

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS

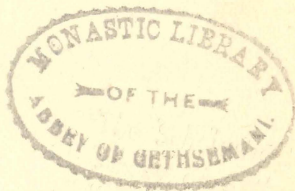
DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Translated from the critical edition of

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and edited by

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VOLUME III

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CAUTIONS

SPIRITUAL SENTENCES AND MAXIMS

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mentioned they greatly attracted S. Peter, so that he said to Christ : Lord, whither shall we go, for Thou hast the words of eternal life?¹ And the Samaritan woman forgot her water and her pitcher, because of the sweetness of the words of God. And thus, when this soul is so near to God that it is transformed in the flame of love, wherein Father, Son and Holy Spirit commune with it, how is it a thing incredible that it should be said to enjoy a foretaste of eternal life,² though this cannot be perfectly so, since that is not permitted by the conditions of this life? But the delight caused in the soul by that flaming of the Holy Spirit is so sublime that it teaches the soul what is the savour of eternal life. For this reason it speaks of the flame as living³ : not that it is not always living, but because its effect is to make the soul live spiritually in God, and experience the life of God, even as David says : My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.⁴ There was no necessity for him to use the word 'living,' since God is ever living ; he uses it to show that spirit and sense had a living experience of God, being wrought in God—which is to have experience⁵ of the living God, that is to say, the life of God and life eternal. David spoke in that passage of the living God because he had had experience of Him in a living manner, albeit not perfectly, but he had had as it were a foretaste of eternal life.⁶ And thus in this flame the soul has so living a perception of God and experiences Him with such great sweetness and delight that it says : 'Oh, living flame of love !'

That tenderly woundest

7. That is, that touchest me tenderly with Thy love. For, inasmuch as this flame is a flame of Divine life, it

¹ S. John vi, 69.

² G : 'commune with it, it can certainly be said that it enjoys eternal life.'

³ E.p. abbreviates : 'how is it a thing incredible to say that in this flaming of the Holy Spirit it enjoys a foretaste of eternal life, though this cannot be perfectly, since that is not permitted by the conditions of this life? For this reason it speaks of this flame as living.'

⁴ Psalm lxxxiii, 3 [A.V., lxxxiv, 2].

⁵ [The word translated 'have experience of' is that rendered 'be attracted by' at the beginning of this paragraph.]

⁶ E.p. gives the Scriptural text in Latin only ; then continues with only the slightest variation as far as 'experience of God' ; and finally, substitutes for 'being wrought in God' and this is to rejoice in the living God.' C has : 'experience of God, which is to have experience of [see last note] the living God—that is, the life of God and eternal life.'

wounds the soul with the tenderness of the life of God ; and so deeply and profoundly does it wound it and fill it with tenderness that it causes it to melt in love, so that there may be fulfilled in it that which came to pass to the Bride in the Song of Songs. She conceived such great tenderness that she melted away, wherefore she says in that place : When the Spouse spake, my soul melted.¹ For this is the effect that the speaking of God causes in the soul.

8. But how can we say that this flame wounds the soul, when there is nothing in the soul to be wounded, since it is wholly consumed by the fire of love ? It is a marvellous thing : for, as love is never idle, but is continually in motion, it is continually throwing out sparks, like a flame, in every direction ; and, as the office² of love is to wound, that it may enkindle with love and cause delight, so, when it is as it were a living flame, within the soul, it is ever sending forth its arrow-wounds, like most tender sparks of delicate love, joyfully and happily exercising the arts and wiles³ of love. Even so, in his palace, at his marriage, did Ahasuerus show forth his graces to Esther his bride, revealing to her there his riches⁴ and the glory of his greatness.⁵ Thus that which the Wise Man said in the Proverbs is now fulfilled in this soul, namely : I was delighted every day as I played before him alway,⁶ playing over the whole earth, and my delight is to be with the sons of men, namely, by giving myself to them.⁷ Wherefore these wounds, which are the playing of God,⁸ are the sparks of these tender touches of flame which touch the soul intermittently and proceed from the fire of love, which is not idle, but whose flames, says the stanza, strike and wound

My soul in its deepest centre,

9. For this feast of the Holy Spirit takes place in the substance of the soul, where neither the devil nor the world nor sense can enter ;⁹ and therefore the more interior it is, the more is it secure, substantial and delectable ; for the

¹ Canticles v, 6.

² G : ' the effect.'

³ E.p. : ' the arts and devices.'

⁴ G abbreviates : ' show forth his riches to Esther his bride.' E.p. : ' show forth his riches to the fair Esther.'

⁵ [Esther ii, 17-18.]

⁶ G, T, e.p. omit : ' as I played before him alway.'

⁷ [Proverbs viii, 30-1.]

⁸ E.p. : ' of Divine knowledge.'

⁹ Thus e.p. : The MSS. [and P. Silverio] read : ' where neither the centre of sense nor the devil can enter.'

capacious can it become ; and it becomes the more diffusive and communicative, according as it is the more delicate. Oh, then, Thou delicate touch, that dost infuse Thyself the more by reason of Thy delicacy, while the vessel of my soul, through this Thy touch, becomes the simpler, purer, more delicate and more capacious ! Oh, then, Thou delicate touch, so delicate that, when naught¹ is felt in the touch, Thou dost touch the soul the more, and, by penetrating deeply within it at Thy touch, Thou dost make it the more divine, according as Thy Divine Being² where-with Thou dost touch the soul is far removed from the way and manner thereof and free from all outward seeming³ of form and figure ! Oh, then, last of all, Thou delicate, most delicate touch, that touchest not the soul save with Thy most pure and simple Being, which is infinite, and therefore infinitely delicate ! Wherefore it is a touch

That savours of eternal life

19. Although this is not so in a perfect degree, there is indeed a certain savour herein of life eternal, as has been said above, which the soul tastes in this touch of God. And it is not incredible that this should be so if we believe, as we must believe, that this touch is substantial, that is to say, is a touch of the Substance of God in the substance of the soul ;⁴ and to this many holy men have attained in this life. Wherefore the delicacy of the delight which is felt in this touch is impossible of description ; nor would I willingly speak thereof, lest it should be supposed that it is no more than that which I say ; for there are no words to expound and enumerate such sublime things of God as come to pass in these souls ; whereof the proper way to speak is for one that knows them to understand them inwardly and feel them and enjoy them and be silent concerning them. For the soul in this state sees that these things are in some measure like the white stone which

¹ [Lit., 'when no bulk.']

² E.p. : 'while the vessel of my soul, through this Thy touch, is simple and pure and has capacity to receive Thee. Oh, then, Thou delicate touch, that feelest naught material within Thyself, yet dost touch the soul the more and the more deeply, changing it from the human into the divine, according as Thy Divine Being.'

³ [Lit., 'from all husk.']

⁴ E.p. : 'that this touch is most substantial and that the Substance of God touches the substance of the soul.'

sets no obstacle in the way of the guide, who is the Holy Spirit, upon the road by which God is leading it, and which is ordained according to the law of God and faith, as we say. And this impediment may come to the soul if it allows itself to be led by some blind guide ; and these blind guides that might lead it out of its way are three, namely, the spiritual director, the devil, and its own self.

29. With regard to the first of these, it is of great importance for the soul that desires to profit, and not to fall back, to consider¹ in whose hands it is placing itself ; for as is the master, so will be the disciple, and as is the father, so will be the son. There is hardly anyone who in all respects will guide the soul perfectly along the highest stretch of the road, or even along the intermediate stretches, for it is needful that such a guide should be wise and discreet and experienced. The fundamental requirement of a guide in spiritual things is knowledge and discretion ; yet, if a guide have no experience of the higher part of the road, he will be unable to direct the soul therein, when God leads it so far. A guide might even do the soul great harm if, not himself understanding the way of the spirit,² he should cause the soul, as often happens, to lose the unction of these delicate ointments, wherewith the Holy Spirit gradually prepares it for Himself, and if instead of this he should guide the soul by other and lower paths of which he has read here and there, and which are suitable only for beginners. Such guides know no more than how to deal with beginners—please God they may know even so much !—and refuse to allow souls to go beyond these rudimentary acts of meditation and imagination, even though God is seeking to lead them farther, so that they may never exceed or depart from their natural capacity,³ whereby they can achieve very little.

30. And in order that we may understand this the better, we must know that the state of beginners comprises meditation and discursive acts. In this state, it is necessary for the soul to be given material for meditation, and to make interior acts on its own account, and take advantage of the spiritual heat and fire which come from sense ; this is necessary in order to accustom the senses and desires to good things, so that, by being fed with this delight, they may

¹ C adds ' most diligently ' and omits ' great ' earlier in the sentence.

² E.p. : ' the roads of the spirit.'

³ E.p. omits : ' so that . . . capacity.'

become detached from the world. But, when this has been to some extent effected, God begins to bring the soul into the state of contemplation, which is wont to happen very quickly, especially in religious, because these, having renounced things of the world, quickly attune their senses and desires to God ; and then they have nothing to do save to pass from meditation to contemplation, which happens when the discursive acts and the meditation of the soul itself cease, and the first fervours and sweetness of sense cease likewise, so that the soul cannot meditate as before, or find any help in the senses ; for the senses remain in a state of aridity, inasmuch as their treasure is transformed into spirit, and no longer falls within the capacity of sense. And, as all the operations which the soul can perform on its own account naturally depend upon sense only, it follows that God is the agent in this state and the soul is the recipient ; for the soul behaves only as one that receives and as one in whom these things are being wrought ; and God as One that gives and acts and as One that works these things in the soul, giving it spiritual blessings in contemplation,¹ which is Divine love and knowledge in one—that is, a loving knowledge, wherein the soul has not to use its natural acts and meditations, for it can no longer enter into them as before.

31. It follows that at this time the soul must be led in a way entirely contrary to the way wherein it was led at first. If formerly it was given material for meditation, and practised meditation, this material must now be taken from it and it must not meditate ; for, as I say, it will be unable to do so even though it would, and it will become distracted. And if formerly it sought sweetness and fervour, and found it, now it must neither seek it nor desire it, for not only will it be unable to find it through its own diligence, but it will rather find aridity, for it turns from the quiet and peaceful blessings which were secretly given to its spirit, to the work that it desires to do with sense ; and thus it will lose the one and not obtain the other, since no blessings are now given to it by means of sense as they were formerly. Wherefore in this state the soul must never have meditation imposed upon it, nor must it perform any acts, nor strive

¹ E.p. : ' that God in this state is in a special way the agent who infuses and teaches, and the soul is one that receives, [to whom He is] giving very spiritual blessings in contemplation.'

unite it with Himself in some act, it would place an effective impediment in the way of the blessings which God is communicating to it supernaturally in loving knowledge.¹ This comes to pass first of all in the exercise of purgation,² as we have said above, and afterwards in increased sweetness of love. If, as I say, and as in truth is the case, the soul continues to receive these blessings passively and after the supernatural manner of God, and not after the manner of the natural soul,³ it follows that, in order to receive them, this soul must be quite disencumbered, at ease, peaceful and serene, according to the manner of God ; like the air, which receives greater illumination and heat from the sun when it is pure and cleansed and at rest. And thus the soul must be attached to nothing—nay, not even to any kind of meditation or sweetness, whether of sense or of spirit. For the spirit needs to be so free and so completely annihilated that any thought⁴ or meditation that the soul in this state might desire, or any pleasure to which it may conceive an attachment, would impede and disturb it and would introduce noise into the deep silence which it is meet that the soul should observe, according both to sense and to spirit, so that it may hear the deep and delicate voice of God which speaks to the heart in this secret place, as He said through Hosea,⁵ in the utmost peace and tranquillity, so that the soul may listen and hear, as David heard, the words of God, when He speaks this peace in the soul. When this comes to pass, and the soul is conscious of being led into silence, and hearkens, it must forget even that loving awareness of which I have spoken, so that it may remain free for that which is then desired of it ; for it must exercise that awareness only when it is not conscious of being brought into solitude or rest or forgetfulness or attentiveness of the spirit, which is always accompanied by a certain interior absorption.⁶

¹ E.p. omits : ' whereof we have spoken ' and continues ' reasoning [i.e. meditating] not as formerly, it would place an impediment in the way of the blessings which God is communicating to it in loving knowledge.'

² C : ' in loving knowledge in the exercise of purgation.'

³ E.p. : ' after the manner of God and not after the manner of the soul.'

⁴ E.p. : ' any particular thought.'

⁵ Hosea ii, 14.

⁶ E.p. : ' and hearkens, even the loving awareness of which I have spoken must be most pure, without any anxiety or reflection, so that the soul almost forgets it through being wholly occupied in hearing, in order that it may remain free for that which is then desired of it.'

33. Wherefore¹ at no time or season, when once the soul has begun to enter into this pure and restful state of contemplation, must it seek to gather to itself meditations, neither must it desire to find help in spiritual sweetness or delight,² but it must stand in complete detachment above all this and its spirit must be freed from it, as the prophet Habakkuk said that he must needs do, in these words : I will stand upon my watch over my senses—that is, leaving them below—and I will fix my step upon the munition of my faculties—that is, not allowing them to advance a step in thought—and I will watch to see that which will be said unto me—that is, I will receive that which is communicated to me.³ For we have already said that contemplation is receiving, and it is not possible that this loftiest wisdom and lineage of contemplation can be received save in a spirit that is silent and detached from⁴ sweetness and knowledge. For this is that which is said by Isaiah, in these words : Whom shall He teach knowledge and whom shall He make to hear⁵ that which is heard? Them that are weaned from milk—that is, from sweetness and pleasures—and them that are drawn from the breasts—that is, from attachment to particular acts and knowledge. Take away the mist and the mote and the hairs, and cleanse thine eye, and the bright sun shall shine upon thee, and thou shalt see. Set the soul in the liberty of peace, and draw it away from the yoke and slavery of its operation, which is the captivity of Egypt ; for all this is little more than gathering straw to make bricks ; and lead it to the promised land flowing with milk and honey.⁶

34. Oh, spiritual director, remember that it is to give the soul this freedom and holy rest which belongs to His sons that God calls it into the wilderness. There it journeys clad in festal robes, and with jewels of silver and of gold, having now despoiled Egypt⁷ and taken away its riches.

¹ E.p. : ' This manner and [*sic*] forgetfulness is always accompanied by a certain interior absorption. Wherefore, etc.'

² E.p. adds : ' as is said at length in the tenth chapter of the first book of the *Dark Night*, and previously in the last chapter of the second book, and in the first chapter [*the second in our edition*] of the third book of the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*.'

³ [Habakkuk ii, 1.] E.p. adds ' passively.'

⁴ E.p. : ' from particular.'

⁵ E.p. : ' to understand.'

⁶ Isaiah xxviii, 9.

⁷ Gr, P add : ' which is the sensual part.'

And not only so, but the Egyptians are drowned¹ in the sea of contemplation, where the Egyptian of sense finds no support or foothold, and sets free the child of God—that is, the spirit that has gone forth from the narrow limits and bounds of natural operation (which is to say from its lowly understanding, its crude perception, and its miserable liking)—so that God may give it the sweet manna; and, though the sweetness of this contains within itself all these sweetnesses and delights for which thou desirest to make the soul work, nevertheless, being so delicious that it melts in the mouth, the soul shall not taste of it if it desire to taste of any other delight or aught else, for it shall not receive it. Endeavour, then, to detach² the soul from all coveting of sweetness, pleasure and meditation, and disturb it not with care and solicitude of any kind for higher things, still less for lower things, but bring it into the greatest possible degree of solitude and withdrawal. For the more the soul attains of all this, and the sooner it reaches this restful tranquillity, the more abundantly does it become infused with the spirit of Divine wisdom, the loving, tranquil, lonely, peaceful, sweet ravisher of the spirit. At times the soul will feel itself to be tenderly and serenely ravished and wounded, knowing not by whom, nor whence, nor how, since the Spirit communicates Himself without any act on the part of the soul.³

35. And the smallest part of this that God brings to pass in the soul in holy rest and solitude is an inestimable blessing, greater than either the soul itself, or he that guides it, can imagine; and, if this be not realized at the time, it will in due course become manifest. But now, at least, the soul will be able to attain to a perception of estrangement and withdrawal from all things, sometimes more so than at others, together with a sweet aspiration of love and life in the spirit, and with an inclination to solitude and a sense of weariness with regard to creatures and the world. For, when the soul tastes of the spirit, it conceives a distaste for all that pertains to the flesh.

