Conceptions of the Love of God 天主之爱的观念

St. Teresa of Ávila 大德兰 (1515 – 1582)

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CONCEPTIONS OF THE LOVE OF GOD ON

SOME VERSES OF THE CANTICLE.

CHAPTER I.

Treats of the difficulty of understanding the meaning of the Holy Scriptures, especially the Canticle of Canticles. That some sentences contained in the latter, although they seem trite, homely, and unsuited to the most pure utterance of God and of His Spouse, yet comprise very holy mysteries and sublime ideas.

1. Consolation to be found in the mysteries of the Holy Scriptures. 2. How to look upon these mysteries. 3. Misinterpretation of the Canticle of Canticles. 4. Caused by our lack of love for God. 5. How the Canticles comfort devout souls. 6. They demonstrate God's love for us. 7. How profound are the mysteries of the Canticles. S. Saint Teresa's plea for commenting on them. 9. Her apologies. 10. Whom the Bride addresses in the text quoted. 11. " Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth." 12. The " kiss " signifies peace. 13. The Canticles scandalise tepid souls. 14. They are meant for fervent souls.

"let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth: for thy breasts are better than wine."^

I. I HAVE noticed especially that the soul appears by these words to be speaking with one person and asking a kiss from another. For the Bride says: " Let Htm kiss me with the kiss of His mouth," and then appears to

1 Cant. i. I : Osculeiur me ósculo oris sui : quia meliora sunt ubera tua vino,

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address the person himself in the words : "for thy breasts are better than wine." I cannot understand this, and I am very glad of it. For the soul ought not so much to contemplate and honour God in those things that our grovelling intellects can master in this life, as in these problems that we cannot solve. When you read a book, or hear a sermon, or meditate on any of the mysteries of

our holy faith, if you find you cannot clearly comprehend the matter, I strongly recommend you not to tire yourselves, nor to strain your minds by puzzling over it, for many of these things are not suited for women — nor men either, very often !

2. When our Lord wishes us to comprehend these matters, He will enlighten us with no labour of our own. This applies to women, and also to men who are not bound to defend the truth by their doctrine : those whom God has appointed for our teachers must necessarily study, and they gain by it. As for us, let us accept what He gives us in all simplicity, and not tire ourselves by trying to discover the rest ; let us rather rejoice at thinking that we have so great a God, Whose every word contains a thousand mysteries, so that its very first principle is beyond our grasp. This would not be surprising were the language Latin, or Hebrew, or Greek, but how many things in the Psalms of the glorious King David are as obscure to us in Spanish as they would be in Latin ! Therefore never rack your brain or tire yourselves about

these matters ; for women need no more than what suits their capacity — with this, God will give us His grace when He chooses. He will teach us without any trouble or labour of our own. As for the rest, let us humble our- selves and, as I said, glory in having a God Whose words, even in the vulgar tongue, are beyond our understanding. I 3. You may think that some things in the Canticles might have been expressed diñerently. Our minds are so evil that this would not surprise me. I have even heard people say that they avoided hearing them. Alas, O God, what most miserable creatures we are : like veno- mous reptiles that turn all they eat into poison ! From the great favour our Lord does us in showing us the bliss enjoyed by the soul that loves Him and how He encourages it to converse with and delight in Him, we draw misgivings and mistaken ideas in accordance with our lukewarm love for Him.

4. O my Master ! How we pervert all the blessings Thou bestowest on us ! Thou dost seek ways and means- and allurements to testify Thy love for us, but we, unused, : as it were, to love Thee, so disparage them that our- thoughts follow their usual track, and never penetrate the sublime mysteries hidden in mere words, dictated as they are by the Holy Spirit. Could more be needed to inflarne , us with love for God than the thought that He did not adopt this way of speaking without a deep motive ? I remember once hearing, a religious preach an excellent

sermon, principally upon the joys of the bride with her God, and the congregation scandalised me by the way that they laughed at and misinterpreted his words — for he spoke about love because it was at the Mandatum * when no other subject was admissible.

5. I am convinced, as I said, that the love of God is so strange a thing to us that we cannot believe that a soul could thus be intimate with God. But though these people gained no good from the words because they did not understand them, and I believe they fancied that the preacher invented them himself, yet others have drawn great profit and comfort and reassurance of their misgivings from this source, and have often thanked God for having left such gracious refuge and help to souls who love Him fervently, in words which testify how far He can abase Himself. Were it not for this, their fears could not be quieted. I am acquainted with some one ‘ who felt very anxious for many years and nothing could reassure her until our Lord was pleased that she should hear certain passages from the Canticles which showed her that she was in the right path. For, as I

2 The ceremony of the washing of the feet which is performed on Maundy Thursday in memory of our Lord’s washing the feet of the apostles on the eve of His passion. It is called Mandatum (whence Maundy Thursday) from the antiphon sung on that occasion, Mandatum novum do vobis — I give you a new command- ment. A sermon is sometimes preached during this ceremony.

