since the things of God are of themselves profitable to the soul and bring it gain and security, why does God, in this night, darken the desires and faculties with respect to these good things likewise, in such a way that the soul can no more taste of them¹ or busy itself with them than with these other things, and indeed in some ways can do so less? The answer is that it is well for the soul to perform no operation touching spiritual things at that time and to have no pleasure in such things, because its faculties and desires are base, impure and wholly natural; and thus, although these faculties be given the desire and interest in things supernatural and Divine, they could not receive them save after a base and a natural manner, exactly in their own fashion.² For, as the philosopher says, whatsoever is received comes to him that receives it after the manner of the recipient. Wherefore, since these natural faculties have neither purity nor strength nor capacity to receive and taste things that are supernatural after the manner of those things, which manner is Divine, but can do so only after their own manner, which is human and base, as we have said, it is meet that its faculties be in darkness concerning these Divine things likewise.³ Thus, being weaned and purged and annihilated in this respect first of all, they may lose that base and human⁴ way of receiving and acting, and thus all these faculties and desires of the soul may come to be prepared and tempered in such a way as to be able to receive, feel and taste that which is Divine and supernatural⁵ after a sublime and lofty manner, which is impossible if the old man die not first of all.

5. Hence it follows that all spiritual things, if they come not from above and be not communicated by the Father of lights to human desire and free will, (howsoever much a man may exercise his taste and faculties for God, and howsoever much it may seem to the faculties that they are experiencing these things), will not be experienced after a Divine and

¹ E.p., B: 'can no more enjoy them.'

² E.p. modifies: 'that it is meet at that time for its operation and pleasure to be void touching spiritual things; for its faculties and desires are base and impure; and thus, even though these faculties should be given desire and interest in things supernatural and Divine, they could not receive them save after a base manner.'

³ E.p.: '... which manner is Divine, but after their own manner; it is meet that [its faculties] be in darkness concerning these Divine things likewise, for perfect purgation.'

⁴ E.p. omits: 'and human.'

⁵ E.p. omits: 'and supernatural.'

spiritual manner, but after a human and natural manner, just as other things are experienced, for spiritual blessings go not from man to God, but come from God to man.¹ With respect to this (if this were the proper place for it) we might here explain how there are many persons whose many tastes and affections and the operations of whose faculties are fixed upon God or upon spiritual things, and who may perhaps think that this is supernatural and spiritual, when it is perhaps no more than the most human² and natural desires³ and actions. They regard these good things with the same disposition as they have for other things, by means of a certain natural facility which they possess for directing their desires and faculties to anything whatever.

6. If perchance we find⁴ occasion elsewhere in this book, we shall treat of this, describing certain signs which indicate when the interior actions and motions of the soul are only natural, when they are spiritual, and when they are both natural and spiritual, with respect to communion with God. It suffices for us here to know that, in order that the interior motions and acts of the soul may come to be moved by God divinely, they must first be darkened and put to sleep and made to rest naturally⁵ as touching all their capacity and operation, until they have no more strength.

7. Therefore, O spiritual soul, when thou seest thy desire obscured, thy affections arid and constrained, and thy faculties bereft of their capacity for any interior exercise, be not afflicted by this, but rather consider it a great happiness, since God is freeing thee from thyself and taking the work from thy hands. For with those hands, howsoever well they may serve thee, thou wouldst never labour so effectively, so perfectly and so securely (because of their clumsiness and uncleanness) as now, when God takes thy hand and guides thee in the darkness, as though thou wert blind, to an end and by a way which thou knowest not. Nor couldst thou ever hope to travel with the aid of thine own eyes and feet, howsoever good thou mayest be as a walker.

¹ E.p. modifies: 'howsoever much the taste and desire of man and his faculties with respect to God be exercised, and howsoever much it may seem to them that they experience Him, they experience Him not in this way divinely and perfectly.'

² E.p.: 'than very human.'

³ A, B, M read 'trials' [*aprietos*] for 'desires' [*apetitos*].

⁴ E.p., A, B, P: 'we have.'