36. But the interior blessings that this silent contemplation leaves impressed upon the soul without its perception of

¹ [*Lit.*, 'they are drowned.'] E.p.: 'but it drowns its enemies' C: 'but it drowns the Egyptians.'

² E.p.: 'to uproot.'

³ E.p. adds: 'in the sense aforementioned.'

them are, as I say, inestimable ; for they are in fact the most secret and delicate anointings of the Holy Spirit, whereby He secretly fills the soul with riches and gifts and graces, for, after all, being God, He acts as God.¹ These blessings, then, and these great riches, these sublime and delicate anointings and touches of the Holy Spirit, which, on account of their delicate and subtle purity, can be understood neither by the soul nor by him that has to do with it, but only by Him Who infuses them, in order to make the soul more pleasing to Himself: these blessings, with the greatest² facility, by even the very slightest of such acts as the soul may desire to make by applying its sense or desire to the attainment of some knowledge or sweetness or pleasure, are disturbed and hindered, which is a grave evil and a great shame and pity.

37. Ah, how serious is this matter, and what cause it gives for wonder, that the harm done should be imperceptible, and the hindrance which has been interposed almost negligible ; and yet that this harm that has been done should be a matter for greater sorrow and regret than the perturbation and ruin of many souls of a more ordinary nature³ which have not attained to this state of such supreme fineness and delicacy. It is as though a portrait of supreme beauty were touched by the rudest hand, and were daubed with strange and crude colours. This would be a greater and more striking shame than if many more ordinary portraits were besmeared in this way, and it would be a matter of greater grief and pity. For when the work of so delicate a hand has been so roughly treated, who will be able to restore its beauty?⁴

38. Although this evil is so great that it cannot be exaggerated, it is so common that there will hardly be found a single spiritual director who does not inflict it upon souls whom God is beginning, in this way, to draw nearer to Himself⁵ in contemplation. For, whenever God is anointing the soul with some most delicate unction of loving knowledge—serene, peaceful, lonely and very far removed

¹ E.p. adds: ' and works as God.'

² C, G: ' the most welcome ' [*gratisima* for *grandísima*].

³ E.p.: ' than one which would appear much greater in ordinary souls.'

⁴ E.p. omits this sentence. G has: ' For who will be able to amend and perfect that which was wrought by that Divine hand and which this [unskilful director] spoils with his lack of comprehension? '

⁵ [The verb is *recoger*, from which is derived *recogimiento*, ' recollection. ']

are not agents, but only instruments to lead souls in the rule of faith and the law of God, according to the spirituality that God is giving to each one. Let them not, therefore, merely aim at guiding a soul according to their own way and the manner suitable to themselves, but let them see if they know the way by which God is leading the soul, and if they know it not, let them leave the soul in peace and not disturb it. And, in conformity with this, let them seek to lead the soul into greater solitude and liberty and tranquillity, and to give it a certain freedom so that the bodily and spiritual senses may not be bound to anything when God leads them in this way, and let them not worry or grieve, thinking that the soul is doing nothing. For when the soul is detached from all knowledge of its own, and from every desire and all affections of its sensual part, and dwells in the pure negation of poverty of spirit, wholly emptied of the mists of sweetness, wholly weaned from the breast and from milk, which is what the soul must be careful to do, as far as in it lies, the director must aid the soul to deny itself in all these ways, and it is then impossible¹ that God will not perform His own part. It is more impossible than that the sun should fail to shine in a serene and unclouded sky ; for as the sun, when it rises in the morning and shines into your house, will enter if you open the shutter,² even so will God, Who keeps Israel and slumbers not, still less sleeps,³ enter the soul that is empty and fill it with blessings.

41. God, like the sun, is above our souls and ready to enter them. Let spiritual directors, then, be content with preparing the soul according to evangelical perfection, which consists in the detachment and emptiness of sense and of spirit ; and let them not seek to go beyond this in the building up of the soul, for that work belongs only to the Lord, from Whom comes down every perfect gift.⁴ For, if the Lord build not the house, in vain does he labour that builds it ;⁵ and in every soul, in the manner that seems good to Him, He will build a supernatural building. Prepare, then, the nature of the soul, and annihilate its operations, for these disturb rather than help. That is your office ; and the office of God, as the Wise Man says,⁶ is to direct the

¹ E.p. adds : ' according to the method of procedure of the Divine goodness and mercy.'

² C, G : ' the window.' E.p. : ' if you open the door.'

³ Psalm cxx, 4 [A.V., cxxi, 4].

⁴ S. James i, 17.

⁵ Psalm cxxvi, 1 [A.V., cxxvii, 1].

⁶ [Proverbs xvi, 9.]

soul to supernatural blessings by ways and in manners whereof neither you nor the soul can know anything. Say not, again : ' Oh, you are making no progress, for you are doing nothing !' For if the understanding of the soul¹ at that time has no more pleasure in objects of the understanding than formerly, it is making progress in walking towards the supernatural. And say not : ' Oh, but you understand nothing distinctly.' For if the soul were to understand anything distinctly,² it would be making no progress, for God is incomprehensible and transcends the understanding ; and thus the greater the progress it makes, the farther it must withdraw from itself, walking in faith, believing and not understanding ;³ and thus it approaches God more nearly by not understanding than by understanding. Wherefore grieve not at this, for if the understanding goes not backward and desires not to occupy itself with distinct knowledge and other ideas pertaining to this world, it is making progress. For in this case not to go backward is to go forward ; it is to progress in faith,⁴ for when the understanding knows not, neither can know, what God is, it is walking toward Him by not understanding ; and thus what you are condemning in your penitent is fitting for his good, rather than that he should embarrass himself with distinct kinds of understanding.⁵

42. ' Oh,' you will say, ' but if the understanding understands not distinctly, the will at least will be idle and will not love, for it is impossible to love that which one understands not.' It is true that, chiefly in the natural acts and operations of the soul, the will loves only that of which the understanding has distinct knowledge. But in the contemplation⁶ of which we are speaking, wherein God, as we have said, infuses into the soul, there is no necessity for distinct knowledge, nor for the soul to perform any acts, for God, in one act, is communicating⁷ to the soul loving knowledge, which at one and the same time is like light giving heat without any distinction being perceptible

¹ E.p. omits : ' the understanding of.'

² E.p. adds : ' at that time.'

³ E.p. : ' and not seeing.'

⁴ P, e.p. : ' For to go forward is to progress in faith.'

⁵ E.p. adds : ' and not walk in perfect faith.'

⁶ E.p. : ' But in the period of contemplation.'

⁷ E.p. : ' nor for the soul to engage in much reasoning, for at that time God is communicating.'

between the two, and at that time as is understanding, even so is love in the will. As this knowledge is general and dark, and the understanding is unable to understand distinctly that which it understands, the will likewise loves in a general way without the making of any distinction. And, as God in this delicate communication is both light and love, He informs these two faculties equally, though at times the one is more deeply affected than the other. At times, therefore, the soul is more conscious of understanding than of love, and at other times it is more conscious of love¹ than of understanding; and at times all is understanding, and there is hardly any love; while at other times all is love and there is no understanding. And thus, as far as the acts are concerned which the soul performs on its own account, there can be no love without understanding; but in the acts which God performs in the soul, it is different, for He can communicate Himself in the one faculty and not in the other. Thus He can enkindle the will by means of a touch of the heat of His love, although the understanding may have no understanding thereof, just as a person can receive heat from a fire without seeing that he is near the fire. And in this way the will may oftentimes feel itself to be enkindled or filled with tenderness and love without knowing or understanding anything more distinctly than before, since God is introducing love into it, even as the Bride says in the Songs, in these words: The King introduced me into the cellar of wine, and ordained love in me.²

43. There is no reason, therefore, to fear that the will may be idle in this state; for, if it ceases to perform acts concerning particular kinds of knowledge, as far as its own efforts are concerned, God performs them within it, inebriating it in infused love, either by means of the knowledge of contemplation, or without such knowledge, as we have just said; and these acts are as much better than those made by the soul and as much more meritorious³ and

¹ E.p. has 'of more intense love,' and omits the rest of the paragraph'

² Canticles ii, 4.

³ E.p.: 'And therefore there is no reason to fear that the soul will be idle in this state; for, if it ceases to perform acts governed by particular kinds of knowledge, as far as its own efforts are concerned, He inebriates it, nevertheless, in infused love, by means of the knowledge of contemplation, as we have just said; and these acts which are performed through following infused contemplation are as much better and as much more meritorious.'

delectable, as the mover and infuser of this love¹—namely, God—is better than the soul ; and God establishes love in the soul because the will is near God and is detached from other pleasures. The soul must therefore see to it that the will is empty and stripped of its affections ; for if it is not going backward and desiring to experience some sweetness or pleasure, it is going forward, even though it have no particular perception of this in God, and it is soaring upward to God above all things, since it takes no pleasure in anything. It is going toward God, although it may be taking no particular and distinct delight in Him, nor may be loving Him with any distinct act, for it is taking greater pleasure in Him secretly, by means of that dark and general infusion of love, than it does in all things that are distinct,² for it sees clearly in this state that nothing gives it so much pleasure as that solitary quiet. And it is loving Him above all things that can be loved since it has flung from itself all other kinds of sweetness and pleasure which have become distasteful to it. And there is thus no reason to be troubled, for, if the will can find no sweetness and pleasure in particular acts, it is going forward ; for to refrain from going backward and from embracing anything that belongs to sense is to go forward towards the inaccessible, which is God, and thus there is no wonder that the soul has no perception thereof.³ Wherefore, in order to journey to God, the will has rather to be continually detaching itself from everything delectable and pleasant than to be conceiving an attachment to it. In this way it completely fulfils the precept of love, which is to love God above all things ; and this cannot be unless it have spiritual emptiness and detachment⁴ with regard to them all.⁵

44. Neither is there any cause for misgivings when the memory is voided of its forms and figures, for, since God has no form or figure, the memory is safe if it be voided of form or figure, and it is approaching God the more nearly ; for, the more it is attached to the imagination, the farther it is going from God, and the greater is the peril wherein

¹ E.p. : ' the mover who infuses this love.'

² E.p. : ' than if it were governed by distinct kinds of knowledge.'

³ E.p. omits : ' and thus . . . thereof.'

⁴ Thus B, C, G, Gr., P. T, e.p. : ' special emptiness.'

⁵ E.p. : ' and if this is to happen with all perfection, it must happen with this special emptiness and detachment as to them all.'

it walks, since God is incomprehensible and therefore cannot be apprehended by the imagination.

45. Such directors as we have been describing fail to understand souls that have attained to this solitary and quiet contemplation,¹ because they themselves have not advanced beyond a very ordinary kind of meditation, or similar act, nor perhaps have even arrived so far; and they think, as I have said, that these souls are idle, because the animal man—that is, one that advances not beyond the animal feelings of the sensual part of the soul—perceives not, as S. Paul says, the things that are of God.² Wherefore they disturb the peace of this quiet and hushed contemplation which God has been giving these souls by His own power, and they make their penitents meditate and reason and perform acts, not without causing them great displeasure, repugnance, aridity and distraction, since their souls would fain remain in their quiet and peaceful state of recollection; but their directors persuade them to strive after sweetness and fervour, though they ought rather to advise them the contrary. The penitents, however, are unable to do as they did previously, and can enter into none of these things, for the time for them has now passed and they belong no more to their proper path; but the penitents are doubly disturbed, and believe that they are going to perdition; and their directors encourage them in this belief, and bring aridity to their spirits, and take from them the precious unctions wherewith God was anointing them in solitude and tranquillity. This, as I have said, is a great evil; their directors are plunging them into mire and mourning³ for they are losing one thing and labouring without profit at the other.

46. Such persons have no knowledge of what is meant by spirituality, and they offer a great insult and great irreverence to God, by laying their coarse hands where God is working. For it has cost Him dearly to bring these souls to this place and He greatly esteems having brought

¹ G continues, after 'wherein it walks': 'and the farther it withdraws itself from it [i.e. the imagination], the more surely it journeys. And those [directors] who are not experienced cannot properly understand these souls, nor do they know that the Lord is keeping them in this state of quiet contemplation.'

² 1 Corinthians ii, 14.

³ [i.e. mourning for what they lose and the mire of their present unhappy state from which they strive to get free.]

STANZA THE FIRST

Oh, living flame of love That tenderly woundest my soul in its deepest centre,¹

Since thou art no longer oppressive, perfect me now if it be thy will, Break the web of this sweet encounter.

EXPOSITION.

1. The soul feels itself to be at last wholly enkindled in Divine union, and its palate to be wholly bathed in glory and love, and from the inmost part² of its substance to be flowing rivers of glory, abounding in delights, for it perceives that from its belly are flowing the rivers of living water which the Son of God said would flow from such souls.³ It seems to this soul that, since it is transformed in God with such vehemence and is in so lofty a way possessed of Him, and is adorned with such marvellous riches and gifts and virtues, it is very near to bliss, from which it is divided only by a slender web. And, seeing that that delicate flame of love that burns within it is, as it were, glorifying it with a glory both gentle and powerful whensoever it assails it, to such a degree that, whensoever it is absorbed and assailed, it believes that it is about to enter upon eternal life⁴ and that this web of mortal life will be broken, and that there remains but a very short space of time, yet during this space it cannot be perfectly glorified in its essence, the soul addresses this flame, which is the Holy Spirit, with great yearning, begging Him now to break this its mortal life in that sweet encounter, so that of a truth He may communicate to it perfectly that which it believes Him to be about to give to it whensoever He meets it—namely, complete and perfect glory. And thus the soul says :

Oh, living flame of love

¹ P : ' That tenderly woundest the deepest centre of my soul ! '

² Bg, C, P : ' from the last part. '

³ S. John vii, 38.

⁴ Bg, P : ' eternal life and glory. '

2. In order to extol the fervour and delight wherewith it speaks in these four stanzas, the soul begins each of them with the word 'Oh' or 'How,' which words signify affectionate exultation. Each time that they are used they show that something is passing within the soul beyond that which can be expressed by the tongue. And the word 'Oh' serves also to express a deep yearning and earnest supplication with the aim of persuasion; for both these reasons the soul uses that word in this stanza, intimating and extolling its great desire, and endeavouring to persuade love to set it free.¹

3. This flame of love is the Spirit of its Spouse—that is, the Holy Spirit. And this flame the soul feels within it, not only as a fire that has consumed and transformed it in sweet love, but also as a fire which burns within it and sends out flame, as I have said, and that flame, each time that it breaks into flame, bathes the soul in glory and refreshes it with the temper of Divine life. And this is the operation of the Holy Spirit in the soul that is transformed in love, that His interior actions cause it to send out flames, which are the enkindling of love, wherein the will of the soul is united, and it loves most deeply, being made one with that flame in love. And thus these acts of love of the soul are most precious,² and even one of them is of greater merit and worth than all that the soul has done in its life apart from this transformation, however much this may be. Like to the difference that exists between a habit and an act is that which exists between transformation in love and the flame of love; it is the same difference as that between the log of wood that is enkindled and the flame which it sends forth, for the flame is the effect of the fire that burns there.

4. Wherefore it may be said that the soul that is in this state of transformation of love is in its ordinary habit, and that it is like to the log of wood that is continually assailed by the fire; and the acts of this soul are the flame that arises from the fire of love: the more intense is the fire of union, the more vehemently does its flame issue forth. In this flame the acts of the will are united and rise upward, being carried away and absorbed in the flame of the Holy Spirit, even as the angel rose upward to God in the flame

¹ Bz: 'to desire it.' Bg., P read as in the text, but add: 'from mortal flesh.'

² Bg, P: 'most pure.'

of the sacrifice of Manoah.¹ In this state, therefore, the soul can perform no acts, but it is the Holy Spirit that performs them and moves it to perform them ; wherefore all its acts are Divine, since it is impelled and moved to them by God. Hence it seems to the soul that whensoever this flame breaks forth, causing it to love with the Divine temper and sweetness, it is granting it eternal life, since it raises it to the operation of God in God.

5. This is the language used by God when He speaks to souls that are purified and clean : words wholly enkindled,² even as David said : Thy word is vehemently enkindled.³ And the Prophet asked : Are not my words like to fire ?⁴ These words, as God Himself says, through S. John, are spirit and life,⁵ and are felt to be such by souls that have ears to hear them, who, as I say, are souls that are pure and enkindled with love. But those that have not a healthy palate,⁶ and desire other things, cannot perceive the spirit and life that these words contain, but rather find insipidity in them. For this reason, the loftier were the words spoken by the Son of God, the more they displeased certain persons because of these persons' impurity, as when the Lord preached that sweet⁷ and loving doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, and many of His hearers turned back.⁸

6. Because such persons are not attracted by this language of God, which He speaks inwardly, they must not think that others will not be attracted by them. On the occasion here mentioned they greatly attracted S. Peter, so that he said to Christ : Lord, whither shall we go, for Thou hast the words of eternal life ?⁹ And the Samaritan woman forgot her water and her pitcher, because of the sweetness of the words of God. And thus, when this soul is so near to God that it is transformed in the flame of love, wherein the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit commune with it, how is it a thing incredible that it should be said to enjoy a foretaste of eternal life, though this cannot be perfectly so, since that is not permitted by the conditions of this life ? But the delight caused in the soul by that flaming of the Holy Spirit is so sublime that it teaches the soul what is the savour of eternal life. For this reason it speaks of the

¹ Judges xiii, 20.

² Bg, P : ' these words are wholly enkindled.'

³ Psalm cxviii, 40.

⁴ Jeremiah xxiii, 29.

⁵ S. John vi, 64.

⁶ Bg, P : ' that keep not their palate clean.

⁷ S : ' that sovereign.'

⁸ [S. John vi, 67.]

⁹ S. John vi, 69.

flame as living ; not that it is not always living, but because its effect is to make the soul live spiritually in God, and experience¹ the life of God, even as David says : My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.² There was no necessity for him to use the word 'living,'³ since God is ever living ; he uses it to show that spirit and sense had a living experience of God, being wrought in God⁴—which is to have experience⁵ of the living God, that is to say, the life of God and life eternal. David spoke in that passage of the living God because he had had experience of Him in a living manner, albeit not perfectly, but he had had, as it were, a foretaste of eternal life. And thus in this flame the soul has so living⁶ a perception of God and experiences Him with such great sweetness and delight that it says : 'Oh, living flame of love !'

That tenderly woundest

7. That is, that touchest me tenderly with Thy heat. For, inasmuch as this flame is a flame of Divine life, it wounds the soul with the tenderness of the life of God ; and so deeply and profoundly does it wound it and fill it with tenderness that it causes it to melt in love, so that there may be fulfilled in it that which came to pass to the Bride in the Song of Songs. She conceived such great tenderness that she melted away, wherefore she says in that place : When the Spouse spake, my soul melted.⁷ For this is the effect that the speaking of God causes in the soul.

8. But how can we say that this flame wounds the soul, when there is nothing in the soul to be wounded, since it is wholly consumed⁸ by the fire of love ? It is a marvellous thing : for, as love is never idle, but is continually in movement, it is continually throwing out sparks, like a flame, in every direction ; and, as the office of love is to wound, that it may enkindle with love and cause delight, so, when it is, as it were, a living flame within the soul, it is ever sending forth its arrow-wounds, like most tender sparks of delicate love, joyfully and happily exercising the arts and wiles of love. Even so, in his palace,⁹ at his

¹ Bg, P : 'and live.'

² Psalm lxxxiii, 3 [A.V., lxxxiv, 2].

³ Bg., P : 'to use the words "living God."'

⁴ Bg, P : 'being made living in God.'

⁵ [Cf. p. 22, n. 5, above.]

⁶ Bz : 'has so certain.'

⁷ Canticles v, 6.

⁸ Bg, P : 'wholly captivated and consumed.'

⁹ Bg, P : 'in the palace of his love.'

there should be fulfilled that which was promised by the Son of God—namely that, if any man loved Him, the Holy Spirit would come within him and would abide and dwell in him.¹ And this comes to pass when the understanding is divinely illumined in the wisdom of the Son, and the will is made glad in the Holy Spirit, and the Father, with His power and strength, absorbs the soul in the embrace and abyss of His sweetness.²

16. And if, as is truly the case, this habitually comes to pass in certain souls, it is credible that such a soul as that whereof we are speaking will not be backward in receiving these favours from God. For that which we are describing as coming to pass in it, through the operation of the Holy Spirit which He brings about in it, is much greater than that which comes to pass in the communication and transformation of love. For the one is like a burning coal ; but the other, as we have said, is like a coal heated with such fervency³ that it not only burns, but gives forth living flame. And thus these two kinds of union—that is, of union alone, and of love and union with enkindling of love—are in a certain way comparable respectively to the fire of God which, says Isaiah, is in Sion, and to the furnace of God which is in Jerusalem.⁴ The one signifies the Church Militant, wherein is the fire of charity enkindled to no extreme degree ; and the other signifies the vision of peace, which is the Church Triumphant, where this fire is as in a furnace enkindled in perfection of love. Although, as we said, this soul has not attained to such perfection as this, yet, in comparison with the other and common union, it is like a furnace enkindled, and its vision is as much more peaceful and glorious and tender as the flame is brighter and more resplendent than that of a burning coal.

17. Therefore, when the soul feels that this living flame of love is communicating all blessings to it after a living manner, because this Divine love brings everything with it, it says : ‘ Oh, living flame of love, that tenderly woundest.’ This is as though it were to say : Oh, love enkindled, that with thy loving movements art delectably glorifying me according to the capacity and power of my soul—that is to

¹ S. John xiv, 23.

² So C, S. Bz : ‘ in the delectable embrace of His sweetness.’ Bg, P : ‘ in the embrace of His sweetness.’

³ Bz : ‘ a coal which will absorb so much fire.’

⁴ Isaiah xxxi, 9.

say, art giving me Divine intelligence according to the ability and capacity of my understanding, and communicating love to me according to the utmost power of my will, and delighting me in the substance of the soul with the torrent of thy delight, in thy Divine contact and substantial union, according to the utmost purity of my substance and the capacity and freedom of my memory. This comes to pass, and in a greater degree than it is possible for the soul to describe, at the time when this flame of love uprises in it. Inasmuch as the soul has been well purged¹ with respect to its substance and to its faculties—memory, understanding and will—the Divine Substance,² which, as the Wise Man says, toucheth all things by reason of its pureness,³ absorbs it in a profound and subtle and sublime manner; and in that absorption of the soul in wisdom, the Holy Spirit brings to pass the glorious vibrations of His flame;⁴ and, since it is so sweet, the soul then says:

Since thou art no longer oppressive,⁵

18. That is to say, since thou dost no longer afflict or oppress or weary as thou didst aforetime. For it must be known that this flame of God, when the soul was in the state of spiritual purgation—that is, when it was entering upon contemplation—was not as friendly and sweet to it as it now is in this state of union. And we must tarry here for some time in order to explain how this comes to pass.

19. Here it must be known that, before this Divine fire of love is introduced into the substance of the soul, and is united with it, by means of a purity and purgation which is perfect and complete, this flame, which is the Holy Spirit, is wounding the soul, and destroying and consuming in it the imperfections of its evil habits; and this is the operation of the Holy Spirit, wherein He prepares it for Divine union⁶ and the transformation of love in God. For it must be known that the same fire of love which afterwards is united with the soul and glorifies it is that which aforetime assailed it in order to purge it; even as the fire that penetrates the log of wood is the same that first of all attacked and wounded it with its flame, cleansing and stripping it of its accidents of

¹ Bg, P add: 'and made pure.'

² Bg, P: 'the Divine Wisdom.'

³ Wisdom vii, 24.

⁵ [Cf. p. 27, n. 4, above.]

⁴ C: 'of His soul' [*alma* for *llama*].

⁶ S: 'for due union.'

ugliness,¹ until, by means of its heat, it had prepared it to such a degree that it could enter it and transform it into itself, which is what spiritual persons call the Purgative Way. In this operation the soul endures great suffering and experiences grievous afflictions in its spirit, which habitually overflow into the senses, at which times this flame is very oppressive. For in this preparatory state of purgation the flame is not bright to it, but dark, and if it gives it any light at all, it is only that it may see and feel its own faults and miseries. Neither is it sweet to it, but grievous ; for, although at times it kindles within it the heat of love, this is accompanied by torment and affliction. And it is not delectable to it, but arid ; for, although at times, through its benignity, it gives the soul a certain amount of comfort which will strengthen and encourage it, yet, both before and after this happens, it compensates and recompenses it with further trials. Nor does it bring it either refreshment or peace, but consumes and accuses it, making it faint and grieve at its own self-knowledge. And thus it is not glorious to it ; rather it makes it miserable and bitter, by means of the spiritual light of self-knowledge which it sheds upon it ;² for God sends fire, as Jeremiah says, into its bones, and instructs it, and, as David says likewise, tries it by fire.

20. And thus at this time the soul also suffers great darkness with respect to the understanding, great aridities and afflictions with respect to the will, and grievous knowledge of its miseries in the memory, inasmuch as its spiritual eye is very bright with respect to self-knowledge. And in its substance the soul suffers from abandonment and the greatest³ poverty. Dry and cold, and at times hot, it finds relief in naught, nor is there any thought⁴ that can console it, nor can it even raise its heart to God, since this flame has become so oppressive to it. Even so, says Job, did God treat him in this operation, where he says : Thou hast changed and become cruel to me.⁵ For, when the soul suffers all these things together, it seems to it in truth that God has become cruel to it and bitter.⁶

21. The sufferings of the soul at this time are indescribable : they are, indeed, very little less than those of purga-

¹ [*Lit.*, 'its ugly accidents.'] C : 'its cold accidents.'

² Bz omits : 'by means . . . sheds upon it.'

³ Bg, P : 'the profoundest.'

⁵ Job xxx, 21.

⁴ Bz, C : 'a thought.'

⁶ [*Lit.*, 'and tasteless.']

an hundredfold of consolation and delight in this life, so that the soul may very well now say: 'And pays every debt.'

24. And, in order that we may know what debts are these which the soul now recognizes as paid, it must be known that in the ordinary way no soul can attain to this lofty state and kingdom of the betrothal without first having passed through many tribulations and trials, since, as is said in the Acts of the Apostles, it behoves us to enter through many tribulations into the kingdom of the heavens;¹ which things have in this state passed, for henceforth the soul, being purified, has no more suffering.

25. The trials which are suffered by those that are to come to this state are of three kinds, namely: trials and afflictions, fears and temptations which come from the world, and that in many ways—temptations and aridities and afflictions relating to sense; tribulations, darkneses, perils,² abandonments, temptations and other trials relating to the spirit, so that in this way the soul may be purged according both to its spiritual and to its sensual part, in the way that we described in the exposition of the fourth line of the first stanza. And the reason why these trials are necessary for the soul that is to reach this state is that, just as a liquor of great excellence is placed only in a strong vessel, which has been made ready and purified, so this most lofty union³ cannot belong to a soul that has not been fortified by trials and temptations, and purified with tribulations, darkneses and perils, one of which classes purifies and fortifies sense and the other refines and purifies and disposes the spirit.⁴ For even as impure spirits, in order to be united with God in glory, pass through the pains of fire in the life to come, even so, in order to reach the union of perfection in this life, they must pass through the fire of these said pains, a fire which burns more violently in some and less so in others, and for longer in some than in others, according to the degree of union to which God is pleased to raise them and conformably with the degree of purgation which they have to undergo.

26. By means of these trials whereinto God leads the soul and the senses, the soul gradually acquires virtues, strength and perfection, together with bitterness, for virtue is made

¹ Acts xiv, 21 [A.V., xiv, 22].

² C: 'appetites.'

³ Bg, P: 'unction.'

⁴ Bg, P: 'refines and purges the spirit.'

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perfect in weakness,¹ and is wrought by the experience of sufferings. For iron cannot adapt itself and be subservient to the intelligence of the artificer, unless he use fire and a hammer, like the fire which Jeremiah says that God put into his understanding, saying : He sent fire into my bones and taught me.² And Jeremiah likewise says of the hammer : Thou hast chastised me, Lord, and I have been taught.³ Even so the Preacher says : He that is not tempted, what can he know, and he that hath no experience knoweth little.⁴

27. And here it behoves us to note the reason why there are so few that attain to this lofty state of the perfection of union with God. It must be known that it is not because God is pleased that there should be few⁵ raised to this high spiritual state, for it would rather please Him that all souls should be perfect, but it is rather that He finds few vessels which can bear so high and lofty a work. For, when He proves them in small things and finds them weak and sees that they at once flee from labour, and desire not to submit to the least discomfort or mortification,⁶ He finds that they are not strong and faithful in the little things wherein He has granted them the favour of beginning to purge and fashion them, and sees that they will be much less so in great things ; so He goes no farther with their purification, neither lifts them up from the dust of the earth, since greater constancy and fortitude would be necessary for this than they exhibit. And thus there are many who desire to make progress and constantly entreat God to bring them and let them pass to this state of perfection, and when it pleases God to begin to bring them through⁷ the first trials and mortifications, as is necessary, they are unwilling to pass through them, and flee away, to escape from the narrow road of life and seek the broad road of their own consolation, which is that of their perdition, and thus they give God no opportunity, refusing to receive what they have asked when He begins to give it to them. And so they are like useless vessels : they would fain arrive at the state of perfection but are unwilling to be led thither by the road

¹ 2 Corinthians xii, 9.

² Lamentations i, 13.

³ Jeremiah xxxi, 18.

⁴ Ecclesiasticus xxxiv, 9 [cf. p. 51, n. 7, above].

⁵ Bg, P : 'is not pleased that there should be many.'

⁶ Bg adds : 'or to work with solid patience.'

⁷ Bz : 'to fashion them with.'

of trials which leads to it, nor will they hardly set foot upon that road by submitting to the smallest trials which are those that souls are wont to suffer. To these may be made the reply which we find in Jeremiah, in these words : If thou hast run with those who went on foot and hast laboured, how canst thou contend with horses ? And as thou hast had quietness in the land of peace, how wilt thou do in the pride of Jordan ?¹ This is as though he were to say : If in the trials which commonly and ordinarily afflict all those who live this human life thou countedst all as labour, and thoughtest thyself to be running, because thy pace was so slow, how wilt thou be able to keep pace with the step of a horse—that is to say, with trials that are more than ordinary and common, for which is required more than human strength and swiftness ? And if thou hast been loth to break away from the peace and pleasure² of this land of thine, which is thy sensual nature, and hast not desired to make war against it or to oppose it in any way, I know not how thou wilt desire to enter the impetuous waters of spiritual tribulation and trial, which are more interior.