⁵ E.p., A [clarify the somewhat vague adverb by reading]: 'in that which is natural.'

8. The reason, again, why the soul not only travels securely, when it travels thus in the darkness, but also achieves ever greater gain and progress, is that usually, when the soul is receiving fresh advantage and profit, this comes by a way that it least understands—indeed, it quite commonly believes that it is losing ground. For, as it has never experienced that new feeling which makes it go forth and¹ dazzles it and disturbs its first manner of living, it thinks itself to be losing ground rather than succeeding and progressing, since it sees that it is losing with respect to that which it knew and enjoyed, and is going by a way which it knows not and wherein it finds no enjoyment. It is like the traveller, who, in order to go to new and unknown lands,² takes new roads, unknown and untried, and journeys unguided by his past experience, but doubtingly and according to what others say. It is clear that such a man could not reach new countries, or add to his past experience, if he went not along new and unknown roads and abandoned those which were known to him.³ Exactly so, one who is learning further details concerning any office or art always proceeds in darkness, and receives no guidance from his early knowledge, for if he left not that behind he would get no further nor make any progress; and in the same way, when the soul is making most progress, it is travelling in darkness, knowing naught. Wherefore, since God, as we have said, is the Master and Guide of this blind soul, it may well and truly rejoice, once it has learned to understand this, and say: 'In darkness and secure.'

9. There is another reason why the soul has walked securely in this darkness, and this is because it has been suffering; for the road of suffering is more secure and even more profitable than that of fruition and action: first, because in suffering the strength of God is added to that of man, while in action and fruition the soul is practising its own weaknesses and imperfections; and second, because in suffering the soul continues to practise and acquire the virtues and become purer, wiser and more cautious.

10. But there is another and a more important reason why the soul now walks in darkness and securely;⁴ this

¹ E.p. omits: 'makes it go forth and.'

² M adds: 'and untried' and omits: 'takes . . . untried, and.'

³ E.p. modifies: 'unknown and untried by the report of any other person, and would clearly never reach new countries save by new and unknown roads, abandoning those which were known to him.'

⁴ E.p., A: 'now, walking in darkness, walks securely.'

emanates from the dark light or wisdom aforementioned. For in such a way does this dark night of contemplation absorb and immerse the soul in itself, and so near does it bring the soul to God, that it protects and delivers it from all that is not God. For this soul is now, as it were, undergoing a cure, in order that it may regain its health—its health being God Himself. His Majesty restricts it to a diet and abstinence from all things, and takes away its appetite for them all. It is like a sick man, who, if he is respected by those in his house, is carefully tended so that he may be cured ; the air is not allowed to touch him, nor may he even enjoy the light, nor must he hear footsteps, nor yet the noise of those in the house ; and he is given food that is very delicate, and even that with great moderation—food that nourishes rather than pleases him.

11. All these particularities (which are for the security and safe-keeping of the soul) are caused by this dark contemplation, because it brings the soul nearer to God. For¹ the nearer the soul approaches Him, the blacker is the darkness which it feels and the deeper is the obscurity which comes through its weakness ; just as, the nearer a man approaches the sun, the greater are the darkness and the affliction caused him through the great splendour of the sun and through the weakness and impurity² of his eyes. In the same way, so immense is the spiritual light of God, and so greatly does it transcend our natural understanding, that the nearer we approach it, the more it blinds and darkens us. And this is the reason why, in Psalm xvii, David says that God made darkness His hiding-place and covering, and His tabernacle around Him dark water in the clouds of the air.³ This dark water in the clouds of the air is dark contemplation and Divine wisdom in souls, as we are saying. They continue to feel it as a thing which is near Him, as the tabernacle wherein He dwells, when God brings them ever nearer to Himself. And thus, that which in God is supreme light and refulgence is to man blackest darkness, as S. Paul says, according as David explains in the same Psalm, saying : Because of the brightness which is in His presence, passed clouds and cataracts⁴—that is to say, over the natural under-

¹ E.p., A : ' For, in truth.'

² E.p., A add : ' and defectiveness.'

³ Psalm xvii, 12 [A.V., xviii, 11]. A alone gives the passage both in Latin and in Spanish.