28. Oh, souls that seek to walk in security and comfort in spiritual things ! If ye did but know how necessary it is to suffer and endure in order to reach this security and consolation, and how without this³ ye cannot attain to that which the soul desires, but will rather go backward, ye would in no way seek consolation, either from God or from the creatures, but would rather bear the cross, and, having embraced it, would desire to drink pure vinegar and gall, and would count this a great happiness, for, being thus dead to the world and to your own selves, ye would live to God in the delights of the spirit ; and, bearing a few outward things with patience and faithfulness, ye would become worthy for God to set His eyes upon you, to purge and cleanse you more inwardly by means of more interior spiritual trials, and to give you more interior blessings. For they to whom God is to grant so notable a favour as to tempt them more interiorly, and thus to advance them in gifts and deservings, must have rendered Him many services, and have had much patience and constancy for His sake, and have been very acceptable in His sight in their lives and works. This was true of the holy man Tobit,

¹ Jeremiah xii, 5.

² Bg, P omit : ' and pleasure.'

³ Bg, P : ' and if ye did but understand that.'

to whom S. Raphael said that, because he had been acceptable to God, He had granted him this favour of sending him a temptation that should prove him the more in order that he might exalt him the more.¹ And all that remained to him of life after that temptation caused him joy, as says the Divine Scripture. In the same way we read of the holy Job that, when God accepted him as His servant, as He did in the presence of the good and the evil spirits, He then granted him the favour of sending him those great² trials, that he might afterwards exalt him, as indeed He did, by multiplying blessings to him, both spiritual and temporal.³

29. In the same way does God to those whom He desires to exalt with the most important exaltation; He makes and causes them to be tempted in order that He may raise them as far as is possible—that is, that He may bring them to union with Divine wisdom, which, as David says, is silver tried in the fire and proved in the earth⁴ (that is, that of our flesh) and purified seven times, which is the greatest degree possible. And there is no reason to tarry here any longer in order to describe these seven purgations and to show how each of them leads us to this wisdom, and how there correspond to them seven degrees of love in this wisdom,⁵ which in this life is to the soul like that silver spoken of by David, but in the life to come will be to it like gold.

30. It greatly behoves the soul, then, to have great patience and constancy in all the tribulations and trials⁶ which God sends it, whether they come from without or from within, and are spiritual or corporal, great or small. It must take them all as from His hand for its healing, and its good, and not flee from them, since they are health⁷ to it, but follow the counsel of the Wise Man, who says: If the spirit of him that has the power descends upon thee, abandon not thy place⁸ (that is, the place and abode of thy probation, by which is meant that trial that He sends thee); for the healing, he says, will cause great⁹ sins to

¹ Tobit xii, 13.

³ [Job i, 8; xlii, 12.]

⁵ Bz omits this clause.

⁶ Bz. abbreviates: 'which in this life consists in the soul's great constancy and patience in all the tribulations and trials.'

⁷ Bz.: 'sanctity' [*santidad* for *sanidad*].

⁸ Ecclesiastes x, 4.

² Bg, Bz, C, P: 'heavy.'

⁴ Psalm xi, 7 [A.V., xii, 6].

⁹ Bg, P: 'very great.'

cease. That is, it will cut the roots of thy sins and imperfections, which are evil habits ; for battling with trials, perils and temptations quenches the evil and imperfect habits of the soul and purifies and strengthens it. Wherefore the soul must count it a great favour when God sends it interior and exterior trials,¹ realizing that there are very few who deserve to be perfected by suffering, and to suffer that they may come to this lofty state .

31. We return to our exposition. The soul is now aware that all has turned out very well for it, since now *sicut tenebræ ejus, ita et lumen ejus* ;² and, as the soul aforesaid shared in tribulation, it now shares in consolation and in the kingdom ; and as all its trials, within and without, have been amply rewarded by Divine blessings of soul and body, there is none of its trials that has not a correspondingly great reward. And thus the soul confesses that it is now well satisfied, when it says : ' And pays every debt.' In this line it gives thanks to God, even as David gave Him thanks for having delivered him from trials, in that verse where he says : Many and evil are the tribulations that Thou hast shown me, and Thou didst deliver me from them all, and from the depths of the earth hast Thou brought me out again ; Thou hast multiplied Thy magnificence, and, turning to me, hast comforted me.³ And thus this soul that before reaching this state was without, at the gates of the palace (like Mordecai, sitting weeping in the streets of Shushan, because his life was in peril, and clothed in sack-cloth, refusing to receive the garments from Queen Esther, and having received no reward for services rendered the King, and his faithfulness in defending his honour and life⁴), is recompensed, like Mordecai, in a single day for all its trials and services, for not only is it made to enter the palace and stand before the King, clothed in regal vesture, but likewise it is crowned, and given a sceptre, and a royal seat, and possession of the royal ring, so that it may do all that it desires, and need do naught that it desires not to do in the kingdom of its Spouse ; for those that are in this state receive all that they desire. Herein it is not only recompensed, but the Jews, its enemies, are now dead—namely, the imperfect desires that were taking away its spiritual life,

¹ Bg. P : ' sends it trials and temptations.'

² Psalm cxxxviii, 12 [A.V., cxxxix, 12].

³ Psalm lxx, 20 [A.V., lxxi, 20-1].

⁴ Esther iv, 1-4.

worse than death, especially when the soul is vouchsafed some foresight or glimpse of the Divine ray and this is not communicated to it.¹ It is souls in this condition that suffer with impatient love, so that they cannot remain long without either receiving or dying.

19. With respect to the first cavern which we here describe—namely, the understanding—its emptiness is thirst for God, and, when the understanding is made ready for God, this is so great that David compares it to that of the hart, finding no greater thirst wherewith to compare it, for the thirst of the hart is said to be most vehement. Even as the hart (says David) desires the fountains of the waters, even so does my soul desire Thee, O God.² This thirst is for the waters of the wisdom of God which is the object of the understanding.

20. The second cavern is the will, and the emptiness thereof is hunger for God, so great that it causes the soul to swoon,³ even as David says, in these words: My soul desires and faints for the tabernacles of the Lord.⁴ And this hunger is for the perfection of love to which the soul aspires.

21. The third cavern is the memory, whereof the emptiness is the melting away and languishing of the soul for the possession of God, as Jeremiah notes in these words: *Memoria memor ero et tabescet in me anima mea.*⁵ That is: With remembrance I shall remember, and I shall remember Him well and my soul shall melt away within me; turning over these things in my heart, I shall live in hope of God.

22. The capacity, then, of these caverns, is deep; for that which they are capable of containing, which is God, is deep and infinite⁶; and thus in a certain sense their capacity will be infinite, and likewise their thirst will be infinite, and their hunger also will be infinite and deep, and their languishing⁷ and pain are infinite death. For, although the soul suffers not so intensely as in the next life, it suffers nevertheless a vivid image of that infinite privation, since it is to a certain extent prepared to receive fullness; although this suffering is of another kind, for it

¹ Bz: 'and the Divine, in union with God, is not communicated to it.'
Bg, P: 'and God communicates not Himself to it.'

² Psalm xli, 1 [A.V., xlii, 1].

³ C abbreviates: 'and the emptiness thereof causes the soul to swoon.'

⁴ Psalm lxxxiii, 3 [A.V., lxxxiv, 2].

⁵ Lamentations iii, 20-21.

⁶ S: 'is deep in infinite goodness.'

⁷ C: 'their swooning.'

only when it is not conscious of being brought into solitude or interior rest¹ or forgetfulness or attentiveness of the spirit, which, in order that it may be understood, is always accompanied by a certain peaceful tranquillity and interior absorption.

36. Wherefore, whatever be the time or season, when once the soul has begun to enter into this pure and restful state of contemplation, which comes to pass when it can no longer meditate and strives not to do so, it must not seek to gather to itself meditations, neither must it desire to find help in spiritual sweetness or delight, but it must stand in complete detachment above all this and its spirit must be completely freed from it, as Habakkuk² said that he must needs do in order to hear what the Lord should say to him. I will stand upon my watch—he says—and I will fix my step upon my munition, and I will watch to see that which will be said unto me. This is as though he had said: I will raise up my mind above all the operations and all the knowledge that can be comprehended by my senses, and above that which they can keep and retain within themselves: all this I will leave below. And I will fix the step of the munition of my faculties,³ not allowing them to advance a step as to their own operation, so that through contemplation I may receive that which is communicated to me from God. For we have already said that pure contemplation consists in receiving.

37. It is not possible that this loftiest wisdom and language of God, such as is contemplation, can be received save in a spirit that is silent and detached from sweetness and discursive knowledge. For this is that which is said by Isaiah, in these words: Whom shall He teach knowledge and whom shall He make to hear its voice?⁴ Them that are weaned from the milk—that is, from sweetness and pleasures—and them that are detached from the breasts—that is, from particular apprehensions and knowledge.

38. Oh, spiritual soul, take away the motes and the hairs and the mists,⁵ and cleanse thine eye, and the bright sun shall shine upon thee, and thou shalt see clearly.⁶

¹ S: 'into solitude, with all interior rest.'

² Habakkuk ii, 1.

³ Bz: 'of the communication of my faculties.' S omits: 'of my faculties.'

⁴ Isaiah xxviii, 9.

⁵ Bz, C omit: 'and the mists.'

⁶ Bg, P omit: 'and thou shalt see clearly.'

Set the soul in peace, and draw it away and free it from the yoke and slavery of the weak operation of its own capacity, which is the captivity of Egypt, where all is little more than gathering straw to make bricks ; and guide it, oh, spiritual director, to the promised land flowing with milk and honey, remembering that it is to give the soul this freedom and holy rest which belongs to His sons that God calls it into the wilderness. There it journeys adorned with festal robes, and with jewels of silver and of gold, having now left Egypt,¹ by which is meant the sensual part of the soul, and emptied it of its riches. And not only so but the Egyptians² are drowned in the sea of contemplation, where the Egyptian of sense finds no support, or foothold, and thus is drowned, and sets free the child of God—that is, the spirit that has gone forth from the limits³ and the slavery of the operation of the senses (which is to say from its scant understanding, its lowly perception, and its miserable loving and liking) so that God may give it the sweet manna, which, though the sweetness thereof contains within itself all these sweetnesses and delights for which thou desirest to make the soul work, nevertheless, being so delicious that it melts in the mouth, the soul shall not taste of it if it desire to combine it with any other delight or with aught else. Endeavour, then, when the soul is nearing this state, to detach it from all coveting of spiritual sweetness, pleasure, delight and meditation, and disturb it not with care and solicitude of any kind for higher things, still less for lower things, but bring it into the greatest possible degree of solitude and withdrawal. For the more the soul attains of all this, and the sooner it reaches this restful tranquillity, the more abundantly does it become infused with the spirit of Divine wisdom, which is the loving, tranquil, lonely, peaceful, sweet inebriator of the spirit. Hereby the soul feels itself to be gently and tenderly wounded and ravished, knowing not by whom, nor whence, nor how. And the reason of this is that the Spirit communicates Himself without any act on the part of the soul.

39. And the smallest part of this that God brings to pass in the soul in holy rest and solitude is an inestimable blessing, greater sometimes than either the soul itself, or

¹ Bg, C, P: 'having now despoiled Egypt.' Bz: 'Christ having now despoiled it' [or 'him'].
² S: 'the giants.'

³ Br, Bz, C: 'the narrow limits.'

he that guides it, can imagine ; and, although this may not be very clearly realized at the time, it will in due course become manifest. But the soul has at least been able¹ to attain to a perception of estrangement and withdrawal from all things, sometimes more so than at others, together with an inclination to solitude and a sense of weariness with regard to all worldly creatures and a sweet aspiration of love and life in the spirit. And in this state anything that does not imply such withdrawal is distasteful to it, for, as they say, when a soul tastes of the spirit, it conceives a distaste for the flesh.

40. But the blessings that this silent communication and contemplation leave impressed upon the soul without its perceiving them at the time are, as I say, inestimable ; for they are the most secret and therefore the most delicate anointings of the Holy Spirit, which secretly fill the soul with spiritual riches and gifts and graces ; since it is God Who does all this, He does it not otherwise than as God.

41. These anointings, then, and these touches, are the delicate and sublime acts of the Holy Spirit, which, on account of their delicate and subtle purity, can be understood neither by the soul nor by him that has to do with it, but only by Him Who infuses them, in order to make the soul more pleasing to Himself. These blessings, with the greatest facility, by no more than the slightest act which the soul may desire to make on its own account, with its memory, understanding or will, or by the application of its sense or desire or knowledge or sweetness or pleasure, are disturbed or hindered in the soul, which is a grave evil and a great shame and pity.

42. Ah, how serious is this matter, and what cause it gives for wonder, that the evil done should be imperceptible, and the hindrance to those holy anointings which has been interposed should be almost negligible, and yet that this harm that has been done should be a matter for greater sorrow and regret than the perturbation and ruin of many souls of a more ordinary nature which have not attained to a state of such supreme fineness and delicacy. It is as though a portrait of supreme and delicate beauty were touched by a coarse hand, and were daubed with coarse, crude colours. This would be a greater and more striking and pitiful shame than if many more ordinary faces were

¹ Bg, Bz, C, P add 'now.'

besmeared in this way. For when the work of so delicate a hand as this of the Holy Spirit has been thus roughly treated, who will be able to repair its beauty?

43. Although this evil is so great and serious that it cannot be exaggerated, it is so common and frequent that there will hardly be found a single spiritual director who does not inflict it upon souls whom God is beginning to draw nearer to Himself¹ in this kind of contemplation. For, whenever God is anointing the contemplative soul with some most delicate unction of loving knowledge—serene, peaceful, lonely and very far removed from sense and from all that has to do with thought—so that the soul cannot meditate or think of aught soever or find pleasure in aught, whether in higher things or in lower, inasmuch as God is keeping it full of that lonely unction and inclined to rest and solitude,² there will come some spiritual director who has no knowledge save of hammering souls and pounding them with the faculties like a blacksmith, and, because his only teaching is of that kind, and he knows of naught save meditation, he will say: ‘Come now, leave these periods of inactivity, for you are only living in idleness and wasting your time. Get to work, meditate and make interior acts, for it is right that you should do for yourself that which in you lies, for these other things are the practices of Illuminists and fools.’

44. And thus, since such persons have no understanding of the degrees of prayer or of the ways of the spirit, they cannot see that those acts which they counsel the soul to perform, and those attempts to walk in meditation, have been done already, for such a soul as we have been describing has by this time attained to negation and silence of sense and discursive reasoning, and has reached the way of the spirit, which is contemplation,³ wherein ceases the operation of sense and the soul's own discursive reasoning, and God alone is the agent and it is He that now speaks secretly to the solitary soul, while the soul keeps silence. And if, now that the spirit has achieved this in the way that we have described, such directors attempt to make the soul continue to walk in sense, it cannot but go backward and become distracted. For if one that has

¹ [Cf. p. 81, n. 5, above.]

² S: ‘full of that lonely rest and inclined to solitude.’

³ Bg, P: ‘the life of the spirit, which is the contemplative life.’

reached his goal begins to set out again for it, he is doing a ridiculous thing, for he can do nothing but walk away from it.¹ When, therefore, through the operation of its faculties, the soul has reached that quiet recollection which is the aim of every spiritual person, wherein ceases the operation of these faculties, it would not only be a vain thing for it to begin to make acts with these faculties in order to reach this recollection, but it would be harmful to it, for it would cause it distraction and make it abandon the recollection that it already has.

45. Now these spiritual directors, not understanding, as I say, the nature and properties of the soul's spiritual solitude and recollection, in which solitude God effects these sublime anointings in the soul, superpose or interpose other anointings, which consist in more elementary spiritual exercises,² and make the soul work in the way we have described. There is as much difference between this and what the soul previously enjoyed as between any human operation and a Divine operation and between the natural and the supernatural ; for in the one case God is working supernaturally in the soul and in the other case the soul alone is working naturally.³ And the worst result is that, through the exercise of its natural operation, the soul loses its interior recollection and solitude and consequently spoils the wondrous work that God was painting⁴ in it. It is thus as if the director were merely striking an anvil ; and the soul loses in one respect and gains nothing in the other.

46. Let such guides of the soul as these take heed and remember that the principal agent and guide and mover of souls in this matter is not the director, but the Holy Spirit, Who never loses His care for them ; and that they themselves are only instruments to lead souls in the way of perfection by the faith and the law of God, according to the spirituality that God is giving to each one. Let them not, therefore, merely aim at guiding these souls according to their own way and the manner suitable to themselves,

¹ Bg, P : ' but leave it.'

² Bg, P : ' which consist in more labour and spiritual exercises.'

³ Bg, P : ' and in the other it is only itself working and its operation is not more than natural.' Bz reads similarly, but omits 'only.' C : ' for in the one case God is working and in the other only the soul itself is working and its operation is no more than natural.'

⁴ S : ' was working.'



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them be content with preparing the soul for this according

¹ S: 'of solitude and rest.'

² [S. Luke xiv, 33.]

³ S: 'of all bodily and temporal things.'

⁴ S. Matthew v, 3.

⁵ S: 'the window.'

⁶ Psalm cxx, 4 [A.V., cxxi, 4]. This is the reading of S. The other MSS. repeat 'sleeps.'

but let them see if they know the way by which God is leading the soul, and, if they know it not, let them leave the soul in peace and not disturb it. And, in conformity with the way and the spirit by which God is leading these souls, let them ever seek to lead them into greater solitude, tranquillity and liberty of spirit and to give them a certain freedom so that the spiritual and bodily senses may not be bound to any particular thing, either interior or exterior, when God leads them by this way of solitude, and let them not worry or grieve, thinking that the soul is doing nothing; for, though the soul is not working at that time, God is working in it. Let them strive to disencumber the soul and to set it in a state of rest,¹ in such a way that it will not be bound to any particular kind of knowledge, either above or below, or be fettered by covetousness of any sweetness or pleasure or any other apprehension, but that it will be empty in pure negation with respect to every creature and will be established in poverty of spirit. It is this that the soul must do as far as in it lies, as the Son of God counsels, in these words: He that renounceth not all the things that he possesseth cannot be My disciple². This is to be understood, not only of the renunciation of all temporal things³ with the will, but also of the surrender of spiritual things, wherein is included poverty of spirit, in which, says the Son of God, consists blessedness.⁴ When in this way the soul voids itself of all things and achieves emptiness and surrender of them (which, as we have said, is the part that the soul can play), it is impossible, if the soul does as much as in it lies, that God should fail to perform His own part by communicating Himself to the soul, at least secretly and in silence. It is more impossible than that the sun should fail to shine in a serene and unclouded sky; for as the sun, when it rises in the morning, will enter your house if you open the shutter,⁵ even so will God, Who sleeps not in keeping Israel, still less slumbers,⁶ enter the soul that is empty and fill it with Divine blessings.

47. God, like the sun, is above our souls and ready to communicate Himself to them. Let those who guide them be content with preparing the soul for this according

¹ S: 'of solitude and rest.'

² [S. Luke xiv, 33.]

³ S: 'of all bodily and temporal things.'

⁴ S. Matthew v, 3.

⁵ S: 'the window.'

⁶ Psalm cxx, 4 [A.V., cxxi, 4]. This is the reading of S. The other MSS. repeat 'sleeps.'

to evangelical perfection, which is detachment and emptiness of sense and of spirit ; and let them not seek to go beyond this in the building up of the soul, for that work belongs only to the Father of lights, from Whom comes down every good gift and perfect boon.¹ For, if the Lord, as David says, builds not the house, in vain does he labour that builds it.² And since God is the supernatural artificer, He will build supernaturally³ in each soul the building that He desires, if you yourself prepare it and strive to annihilate it with respect to its operations and natural affections, which give it no capacity or strength for the erection of the supernatural building, but at this season disturb rather than help. To prepare the soul thus is your office ; and the office of God, as the Wise Man says,⁴ is to direct the way of the soul—that is to say, to direct it to supernatural blessings, by ways and in manners which neither you nor the soul can understand. Say not, therefore : ‘ Oh, the soul is making no progress, for it is doing nothing ! ’ For if it is true that it is doing nothing, then, by this very fact that it is doing nothing, I will now prove to you that it is doing a great deal. For, if the understanding is voiding itself of particular kinds of knowledge, both natural and spiritual, it is making progress, and, the more it empties itself of particular knowledge and of the acts of understanding, the greater is the progress of the understanding in its journey to the highest spiritual good.

48. ‘ Oh,’ you will say, ‘ but it understands nothing distinctly, and so it cannot be making progress.’ I reply to you that it would rather be making no progress if it were to understand anything distinctly. The reason of this is that God, towards Whom the understanding is journeying, transcends the understanding and is therefore incomprehensible and inaccessible to it ; and thus, when it is understanding, it is not approaching God, but is rather withdrawing itself from Him. Therefore the understanding must withdraw from itself, and walk in faith, believing and not understanding. And in this way the understanding will reach perfection, for by faith and by no other means comes union with God ; and the soul approaches God more nearly by not understanding than by understanding.

¹ S. James i, 17.

² S : ‘ naturally.’

³ Psalm cxxvi, 1 [A.V., cxxvii, 1].

⁴ Proverbs xvi, 9.

Wherefore grieve not at this, for if the understanding goes not backward (which it would be doing if it desired to occupy itself with distinct knowledge and other kinds of reasoning and understanding, and desired not to be at rest) it is making progress, for it is voiding itself of all that it could apprehend, nothing of which could be God ; for, as we have said, God cannot be apprehended by the soul.¹ In this matter of perfection not to go backward is to go forward ; it signifies the progress of the understanding, and a gradual increase of faith, and thus it is a progress in darkness, for faith is darkness to the understanding. Wherefore, since the understanding knows not what God is, it must of necessity walk toward Him in submission and not by understanding² ; and thus, what you are condemning in your penitent is fitting for his good—namely, that he should not occupy himself with distinct kinds of understanding, since by their means he cannot attain to God, but will rather embarrass himself in journeying to Him.

49. 'Oh,' you will say, 'but if the understanding understands not distinctly the will will be idle and will not love, since the will can only love that which is understood by the understanding ; and this must always be avoided on the spiritual road.' This is true, but chiefly so in the natural acts and operations of the soul, wherein the will loves only that which is distinctly understood by the understanding. But in the contemplation of which we are speaking, wherein God, as we have said, infuses into the soul, there is no necessity for distinct knowledge, nor for the soul to perform any acts of the understanding, for God, in one act, is communicating to the soul light and love together, which is loving and supernatural knowledge, and may be said to be like heat-giving light, which gives out heat, for that light also enkindles the soul in love ; and this is confused and obscure to the understanding, since it is knowledge of contemplation, which, as S. Dionysius says, is a ray of darkness to the understanding. Therefore, as is intelligence in the understanding, so also is love in the will. For, as to the understanding this knowledge infused in it by God is general and dark, without distinction of intelligence, so the will also loves in a general way, without any distinction being made as to any particular thing that is

¹ S : 'by the heart that is occupied.'

² S : 'in submission, and therefore walks not by understanding.'

understood. Now as God is Divine light and love, in the communication which He makes to the soul, He informs these two faculties (understanding and will) equally, with intelligence and love. And as He Himself cannot be understood in this life, the understanding is dark, as I say, and after the same fashion is love in the will; although sometimes in this delicate communication God communicates Himself more to the one faculty than to the other, and the one is more deeply affected than the other, the soul being at times more conscious of understanding than of love, while at other times it is more conscious of love than of understanding; at times, again, all is understanding, without any love,¹ and at times all is love and there is no understanding. Therefore I say that as far as concerns the soul's performance of natural² acts with the understanding, there can be no love without understanding; but in the acts which God performs and infuses in the soul, as in those of which we are treating, it is different, for God can communicate Himself in the one faculty and not in the other. Thus He can enkindle the will by means of a touch of the heat of His love, although the understanding may have no understanding thereof, just as a person can be warmed by a fire without seeing the fire.

50. In this way the will may oftentimes feel itself to be enkindled or filled with tenderness and love without knowing or understanding anything more distinctly than before, since God is introducing love into it, even as the Bride says in the Songs, in these words: The King made me enter the cellar of wine, and ordained love in me.³ There is no reason, therefore, to fear that the will may be idle in this case; for, if of itself it leaves performing acts of love concerning particular kinds of knowledge, God performs them within it, inebriating it in infused love, either by means of the knowledge of contemplation, or without such knowledge, as we have just said⁴; and these acts are as much more delectable and meritorious than those made by the soul as the mover and infuser of this love—namely, God—is better than the soul.

51. This love is infused by God in the will when it is

¹ Bg, P omit: 'at times, again, all is understanding, without any love.'

² S: 'interior.'

³ Canticles ii, 4.

⁴ Bz: 'infused love, or by means of the knowledge of simple contemplation, as we have just said.'

empty and detached from other pleasures. The soul must therefore see to it that the will is empty and stripped of its affections ; for if it is not going backward and desiring to experience some sweetness or pleasure, it is going forward, even though it have no particular perception of this in God, and it is soaring upward to God above all things, since it takes no pleasure in anything. It is going toward God, although it may be taking no particular and distinct delight in Him, nor may be loving Him with any distinct act, for it is taking greater pleasure in Him secretly, by means of that dark and general infusion of love, than it does in all things that are distinct, for it sees clearly in this state that nothing gives it so much pleasure as that solitary quiet. And it is loving Him above all things that can be loved since it has flung from itself all other kinds of sweetness and pleasure which have become distasteful to it. And there is thus no reason to be troubled, for, if the will can find no sweetness and pleasure in particular acts, it is going forward ; for to refrain from going backward and from embracing anything that belongs to sense is to go forward towards the inaccessible, which is God, and thus there is no wonder that the soul has no perception thereof. Wherefore, in order to journey to God, the will has rather to be continually detaching itself from everything delectable and pleasant, than to be conceiving an attachment to it. In this way it completely fulfils the precept of love, which is to love God above all things ; and this cannot be unless it have detachment and emptiness¹ with regard to them all.

52. Neither is there any cause for misgivings when the memory is voided of its forms and figures, for, since God has no form or figure, the memory is safe if it be voided of form or figure, and it is approaching God the more nearly ; for, the more it is attached to the imagination, the farther it is going from God, and the greater is the peril wherein it walks, since God is incomprehensible and therefore cannot be contained in the imagination.

53. These spiritual directors such as we have been describing fail to understand souls that have attained to this solitary and quiet contemplation, because they themselves have not arrived so far, nor learned what it means to leave behind the discursive reasoning of meditations, as I have said, and they think that these souls are idle.

¹ Bg, P: 'and spiritual emptiness.'

And therefore they disturb and impede the peace of this quiet and hushed contemplation which God has been giving their penitents by His own power, and they cause them to follow the road of meditation and imaginative reasoning and make them perform interior acts, wherein the aforementioned souls find great repugnance, aridity and distraction, since they would fain remain in their holy rest and their quiet and peaceful state of recollection. But, as sense can perceive in this neither pleasure nor help nor activity, their directors persuade them to strive after sweetness and fervour, though they ought rather to advise them the contrary. The penitents, however, are unable to do as they did previously, and can enter into none of these things, for the time for them has now passed and they belong no more to their proper path ; but the penitents are doubly disturbed and believe that they are going to perdition ; and their directors encourage them in this belief and bring aridity to their spirits, and take from them the precious unctions wherewith God was anointing them in solitude and tranquillity. This, as I have said, is a great evil ; their directors are plunging them into mire and mourning ; for they are losing one thing and labouring without profit at the other.

54. Such persons have no knowledge of what is meant by spirituality. They offer a great insult and great irreverence to God, by laying their coarse hands where God is working. For it has cost Him dearly to bring these souls to this place and He greatly esteems having brought them to this solitude and emptiness of their faculties and operations, that He may speak to their hearts, which is what He ever desires. He has Himself taken them by the hand, and He Himself reigns in their souls in abundant peace and quietness, causing the natural acts of their faculties to fail wherewith they toiled all night and wrought nothing. And He has brought peace to their spirits without the work and operation of sense, for neither sense nor any act thereof is capable of receiving spirit.

55. How precious in His sight is this tranquillity or slumbering or withdrawal¹ of sense can be clearly seen in that adjuration,² so notable and effective, that He utters in the Songs, where He says : I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the goats and harts of the fields, that ye awaken

¹ Bg, Bz, P: 'annihilation.'

² Bz: 'comparison.' P: 'adjunction.'

it is certain that, if that soul¹ is to make progress by going forward on the spiritual road, wherein God is ever aiding it, it will have to change the style and method of its prayer, and it will of necessity require instruction of a higher kind and a deeper spirituality than that of such a director. For not all directors have sufficient knowledge to meet all the possibilities and cases which they encounter on the spiritual road, neither is their spirituality so perfect that they know how a soul has to be led and guided and directed in every state of the spiritual life ; at least no man should think that he knows everything² concerning this, or that God will cease leading a given soul farther onward. Not everyone who can hew a block of wood is able to carve an image ; nor is everyone who can carve it able to outline³ and to polish it ; nor is everyone that can polish it able to paint it ; nor can he that is able to paint it complete it with the final touches. Each one of these, in working upon an image, can do no more than that with which he himself is familiar, and, if he tries to do more, he will only ruin his work.

x 58. How then, we may ask, if you are only a hewer of wood, which signifies that you can make a soul despise the world and mortify its desires ;⁴ or, if at best you are a carver, which means that you can lead a soul to holy meditations but can do no more : how, in such a case, will this soul attain to the final perfection of a delicate painting, the art of which consists neither in the hewing of the wood, nor in the carving of it, nor even in the outlining of it, but in the work which God Himself must do in it ? It is certain, then, that if your instruction is always of one kind, and you cause the soul to be continually bound to you, it will either go backward, or, at the least, will not go forward. For what, I ask you, will the image be like, if you never do any work upon it save hewing and hammering, which in the language of the soul is the exercise of the faculties ? When will this image be finished ? When or how will it be left for God to paint it ? Is it possible that you yourself can perform all these offices, and consider yourself so consummate a master that this soul shall never need any other ?

¹ Bg, P : ' if the soul that has come hither. '

² S : ' that he lacks nothing. '

³ C, S : ' to perfect. '

⁴ [*Lit.*, ' appetites. '] Bg., P : ' its passions and appetites. '

59. And supposing that you have sufficient experience to direct some one soul, which perchance may have no ability to advance beyond your teaching, it is surely impossible for you to have sufficient experience for the direction of all those whom you refuse to allow to go out of your hands ; for God leads each soul along different roads and there shall hardly be found a single spirit who can walk even half the way which is suitable for another. Who can be like S. Paul and have the skill to make himself all things to all men, that he may gain them all ? You yourself tyrannize over souls, and take away their liberty, and arrogate to yourself the breadth and liberty of evangelical doctrine, so that you not only strive that they may not leave you, but, what is worse, if any one of them should at some time have gone to talk, with another director, of some matter which he could not suitably talk of with you, or if God should lead him in order to teach him something which you have not taught him, you behave to him (I say it not without shame) like a husband who is jealous of his wife ; nor is your jealousy even due to desire for the honour of God, or for the profit of that soul (for you must not presume to suppose that in neglecting you in this way he was neglecting God) : it is due only to your own pride and presumption, or to some other imperfect motive that concerns you.