⁴ Psalm xvii, 13 [A.V., xviii, 12].

standing, the light whereof, as Isaiah says in chapter v : *Obtenebrata est in caligine ejus.*¹

12. Oh, miserable is the fortune of our life, which is lived in such great peril and wherein it is so difficult to find the truth ! For the thing that is most clear and true is to us most dark and doubtful ; wherefore, though it is the thing that is most needful for us, we flee from it. And that which gives the greatest light and satisfaction to our eyes we embrace and pursue, though it be the worst thing for us, and make us fall at every step. In what peril and fear does man live, since the very natural light of his eyes by which he has to guide himself² is the first light that dazzles him and leads him astray on his road to God ! And if he is to know with certainty by what road he travels, he must perforce keep his eyes closed and walk in darkness, that he may be secure from the enemies who inhabit his own house—that is, his senses and faculties.

13. Well hidden, then, and well protected is the soul in these dark waters, when it is close to God. For as these waters serve as a tabernacle and dwelling-place for God Himself, they will serve the soul in the same way and for a perfect protection and security, though it remain in darkness, wherein, as we have said, it is hidden³ and protected from itself, and from all evils⁴ that come from creatures ; for to such the words of David refer in another Psalm, where he says : Thou shalt hide them in the hiding-place of Thy face from the disturbance of men ; Thou shalt protect them in Thy tabernacle from the contradiction of tongues.⁵ Herein we understand all kinds of protection ; for to be hidden in the face of God from the disturbance of men is to be fortified with this dark contemplation against all the chances which may come upon the soul from men. And to be protected in His tabernacle from the contradiction of tongues is for the soul to be engulfed in these dark waters, which are the tabernacle of David whereof we have spoken. Wherefore, since the soul has all its desires and affections weaned and its faculties set in darkness, it is free from all imperfections which contradict the spirit, whether they come from its own flesh or from other creatures. Wherefore this soul may well say that it journeys 'in darkness and secure.'

¹ Isaiah v, 30.

² E.p. : ' wherewith he guides himself.'

³ E.p. : ' though in darkness, where it is hidden.'

⁴ E.p., A. V. : ' and from all the other evils.'

⁵ Psalm xxx, 21 [A.V., xxxi, 20].

14. There is likewise another reason, which is no less effective than the last, by which we may understand how the soul journeys securely in darkness ;¹ it is derived from the fortitude by which the soul is at once inspired in these obscure and afflictive dark waters of God. For after all, though the waters be dark, they are none the less waters, and therefore they cannot but refresh and fortify the soul in that which is most needful for it, although in darkness and with affliction. For the soul immediately perceives in itself a true determination and an effective desire to do naught which it understands to be an offence to God, and to omit to do naught that seems to be for His service. For that dark love cleaves to the soul, causing it a most watchful care and an inward solicitude concerning that which it must do, or must not do, for His sake, in order to please Him. It will consider and ask itself a thousand times if it has given Him cause to be offended ; and all this it will do with much greater care and solicitude than before, as has already been said with respect to the yearnings of love. For here all the desires and energies and faculties of the soul are recollected from all things else, and its effort and strength are employed in pleasing its God alone.² After this manner the soul goes forth from itself and from all created things to the sweet and delectable union of love of God, ' In darkness and secure.'

By the secret ladder, disguised.

CHAPTER XVII

*Explains how this dark contemplation is secret.*³

1. Three things have to be expounded with reference to three words contained in this present line. Two (namely, 'secret' and 'ladder') belong to the dark night of contemplation of which we are treating ; the third (namely, 'disguised') belongs to the soul by reason of the manner wherein it conducts itself in this night.⁴ As to the first, it must be known that in this line the soul describes this dark

¹ E.p. : 'journeys well, though in darkness.'

² E.p. : '... of the soul, since they are recollected from all things else, employ their effort and strength in pleasing their God alone.'

³ So e.p. The codices make no division.

⁴ E.p. : 'but the third, which is 'disguised,' touches the manner wherein the soul conducts itself in this night.'