60. Great is the indignation of God with such directors, whom He promises punishment when He speaks through Ezekiel and says : Ye drank of the milk of My flock and clothed yourselves with their wool and ye fed not My flock. I will require My flock at your hand.¹

61. Spiritual directors, then, ought to give these souls freedom, for, when they would seek to better themselves, their directors have an obligation to put a good face upon it,² since they know not by what means God desires such a soul to make progress, especially when the penitent dislikes the instruction that he is receiving, which is a sign that it is of no profit to him, either because God is leading him on farther, or by another way than that by which his director has been leading him, or because the director himself has changed his way of dealing with his penitents.

¹ Ezekiel xxxiv, 2, 3, 10.

² C : ' when, in order to better themselves, they seek another director their director has an obligation to put a good face upon it.'

who can hinder the soul in this kind¹ of recollection, is the devil, who, being himself blind, desires the soul to be blind also. When the soul is in these lofty and solitary places wherein are infused the delicate unctions of the Holy Spirit (at which he has heavy grief and envy, for he sees that not only is the soul gaining great riches, but it is flying beyond him and he cannot catch it), inasmuch as the soul is alone, detached and withdrawn from every creature and every trace thereof, the devil tries to cover this withdrawal, as it were, with cataracts of knowledge and mists² of sensible sweetness, which are sometimes good, so that he may entice the soul more surely, and thus may cause it to return³ to a different way of life and to the operation of sense, and to look at these delights and this good knowledge which he sets before it, and embrace them, so that it may continue its journey to God in reliance upon them. And herein he very easily distracts it and withdraws it from that solitude and recollection, wherein, as we have said, the Holy Spirit is working these great and secret things. As the soul is of itself inclined to perception and enjoyment, especially if it is really aiming at such things, and understands not the road that it is taking, it is very easily led to cling to those kinds of knowledge and delights which the devil⁴ is giving it, and withdraws itself from the solitude wherein God had placed it. For, as it was doing nothing in that solitude and quiet of the faculties (it says), this other state seems better to it, for now it is certainly doing something. It is a great pity that it cannot⁵ realize how, for the sake of one mouthful—of some one delight or some particular kind of knowledge⁶—it is preventing itself from feeding wholly upon God Himself. This God effects in that solitude wherein He places the soul, for He absorbs it in Himself through these solitary and spiritual unctions.

64. In this way, with hardly any trouble, the devil works the most serious injuries, causing the soul to lose great riches, and dragging it forth, with the tiniest bait, like a fish, from the depths of the pure waters of the spirit, where

¹ Bz: 'this business.'

² C: 'and particles.'

³ Bg, P: 'to turn back.'

⁴ Bz: 'the horned devil' [a depreciatory adjective].

⁵ Bz: 'that it thinks it was doing nothing and cannot.'

⁶ Bg: 'of one mouthful and a particular delight.' P: 'of one mouthful of no such particular delight.'

it had no support or foothold, but was engulfed and immersed in God. And hereupon he drags it to the bank, giving it help and support, and showing it something whereon it may lean, so that it may walk upon its own feet with great labour instead of floating in the waters of Shiloa, which run silently, bathed in the unctions of God.

And to this the devil attaches such importance that it is a matter for great marvel ; and, since a slight injury is more serious to a soul in this condition than is a serious injury to many other souls, as we have said, there is hardly any soul walking on this road which does not meet with great injuries and suffer great losses. For the evil one takes his stand, with great cunning, on the road which leads from sense to spirit,¹ deceiving and luring the soul by means of sense, and giving it sensual things, as we have said.² And the soul thinks not that anything is being lost thereby, and therefore fails to enter into the innermost chamber of the Spouse, but stands at the door to see what is happening outside in the sensual part. The devil, as Job says, beholdeth all things that are high³—that is to say, the spiritual high places of souls—that he may assault them. Therefore if perchance any soul enters into high recollection, since he cannot distract it in the way we have described, he labours so that he may at least be able to make it advert to sense⁴ by means of horrors, fears or pains of the body, or by outward sounds⁵ and noises, in order to bring it out and distract it from the interior spirit, until he can do no more and leaves it. But with such ease does he corrupt these precious souls and squander their great riches, that, although he thinks this of greater importance than to bring about a heavy fall in many others, he esteems it not highly because of the facility with which it is done and the little effort that it costs him. In this sense we may understand that which God said to Job concerning the devil, namely : He shall drink up a river and shall not marvel, and he hath confidence that Jordan shall run into his mouth—by Jordan being understood the summit of perfection. In his eyes, as with a hook, shall he take him, and

¹ Bg, P add : ' as is his invariable custom, so that the soul may not pass from sense to spirit.'

² Bg follows the first redaction [p. 92, above] in this sentence.

³ Job xli, 25.

⁴ Bz, C : ' to cause it to be diverted to sense.'

⁵ Thus Bg, P. The other MSS. [and P. Silverio] read ' senses.'

with stakes shall he bore his nostrils.¹ That is, with the darts of the knowledge wherewith he is piercing the soul, he will disperse its spirituality; for the breath which goes out through his nostrils, when they are pierced, is dispersed in many directions. And later he says: The beams of the sun shall be beneath him and they shall scatter gold beneath him as mud.² For he causes souls that have been enlightened to lose the marvellous rays of Divine knowledge, and from souls that are rich he takes away and scatters the precious gold of Divine adornment.

65. Oh, souls! Since God is showing you such sovereign mercies as to lead you through this state of solitude and recollection, withdrawing you from your labours of sense, return not to sense again. Lay aside your operations, for, though once they helped you to deny the world and yourselves, when you were beginners, they will now be a great obstacle and hindrance to you, since God is granting you the grace of Himself working within you. If you are careful to set your faculties upon naught soever, withdrawing them from everything and in no way hindering them, which is the proper part for you to play in this state alone, and if you wait upon God with loving and pure attentiveness, as I said above, in the way which I there described (working no violence to the soul,³ save to detach it from everything and set it free, lest you disturb and spoil its peace and tranquillity) God will feed your soul for you with heavenly food, since you are not hindering Him.

66. The third blind guide of the soul is the soul itself, which, not understanding itself, as we have said, becomes perturbed and does itself harm. For it knows not how to work save by means of sense and thoughtful reasoning, and thus, when God is pleased to bring it into that emptiness and solitude where it can neither make use of its faculties nor perform any acts, it sees that it is doing nothing, and strives to do something: in this way it becomes distracted and full of aridity and displeasure, whereas formerly it was rejoicing in the rest of the spiritual silence and peace

¹ Job xl, 18-19 [A.V., xl, 23-4].

² Job xli, 21 [A.V., xli, 30].

³ The MSS. show considerable divergences here, adding, as in the first redaction [p. 94, above], 'which must be when you have no desire to be attentive' (Bz). C, P omit 'no.' S [followed by P. Silverio]: 'which must be when you are not unwilling not to be attentive.' Bg reads similarly, but omits the second 'not,' thus reversing the sense.

wherein God was secretly exercising it.¹ And it may come to pass that God persists in keeping the soul in this silent tranquillity, while the soul also persists with its imagination and its understanding in trying to work by itself. In this it is like a child, whom its mother tries to carry in her arms, while it strikes out with its feet and cries out to be allowed to walk, and thus neither makes any progress nor allows its mother to do so. Or it is as when a painter is trying to paint a portrait and his subject keeps moving : either he will be unable to do anything at all or the picture will be spoiled.

x 67. The soul in this state of quiet must bear in mind that, although it may not be conscious of making any progress or of doing anything, it is making much more progress than if it were walking on its feet ; for God is bearing it in His arms, and thus, although it is making progress at the rate willed by God Himself, it is not conscious of movement. And although it is not working with its own faculties, it is nevertheless accomplishing much more than if it were doing so, since God is working within it. And it is not remarkable that the soul should be unable to see this, for sense cannot perceive that which God works in the soul at this time, since it is done in silence ; for, as the Wise Man says, the words of wisdom are heard in silence. Let the soul remain in the hands of God and entrust itself neither to its own hands nor to those of these two² blind guides ; for, if it remains thus and occupies not its faculties in anything, it will make sure progress.

68. Now let us return to the matter of these deep caverns of the faculties of the soul wherein we said that the suffering of the soul is wont to be great when God is anointing and preparing it with the most sublime³ unctions of the Holy Spirit in order that He may unite it with Himself. These unctions are so subtle and so delicate in their anointing that they penetrate the inmost⁴ substance of the depth⁵ of the soul, preparing it and filling it with sweetness in such a way that its suffering and fainting with desire in the boundless emptiness of these caverns is likewise boundless. Here we must note one further point : if the unctions that were preparing these caverns of the soul for the union

¹ Bg, G : ' was secretly giving it joy.'

² Bg : ' of the two other.'

³ Bg.P : ' most subtle.'

⁴ Bz, S : ' final.' P : ' infinite.'

⁵ Bz : ' of the sense

knowledge of created substances, both higher and lower ; it looks upon the face of the Word, which is full of graces that strike this queen (which is the soul) and likewise clothe her, so that she may be transformed in these virtues of the King of Heaven and see herself a queen indeed, and thus she may say of herself truly that which David says in the Psalm, namely : The queen was at Thy right hand in vesture of gold and surrounded with variety.¹ And since all this comes to pass in the inmost substance of the soul it adds next :

Where thou dwellest secretly and alone !

14. The soul says that He dwells secretly in its breast, because, as we have said, this sweet embrace is made in the depth of the substance of the soul. That is to say that God dwells secretly in all souls and is hidden in their substance ; for, were this not so, they would be unable to exist. But there is a difference between these two manners of dwelling, and a great one. X For in some He dwells alone, and in others He dwells not alone ; in some He dwells contented and in others He dwells displeased ; in some He dwells as in His house, ordering it and ruling everything, while in others He dwells as a stranger in the house of another where He is not allowed to do anything or to give any commands. Where He dwells with the greatest content and most completely alone is in the soul wherein dwell fewest desires and pleasures of its own ; for here He is in His own house and rules and governs it. And the more completely alone does He dwell in the soul, the more secretly He dwells ; and thus in this soul wherein dwells no desire, neither any other image or form of aught that is created, the Beloved dwells most secretly, with more intimate, more interior and closer embrace, according as the soul, as we say, is the purer and more completely withdrawn from all save God. And thus He dwells secretly, since the devil cannot attain to this place and to this embrace, neither can the understanding of any man attain to a knowledge of the manner thereof. But He dwells not secretly with respect to the soul which is in this state of perfection, for it feels² this intimate embrace within it. But this is not always so when these awakenings take place, for then it seems to the soul that He is now awakening in

¹ Psalm xlv, 10.

² Bg : ' which ever feels.'

and not in such a way that, instead of approving him¹ in his time of trial, God will have to reprove him for not having been willing to bear the cross of Christ with patience. Many religious, not realizing that they have entered the religious life for this purpose, endure others with difficulty, and such, when they come to their account, shall find themselves put to great shame and confusion.

5. In order to put into practice the third counsel, which is the exercise of virtues, the religious must needs have constancy in practising the acts of his religious life and of obedience, without any respect to the world, but for God's sake alone. In order that he may do so in this way, and without being deceived, let him never consider the pleasure or the displeasure which he finds in the work before doing it or refraining from doing it, but only the reason which he has for doing it for God's sake. And so he must do all things, whether delectable or distasteful, with this sole aim of serving God thereby.

6. And in order to put this into practice firmly and with this constancy, and to bring forth the virtues speedily, let him ever have a care to incline himself rather to that which is difficult than to that which is easy, to that which is rough rather than to that which is smooth, and to the grievous and distasteful part of his work rather than to that which is delectable and pleasant in it. Let him not go about selecting that which is but a light cross, for that is a shameful burden; and the greater the burden, the lighter is it, if borne by God. Let him ever strive likewise that his brothers be preferred to him in all comforts, and set himself ever in the lowest place, and this with a right good will. For this is the way to become great in spirituality, as God tells us in His Gospel: *Qui se humiliat exaltabitur.*²

7. To put into practice the fourth counsel, which is solitude, the religious must needs consider all the things of the world as ended, so that, when against his will he is obliged to engage in them, he may do so with as great detachment as if they were not.

8. And let him take no account of things without, since God has withdrawn him from them and led him to neglect them. Let him not do any business himself that he can do by means of a third person, for it greatly behoves him to

¹ The Bujalance MS. has 'instead of causing him to profit.'

² S. Luke xiv, 11.

desire to see nobody and to be seen of none. And let him carefully consider that if God will exact from any one of the faithful a strict account of any idle word, how much more will He not exact an account of every such word, on the day of reckoning, from a religious, whose whole life and works are consecrated to God?

9. I mean not by this that a religious should fail to perform the office which he holds, or any other that is required of him by his obedience, with all necessary and possible solicitude; he must do this in such a way that none can attach any blame to him, for neither God nor his obedience expects otherwise. To this end let him endeavour to be instant in prayer, which he must not abandon even in the midst of the exercise of the body. Whether he be eating or drinking or speaking or conversing with persons in the world, or whatsoever else he be doing, let him ever be desiring God and having his heart affectioned to Him, for this is a thing most necessary for interior solitude, which demands that the soul let fall no thought that is not directed toward God and that he forget all things which belong to this short and miserable life and which pass away. In no wise let him seek to know aught, save how he may the better serve God and keep His ordinances the more faithfully.

10. If Your Charity keep these four things with care, you will very quickly attain perfection, for they are of such mutual assistance to each other that, if a man come short in one of them, he loses thereby that wherein he was gaining and making progress with respect to the rest.

8. He that falls alone remains on the ground alone and holds his soul of small account, since he trusts it to himself alone.

9. If thou fearest not to fall alone, how dost thou presume to rise alone? See how much more can be done by two together than by one alone!

10. He that falls heavily laden will have difficulty in rising with his load.

11. And he that falls and is blind will not, in his blindness, rise up alone; and if he rise up alone he will journey whither it is not fitting.

12. More does God desire of thee the least degree of purity of conscience than all the works that thou canst perform.

13. More does God desire of thee the least degree of obedience and submission than all those services that thou thinkest to do Him.

14. More does God esteem in thee an inclination towards aridity and suffering for love of Him than all the consolations and spiritual visions and meditations that may be thine.

15. Renounce thy desires and thou shalt find that which thy heart desires. How knowest thou if thy desire¹ is according to God?

16. O sweetest love of God that art so little known! He that has found the veins of this mine² has found rest.

17. Since if thou fulfil thy desire thou wilt have a double measure of bitterness, desire not to fulfil it even if thou remain in bitterness.

18. Greater unfitness and impurity has the soul in its journey to God if it has within itself the smallest desire for things of the world than if it were burdened with all the hideous and persistent temptations and works of darkness describable, provided that its rational will refused them entrance. For the soul that is in the latter case can with confidence approach God to do the will of His Majesty, Who says: 'Come unto Me, all ye that weary and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.'

19. More pleasing to God is the soul that in aridity and trial submits to that which is reason than the soul which fails to do this but receives consolations from everything that it does.

¹ [*Lit.*, 'thy appetite.']

² ['of this mine' is not in the original Spanish.]

20. More pleasing to God is one good work, howsoever small it be, that is done in secret with no desire that it shall be known than a thousand that are done with the desire that they may be known of men. For he that with purest love does such works for God's sake not only cares nothing if men see him, but does them not even that God Himself may see him. Such a man, even though God were never to know it, would not cease to do Him the same services with the same joy and purity of love.

21. A good work performed in purity and singleness of heart, for God's sake, in a breast that is pure, makes a kingdom of singleness of heart for him that performs it.

22. Twofold are the difficulties of a bird that is caught by the lime : first it has to free itself and then it must make itself clean. And twofold are the troubles of him that fulfils his desire : first, he must free himself, and, once free, must purify himself from that which has clung to him.

23. He that allows not himself to be carried away by his desires will soar upward with ease according to the spirit, even as the bird that lacks no feathers.

24. The fly that clings to honey hinders itself from flying ; and the soul that would cling to spiritual sweetness hinders its own liberty and contemplation.

25. Take thou no heed of the creatures if thou wilt keep the image of God clearly and simply in thy soul, but empty thy spirit of them, and withdraw far from them, and thou shalt walk in the Divine light,¹ for God is not like to the creatures.

A PRAYER OF THE SOUL ENKINDLED WITH LOVE

Lord, God, my Beloved ! If Thou still rememberest my sins and so doest not that which I am ever beseeching of Thee, do Thou Thy will as concerning them, my God, for it is this that I most desire, and exercise Thy goodness and mercy and Thou shalt be known in them ; and if Thou awaitest my works in order to grant me my prayer by means of them, do Thou grant them to me and work them for me, and the griefs that Thou wilt accept, and let it be done. And if Thou awaitest not my works, for what then dost Thou wait, my most merciful Lord ? Wherefore tarriest Thou ? For if after all I am to receive the grace

¹ [*Lit.*, ' the Divine lights. ']

and mercy which I entreat of Thee in Thy Son, take Thou my mite, since Thou desirest it, and grant me this good thing, since Thou desirest it likewise.

Who can free himself from unworthiness of speech and manners, if Thou raise him not up to Thyself, my God, in purity of love?

How will a man that is engendered and nurtured in unworthiness rise up to Thee, if Thou, O Lord, that madest him, raise him not up with Thy hand?

Thou wilt not take from me, my God, that which once Thou gavest me in Thine only Son Jesus Christ, in Whom Thou gavest me all that I desire; wherefore I shall rejoice that Thou tarry not if I wait for Thee.

With what procrastinations¹ dost thou wait, since thou canst of a certainty love God in thy heart?

Mine are the heavens and mine is the earth; mine are the people, the righteous are mine and mine are the sinners; the angels are mine and the Mother of God, and all things are mine; and God Himself is mine and for me, for Christ is mine and all for me. What, then, dost thou ask for and seek, my soul? Thine is all this, and it is all for thee.

Despise not thyself nor give thou heed to the crumbs which fall from thy Father's table. Go thou forth and do thou glory in thy glory. Hide thee therein and rejoice and thou shalt have the desires of thy heart.

26. The spirit that is indeed pure concerns not itself with advertence to exterior things, or with human respects, but inwardly, alone and withdrawn from all forms, and in delectable tranquillity, it communes with God, for the knowledge of Him is in Divine silence.²

27. The soul enkindled with love is a soul that is gentle, meek, humble and patient.

28. The soul that is hard becomes harder through love of its own self. If in Thy love, O good Jesus, Thou softenest³ not the soul, it will persist for ever in its natural hardness.

29. He that loses an opportunity⁴ is like one that has let a bird fly out of his hand, for he will not regain it.

¹ B, Bg: 'With what discretion.'

² B, Bg, 1693: 'is Divine knowledge.'

³ B, Bg, 1693: 'Thou sanctifiest.'

⁴ B, Bg, 1693: 'He that loses a prayer.'

30. I knew Thee not, my Lord, because I still desired to know and delight in things.

31. Let everything be changed, and that willingly, Lord God, so that we may find rest in Thee.

32. One single thought of a man is of greater worth than the whole world ; wherefore God alone is worthy of him.

33. For that which cannot be felt, that which thou feelest¹ not ; for that which can be felt, sense ; and for the Spirit of God, thought.

34. Consider that thy guardian angel does not always move the desire to act, though he ever illumines the reason. Wherefore stay thou not for desire before thou perform a virtuous deed, since reason and understanding suffice thee.

35. The desire gives the angel no cause to move it when it is set upon aught beside.

36. My spirit has dried up in me, because it forgets to feed upon Thee.

37. This that thou seekest and that thou most desirest thou wilt not find by this way of thine, neither by lofty contemplation, but in deep humility and submissiveness of heart.

38. Weary not thyself, for thou shalt not enter into spiritual delight and sweetness² if thou give not thyself to mortification of all this that thou desirest.

39. Consider that it is the most delicate flower that soonest withers and loses its fragrance. Wherefore beware thou of seeking to walk in the way of spiritual delight, for thou shalt not be constant. But choose thou for thyself spiritual vigour, and have attachment to naught, and thou shalt find sweetness and peace in abundance ; for fruit that is both delicious and lasting is gathered in country that is cold and dry.

40. Remember that thy flesh is weak and that naught belonging to the world can give strength or consolation to thy spirit ; for that which is born of the world is worldly, and that which is born of the flesh is fleshly, and true spirituality is born of the Spirit of God alone, which is communicated neither through the world nor through the flesh.

¹ The MS. is imperfect here : the reading ' that which does not feel ' is admissible [and certainly preferable] ; B, Bg, 1693 read as in the text.

² Bg, 1693 : ' into the delight and sweetness of Christ.' B : ' into the delight and wisdom of Christ.'

41. Enter into account with thy reason to do that which it counsels thee on the road to God, and it will be of greater worth to thee with respect to thy God than all the works that thou doest without this counsel and than all the spiritual delights that thou seekest.¹

42. Blessed is he that puts aside his pleasure and inclination and regards things according to reason and justice in order to perform them.

43. He that acts according to reason is like one that eats of substantial food, and he that is moved by the desire of his will is like one that eats insipid fruit.

44. Thou, Lord, returnest gladly and lovingly to exalt him that offends Thee, and I return not to exalt and honour him that angers me.

45. O powerful Lord, if a spark of Thy empire of righteousness has so great an effect upon a prince who is mortal and who governs and moves the peoples, what effect will Thy omnipotent righteousness have upon the righteous man and the sinner?²

46. If thou purify thy soul of strange possessions and desires, thou shalt understand things in spirit; and if thou deny thy desire with respect to them thou shalt enjoy the truth that is in them, understanding that which is sure in them.

47. My God and Lord, Thou art no stranger to him that makes not himself a stranger to Thee. How do they say that Thou dost absent Thyself?

48. Truly a man has conquered all things if the pleasure that they bring moves him not to joy and the insipidity which they leave behind causes him not sorrow.

49. If thou desirest to attain to holy recollection, thou shalt attain it, not by accepting, but by denying.

50. If I go, my God, whithersoever Thou goest, thus will it go with me as I desire for Thy sake.³

51. That man will not be able to attain to perfection who endeavours not to be satisfied with nothing, so that his natural and spiritual concupiscence may be content with emptiness; for this is needful if a man would attain to the highest tranquillity and peace of spirit; and in this

¹ In Bg this maxim ends with the words: 'road to God.'

² This maxim is not found in B, Bg.

³ In B, Bg, 1693 the maxims which correspond with those of the Andújar MS. end here, and there follow others, under the title 'Points of Love,' which will be found on p. 250, below.

way the love of God is almost continually in action in the simple and pure soul.

52. Since God is inaccessible, see that thou concern not thyself with how much thy faculties can comprehend and thy senses can perceive, that thou be not satisfied with less and that thy soul lose not the swiftness that is needful for one that would attain to Him.

53. As one that drags a cart uphill, even so does that soul journey toward God that shakes not off anxiety and quenches not desire.

54. It is not the will of God that the soul allow aught to trouble it, or suffer trials ; if it suffer them in the adversities of the world, this comes from the weakness of its virtue ; for the soul of the perfect man rejoices in that which causes the imperfect soul affliction.

55. On the road to life there is very little bustle and business, and it requires mortification of the will rather than much knowledge. He that cumburs himself least with things and pleasures will go farthest along that road.

56. Think not that pleasing God lies so much in performing numerous good works as in performing them with good will, and without attachment and respect to persons.

57. At eventide they will examine thee in love. Learn to love as God desires to be loved and lay aside thine own temperament.

58. See that thou meddle not in the affairs of others, nor even allow them to pass through thy memory, for perchance thou wilt be unable to fulfil thy task.

59. Think not that, because in yonder man there shine not the virtues whereof thou thinkest, he will not be precious in God's sight for that whereof thou thinkest not.

60. Man knows not either how to rejoice aright or how to grieve aright, for he understands not the distance that there is between good and evil.

61. See that thou become not of a sudden sorrowful because of the adversities that are in the world, since thou knowest not the blessings that they bring with them, being ordained in the judgements of God for the everlasting joy of the elect.

62. Rejoice thou not in temporal prosperity, since thou knowest not of a certainty that it assures thee eternal life.

63. In tribulation, draw near to God with confidence and thou shalt be strengthened and illumined and instructed.

64. In joys and pleasures draw near at once to God with fear and truth, and thou shalt neither be deceived nor turned to vanity.

65. Take God for thy Spouse and for a Friend with Whom thou walkest continually, and thou shalt not sin and shalt learn to love, and the things that are needful shall be wrought prosperously for thee.

66. Without labour thou shalt subject people and things shall serve thee, if thou forget both them and thyself.

67. Betake thyself to rest, putting anxieties far from thee and caring not at all for all that comes to pass, and thou shalt serve God as He wills and find happiness in Him.

68. Behold, God reigns not save in the disinterested and peaceful soul.

x 69. Though thou perform many actions, yet thou shalt make no progress in perfection if thou learn not to deny thy will and to submit thyself, losing all anxiety concerning thyself and thine own business.

70. What profit is it that thou give one thing to God if He asks of thee another? Consider that which will please God and do it; in this way thou shalt better satisfy thy heart than with that to which thou thyself inclinest.

71. How presumest thou to take thine ease so fearlessly since thou must appear before God to give an account of the least of thy words and thoughts?

72. Behold how many are they that are called and how few they that are chosen. And see that, if thou have no care for thyself, thy perdition is more certain than thine amendment, especially since so narrow is the way that leads to eternal life.

73. Rejoice not vainly, for thou knowest how many sins thou hast committed and thou knowest not how thou standest with God; but fear, yet have confidence.

74. Since when thine hour of reckoning comes it will grieve thee that thou hast not employed this time in the service of God, wherefore dost thou not order and employ it now¹ as thou wouldst wish to have done wert thou dying?

75. If thou desirest devotion to be born in thy spirit and the love of God and desire for Divine things to grow, cleanse thy soul of every desire and attachment and pretension, so that thou carest nothing for anything. For just as a sick man, when he has cast out the evil humour, is at once

¹ The word 'now' is the Saint's interlinear addition.

conscious of good health and there comes to him a desire to eat, just so shalt thou recover thy health in God if thou curest thyself in this matter ; and otherwise, however much thou doest, it shall profit thee nothing.

76. If thou desirest to find peace and consolation for thy soul, and to serve God truly, content not thyself with this that thou hast left behind, for perchance thou wilt still have as many impediments as before, or more than before. But leave all these other things that remain to thee and withdraw thyself to one thing alone which brings everything with it —namely, to holy solitude, together with prayer and with holy and Divine reading, and remain there in forgetfulness of all things. For if these things are not incumbent upon thee of obligation, thou wilt be better pleasing to God in being able to keep thyself and make thyself more perfect than in gaining all other things at once. For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul ?

POINTS OF LOVE¹

- 1. Straitly restrain thy tongue and thy thoughts and keep thine affection habitually fixed upon God, and He will grant thy spirit Divine fervour.
2. Feed not thy spirit on aught beside God. Cast away concern for all things and have peace and recollection in thy heart.
- 3. Find spiritual tranquillity in a loving attentiveness to God, and, if it be necessary to speak, let it be with the same tranquillity and peace.
4. Have remembrance habitually of eternal life, and of the truth that they that are lowliest and poorest and counted as least shall have fruition of the chiefest dominion and glory in God.
5. Rejoice habitually in God, Who is thy salvation, and know that it is good to suffer in any way for him that is good.
6. Let us consider how necessary it is for us to be our own enemies, and to journey to perfection on the road of holy severity, and let us understand that every word we speak, save by command and under obedience, is laid to our account by God.
7. An intimate desire that God may grant thee that which His Majesty knows thou dost lack for His honour.
8. Crucified inwardly and outwardly with Christ, a man will live in this life with fullness and satisfaction of soul, possessing his soul in His patience.²
9. Have a loving attentiveness to God, with no desire to feel or understand anything in particular concerning Him.
10. Habitual confidence in God, esteeming in oneself and in one's sisters that which God most esteems—namely, spiritual blessings.

¹ These are to be found in Bg and (with slight variations) in 1693 and the copy in the library of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, Barcelona. Bg seems the most reliable authority and is accordingly followed in the text above.

² [Or 'in his patience.']

11. Enter into thy bosom¹ and labour in the presence of the Spouse, Who is ever present and loves thee² well.

12. Be unwilling to admit into thy soul things that have in themselves no spiritual substance, that they make thee not to lose the desire for devotion and recollection.

13. Let Christ crucified be sufficient for thee, and with Him do thou suffer and rest ; for which cause do thou annihilate thyself with respect to all things, both without and within.

14. Endeavour that things be naught to thee, and that thou be naught to things ; forgetting all, dwell thou in thy recollection with the Spouse.

15. Love trials greatly and repute them of small account if thou wilt attain the favour of the Spouse, Who hesitated not to die for thee.

16. Have fortitude of heart against all things that move thee to that which is not God and be thou a lover of the Passion³ of Christ.

17. Have interior detachment from all things and set not thy pleasure on any temporal thing and thy soul shall be recollected with blessings that thou knowest not.

18. The soul that walks in love⁴ wearies not neither is wearied.

19. The poor man who is naked will be clothed ; and the soul that is naked of desires, of willings and of nillings will be clothed by God with His purity, desire and will.

20. There are souls that wallow in the mire even as animals wallow in it, and others that soar like the birds which purify and cleanse themselves in the air.

21. One word spake the Father, which Word was His Son, and this Word He speaks ever in eternal silence, and in silence must it be heard by the soul.

22. We must measure our trials by ourselves, and not ourselves by our trials.

23. He that seeks not the Cross of Christ seeks not the glory of Christ.

24. God conceives not love for the soul by considering

¹ For *seno* ['bosom'] B, Bg have *cieno* ['slough,' 'mire']; Bg, however, has the correction *seno* and 1693 also reads *seno*.

² [The pronoun is feminine, as one would expect from the reference to 'sisters' in the last maxim. The feminine pronoun recurs in later 'Points.']

³ 1693: 'of the passions.'

⁴ So B, Bg, 1693: 'that walks enkindled with love.'

its greatness, but by considering the greatness of its humility.¹

25. He that is ashamed to confess Me before men, says the Lord, him will I also be ashamed to confess before My Father.²

26. Hair that is combed with frequency is untangled, and there will be no difficulty in combing it as often as one desires ; and the soul that with frequency examines its thoughts, words, and deeds, which are like the hair, and that does all things for love of God, will find that its hair is quite free from entanglement. Then the Spouse will look upon the neck of the Bride, and will be captivated thereby, and will be wounded by one of her eyes, namely by the purity of intention wherewith she performs all her acts. We begin to comb our hair from the crown of the head if we desire it not to be tangled ; all our works must begin from the crown—that is, from the love of God—if we wish them to be without entanglement and pure.

27.³ The heavens are stable and not subject to generation, and souls which are of heavenly texture are also stable, and are not subject to the generation of desires or to aught else, for after their kind they are like unto God, and are never moved.

28. Eat not of forbidden fruit which belongs to this present life, since blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. That which God seeks to do is to make us gods by participation, as He is God by nature, even as fire converts all things into fire.

29. All the goodness that we have is lent to us and God considers it as His own work ; God and His work is God.

30. Wisdom enters through love, silence, and mortification ; great wisdom is it to be able to keep silence and to look neither at the words nor at the deeds nor at the lives of others.

31. All for Me and naught for thee.

32. All for Thee and naught for me.

33. Allow thyself to be taught, allow thyself to be commanded, allow thyself to be brought into submission and despised, and thou shalt be perfect.

34. Five evils are caused in the soul by any desire : first,

¹ B : ' of its humility and contempt ' ; 1693 : ' of its contempt and humility.'

² 1693 omits this maxim, which is, of course, simply a verse from the Gospel.

³ Bg omits this maxim, which is found, however, in B and 1693.

it is made uneasy ; second, it is confused ; third, it is soiled ; fourth, it is weakened ; and fifth, it is darkened.

35. Perfection lies not in the virtues which the soul knows itself to have ; it consists in those which Our Lord sees in the soul. And this is a closed book ;¹ wherefore the soul has no excuse for presumption, but must humble itself to the ground with respect to its virtues.

36. Love consists not in feeling great things, but in having great detachment and in suffering for the Beloved.

37. The whole world is not worthy of a man's thought, for it is the work of God alone, and whatever thought of ours is not centred upon God is stolen from Him.

38. The faculties and senses must not be employed wholly upon things, but only in so far as is unavoidable. With this exception all must be left free for God.

39. Look not at the imperfections of others, keep silence, and have continual converse with God. These three things will uproot great imperfections from the soul and will make it the mistress of great virtues.

40. The signs of interior recollection are three ; first, if the soul has no pleasure in transitory things ; second, if it have pleasure in solitude and silence and give heed to all that leads to greater perfection ; third, if the things which were wont to help it (such as considerations, meditations, and acts) now hinder it and the soul has no other support in prayer than faith and hope and charity.

41. If a soul becomes more patient in suffering and readier to endure lack of consolations, this is a sign that it is making greater progress in virtue.

42. The characteristics of the solitary bird are five. First, it soars as high as it is able. Second, it can endure no companionship, even of its own kind. Third, it has its beak in the air. Fourth, it has no definite colour. Fifth, it sings sweetly. These characteristics will belong to the contemplative soul. It must soar above transitory things, paying no more heed than if they were not. It must be so fond of solitude and silence that it can endure the companionship of no other creature. Its beak must be in the atmosphere² of the Holy Spirit—that is, it must respond to His inspirations, to the end that, by so doing, it may become

¹ [*Lit.*, 'closed burden.'] 1693 reads : 'closed letter' [which suggests the phrase used above].

² [*Lit.*, 'in the air.']

more worthy of His companionship. It must have no definite colour—that is, it must desire to do no definite thing save that which is the will of God. It must sing sweetly in the contemplation and love of its Spouse.

43. The habits of voluntary imperfections which are never completely conquered not only hinder Divine union, but also prevent a soul from approaching perfection. Such imperfections are : the habit of much speaking, little unconquered attachments, such as for persons, clothes, cells, books, different kinds of food, and other conversations and preferences in tasting things, in knowledge and hearing, and other matters like to these.¹

44. If thou desirest to glory, and desirest not to appear stupid and foolish, put away from thee things that are not thine, and thou shalt have glory of that which remains. But, in truth, if thou puttest away all things that are not thine, thou shalt be changed into nothing, for thou must glory in nothing if thou desirest not to fall into vanity. But let us descend now especially to the gifts of those graces which make men full of grace and pleasing in the eyes of God. It is certain that thou shouldst not glory in those gifts since thou knowest not yet if thou hast them.²

45. Oh, how sweet will Thy presence be to me, Thou that art the highest Good. I will approach Thee with silence³ and will uncover my feet before Thee that Thou mayest be pleased to unite me unto Thee in marriage, and I will not take mine ease until I have fruition of Thyself in Thine arms. And now I entreat Thee, Lord, not to forsake me at any time in my recollection since I am a spendthrift of my soul.

46. If thou be detached from that which is without and dispossessed of that which is within, and without attachment to the things of God, neither will prosperity detain thee nor adversity hinder thee.

47. The soul that is united with God is feared by the devil as though it were God Himself.⁴

¹ Bg. adds at this point : ' This is by our venerable Father Fray Juan de la Cruz.' This maxim (43) is not found in B or in 1693, both of which authorities go on to give others which are not in Bg. and which we now reproduce. The numbering which we have adopted follows on continuously from the maxims already transcribed. Some of the maxims which follow, but not all, are found in B.

² This maxim is found in B.

³ B. ends this maxim here.

⁴ This maxim and the six which follow it are found in B.

48. The purest suffering bears and carries in its train the purest understanding.

49. The soul that desires God to surrender Himself to it wholly must surrender itself to Him wholly and leave nothing for itself.

50. The soul that is in the union of love has not even the first movements of sin.¹

51. The tried friends of God very rarely fail God, since they are above all that they can lack.²

52. My Beloved, all that is rough and toilsome I desire for myself, and all that is sweet and delectable I desire for Thee.

53. That which we most need in order to make progress is to be silent before this great God, with the desire and with the tongue, for the language that He best hears is the silent language of love.

54. Divest thyself of what is human in order to seek God.³ A man employs a light in his outward life, so that he may not fall, but light acts in the contrary manner in the things of God. Wherefore it is better to be unable to see and the soul has thus more security.

55. More profit can be obtained from the good things of God in one hour than from our own good things in a whole lifetime.

56. Love to be unknown both by thyself and by others. Never look at the good or at the evil things of others.

57. Walk in solitude with God ; work in the mean ; hide the good things of God.

58. To be prepared to lose and see all others win belongs to valiant souls, to generous bosoms, and to liberal hearts. One of the qualities of such souls is that they will give rather than receive even till they come to give themselves, for they consider the possession of themselves to be a great burden, and prefer to be possessed by others and withdrawn from themselves, since we belong rather to that infinite Good than to ourselves.

59. A great evil is it to have an eye rather to the good things of God than to God Himself, to prayer and to detachment.

¹ ['Of sin' is not found in the original.]

² B: 'that can fail them.' [There is a slight play here on the words 'fail' (*faltar*) and 'lack' (*hacer falta*). The version of B makes the play explicit in English, but the sense is not so good].

³ [P. Gerardo amended this obscure Spanish sentence to read: 'Simple faith in order to seek God.']

60. Behold that infinite knowledge and that hidden secret. What peace, what love, what silence is in that Divine Bosom ! How lofty a science is that which God there teaches—namely, the science of what we call anagogical acts, which so greatly enkindle the heart !

61. Great damage and harm is done to the secrecy of the conscience whensoever the fruit thereof is manifested to men, for in such case the soul receives as a reward the fruit of transitory fame. (1) Speak little, and meddle not in things where thou art not consulted. (2) Strive ever to have God present in thee and keep within thyself the purity that God teaches. (3) Excuse not thyself neither refuse to be corrected by all ; listen to every reproof with a serene countenance ; think that God utters it. (4) Live in this world as though there were in it but God and thy soul, so that thy heart may be detained by naught that is human. (5) Count it the mercy of God if at times some good word is spoken of thee, for thou deservest none. (6) Never allow thyself to pour out thy heart, even though it be but for a moment. (7) Never hear the weaknesses of others, and then, if anyone complain to thee of another, thou shalt be enabled to tell him humbly to say naught of it to thee. (8) Make complaint of none, ask naught soever, or, if it be needful for thee to ask, let it be with few words. (9) Refuse not work, even though it appear to thee that thou canst not perform it. Let all find compassion in thee. (10) Contradict not ; and in no way speak thou words that are not pure. (11) Let thy speech be such that none can be offended by it, and speak of things which it troubles thee not that all should know. (12) Deny not aught that thou hast, even though thou have need of it. (13) Be silent concerning that which God may give thee and remember that saying of the Bride : ‘ My secret for myself.’ (14) Strive to keep thy heart in peace, and let naught that comes to pass in this world make thee uneasy—for consider that it must all come to an end. (15) Trouble not thyself either much or little as to who is against thee and who is with thee ; and strive ever to please thy God. Pray to Him that His will may be done in thee. Love Him greatly, for this thou owest Him.

62. Twelve means¹ for arriving at the highest perfection : love of God, love of our neighbour, obedience, chastity,

¹ [*Lit., estrellas, ‘ stars,’ ‘ guiding lights.’*]

OTHER MAXIMS¹

1. The farther thou withdrawest thyself from earthly things, the nearer dost thou approach heavenly things, and the more thou findest in God.

2. He that knows how to die in all things will have life in all things.

3. Withdraw from evil, work good and seek peace.

4. He that complains or murmurs is not perfect, nor is he even a good Christian.

5. Humble is he that hides himself in his own nothingness and knows how to cast himself upon God.

6. Meek is he that knows how to suffer his neighbour and to suffer his own self.

7. If thou wilt be perfect, sell thy will and give it to the poor in spirit; come to Christ through meekness and humility; and follow Him to Calvary and the grave.

8. He that trusts to himself is worse than the devil.

9. He that loves not his neighbour abhors God.

10. He that works lukewarmly is near to falling.

11. He that flees from prayer flees from all that is good.

12. Better is it to conquer the tongue than to fast on bread and water.

13. Better is it to suffer for God's sake than to work miracles.

14. Oh, what blessings will be those that we shall enjoy with the sight of the Most Holy Trinity!

¹ These Maxims, which we owe to the diligence of P. Andrés de la Encarnación, appear to us authentic. Others, which can be gleaned from the documents connected with the Beatification of S. John of the Cross, often express his thought, but are not written in the style with which we are familiar as his. These last, therefore, we have not included.

impedes the interior resurrection of the spirit. May that spirit dwell in your souls ! Amen.

From Málaga.

Your servant,

FRAY JOHN OF THE CROSS.

November 18, 1586.

LETTER VI

TO THE DISCALCED CARMELITE NUNS OF BEAS

GRANADA, NOVEMBER 22, 1587.

*New spiritual instructions for the nuns. What the soul ordinarily needs is not to write and speak but to be silent and act. The best means of preserving one's spirituality is to suffer. Solitude and recollection in God.*¹

Jesus, Mary be in your souls, my daughters in Christ. Your letter comforted me greatly : may Our Lord reward you for it ! My not having written has not been for lack of willingness, for truly I desire your great good, but because it seems to me that enough has already been said and written for the accomplishment of what is needful ; and that what is lacking (if anything be lacking) is not writing or speaking, for of this there is generally too much, but silence and work. And, apart from this, speaking is a distraction, whereas silence and work bring to the spirit recollection and strength. And therefore, when a person once understands what has been said to him for his profit, he needs neither to hear nor to say more, but rather to practise what has been said to him silently and carefully, in humility and charity and self-contempt, and not to go away and seek new things, which serve only to satisfy the appetite in external matters (and even here are unable to satisfy it) and leave the spirit weak and empty, with no interior virtue. Hence such a one profits neither at the beginning nor at the end. He is as one that eats again before he has digested his last meal, who, because his

¹ This letter belonged to the Discalced Carmelite Friars of Zaragoza and seems to have disappeared in the siege of that city during the War of Independence. There are two almost identical copies in the National Library, Madrid (MS. 12738, f. 767, and MS. 13245, f. 247). We follow the latter copy in the text.

natural heat is divided between both meals, has no strength to convert this food into substance, and becomes indisposed.

It is very needful, my daughters, to be able to withdraw the spirit from the devil and from sensuality,¹ for otherwise, without knowing it, we shall find ourselves completely failing to make progress and very far removed from the virtues of Christ, and afterwards we shall awaken, and find our work and labour inside out. Thinking that our lamp was burning, we shall find it apparently extinguished, for when we blew upon it, and thought thereby to fan its flame, we may rather have put it out. I say, then, that, if this is not to be, and in order to preserve our spirituality (as I have said) there is no better remedy than to suffer and work and be silent, and to close the senses by the practice of solitude and the inclination to solitude, and forgetfulness of all creatures and all happenings, even though the world perish. Never, for good or for evil, fail to quiet your heart² with tender love,³ in order that you may suffer in all things that present themselves. For perfection is of such great moment, and spiritual delight is of so rich a price—may God grant that all this may suffice; for it is impossible to continue to make progress save by working and suffering with all virtue, and being completely enwrapped in silence.

I have understood,⁴ daughters, that the soul which is easily inclined to talk and converse is but very little inclined toward God; for, when it is inclined toward God, it is at once, as it were, forcibly drawn within itself, that it may be silent and shun all conversation, for God would have the soul enjoy Him more than it enjoys any creature, howsoever excellent and suitable such a creature may be.

I commend myself to the prayers of Your Charities; and be certain that, small as my charity is, it is so completely centred in you that I never forget those to whom I owe so much in the Lord. May He be with us all. Amen.

From Granada, on the 22nd of November, 1587.

FRAY JOHN OF THE CROSS.

The greatest necessity we have is to be silent before this great God with the desire⁵ and with the tongue, for the

¹ MS. 12738: 'from our sensuality.'

² MS. 12738: 'allow your heart to become disquieted.'

³ [*Lit.*, 'with the bowels of love.']

⁴ MS. 12738: 'I understand.'

⁵ MS. 12738: 'with the spirit.'

language which He alone hears is the silent language of love.

(Superscription) : To Ana de Jesús and the other Discalced Carmelite Sisters of the Convent of Granada.

LETTER VII

TO M. LEONOR BAUTISTA AT BEAS

GRANADA, FEBRUARY 8, 1588.

*Commiserates with her on her trials and counsels her to bear them with pleasure, for God's sake.*¹

Jesus be in Your Reverence. Think not, daughter in Christ, that I have ceased to grieve for you in your trials or for those that share them with you ; yet, when I remember that God has called you to lead an apostolic life, which is a life of contempt, and is leading you by that road, I am comforted. Briefly, God desires that the religious shall live the religious life in such a way that he shall have done with everything, and everything shall be as nothing to him. For He Himself desires to be the only wealth of the soul and its comfort and its delectable glory. A surpassing favour has God granted Your Reverence, for now, forgetting all things, Your Reverence will be able to rejoice in God alone, and for love of God will care nothing as to what they do with you, since you belong not to yourself but to God.

Let me know if your departure for Madrid is certain, and if the Mother Prioress is coming, and commend me greatly to my daughters Magdalena and Ana,² and to them all, for I have no opportunity to write to them.

From Granada, on the 8th of February, (15)88.

FRAY JOHN OF THE CROSS.

¹ The autograph, in a good state of preservation, is venerated in the Convent of Discalced Carmelite Nuns of Barcelona. It measures 31 by 23 cm. and is written on one side only. There is a photographic reproduction in P. Gerardo's *Autógrafos*.

The nun to whom the letter was written was born at Alcaraz, in the province of Albacete, and professed at Beas in 1578. She had just laid down her office as prioress ; it is to this that the Saint alludes in the last sentence of the second paragraph.

² These were two of the nuns of Beas, both of whom are mentioned elsewhere in these volumes.