8 The Saint evidently speaks here of her own experience.

said, she knew that it is possible for a soul enamoured of the Bridegroom to experience these caresses, ecstasies, overmastering desires of death, and desolations, delights and joys with Him, once it has forsaken all worldly pleasures for His love and has placed itself entirely in His hands ; * resigning itself to His will — not in word alone as many do, but in very truth, confirmed by deeds. 6. O my daughters, what a good Paymaster God is ! You have a Master and Bridegroom Whose notice nothing escapes, Who knows and sees everything, so do all you can, however little, for love of Him. He will reward you, for He will only look at the love which inspired your deeds. To conclude with, I advise you, whenever you meet with anything that you do not understand, either in the Holy Scriptures or the Mysteries of the Faith, not to stop to puzzle over it, as I said, nor to be shocked at the tender speeches which pass between God and the soul. I am more daunted and overcome at His love for us, seeing what we are, yet since He feels such affection, no endearing words can testify it so plainly as do His actions. And now, I beg you to pause a little, and think over the love of God for us, and what He has done for us. Seeing that His love was potent and resistless enough to make Him suffer thus, how can He amaze us by any words through which He utters it ?

7. To return to what I was speaking of. There must

4 CasUe, M. y. gh. ij. 5.

needs be a deep meaning and profound mystery contained in the words of the Canticle of Canticles, and they are so precious that theologians, whom I have asked what the . Holy Ghost signifies by them and what was their true purport, have told me that the Doctors of the Church have written many commentaries without succeeding in fully explaining them.

8. Since this is the case, it seems excessively pre- sumptuous for me to attempt to elucidate the subject ; but this is not my design, nor, however wanting I may be in humility, do I suppose that I can penetrate the exact sense. My idea is, as I derive great pleasiure from what our Lord makes me understand when I hear any part of the Canticles, that if I told you about it, it might perhaps comfort you as it does me. Though my commentary may not be applicable to the words of the Holy Scripture, yet I may take them in that sense, if I do not differ from the doctrine of the Church and the Saints — and men skilled in theology will examine my book to guard against this before it is shown you — I think our Lord authorises this, as He permits us, when meditating on His sacred Passion, to ponder over the many labours and torments He must have suffered which the Evangelists never mention. If we do not act from curiosity, as I said at first, but only accept the light God gives us, I feel certain that He will not resent our joy and comfort in His words and works. In the same way, it would please and amuse a king to see a

simple shepherd boy, who was his favourite, standing amazed at the sight of the royal robes, wondering of what material they were, and how they were made. So we women need not be entirely shut out from enjoying the divine treasures ; as to discussing them and teaching others on the subject as if we thought we understood it without having consulted learned men — that is another thing.

9. God knows I do not expect such success in what I write — I am only like the shepherd lad I spoke of. It is a pleasure to relate my thoughts to you, although many of them are very foolish. So I will begin, with the aid of my Divine King, and the permission of my confessor. May God grant, since He has vouchsafed to let me succeed in aiding you (or has Himself aided you through me on your account) in other ways, that I may help you now. But if not, my time will have been well spent in writing and thinking over a subject so divine that I am unworthy even to hear it mentioned.

10. It appears to me, as I said before, that the Bride is speaking of a third person who yet is the very same she is addressing, for in Christ there are two natures, one divine and the other human. I will not dwell on this, because I only intend writing of what appears profitable to us who practise prayer — yet everything serves to encourage and rouse to admiration the soul that fervently desires to love our Lord. His Majesty knows that,

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though I have heard these words expounded and they have been explained to me at my own request, yet this happened but rarely and I remember nothing at all about it, for my memory is very bad. Thus I can only say what He teaches me or what suits my purpose, and I cannot recall having heard anything about the beginning of the chapter : " Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth."

11. O my Lord and my God ! What words for a creature to utter to its Creator ! Blessed be Thou for having taught us in so many different ways ! Who, O my King, who would dare to speak thus without Thy permission ? It is astounding ; indeed, some may be astounded at my saying that anyone may use such an expression. People may tell me that I am a simpleton — " that the bride would not utter such a speech," — " the words have many meanings and we certainly ought not to address them to God ; " — " it would be better that simple persons should not discuss such things ! "

12. I own that the words have many meanings, yet the soul inflamed and intoxicated with love cares for no other meaning, and only desires to utter them, since God does not deprive her of the right of so doing. God help me ! Why should we be so amazed ? Is not the reality still more wonderful ? Do we not approach the most Blessed Sacrament ? I have sometimes wondered whether the Spouse \ya^ asking here for this favour which Christ

afterwards bestowed on us ? At other times I have thought she might have meant the consummate union of God being made Man, that close friendship He contracted with the human race. Undoubtedly, a kiss is the sign of peace

and friendship between two persons. May God give us grace to understand how many kinds of peace there are. 13. Before going any farther, I have a remark to make which I think is important, although it would have been more appropriate at some other time ; however, I wül run no risk of forgetting it. I feel sure that many souls approach the most Blessed Sacrament — would to God I were mistaken ! — laden with mortal sms. If such persons heard one who was dying for love of God utter the words I quote, they would be scandalised and would take it for extreme presumption. Most certainly they would never themselves use this expression, for it and others of the same sort contained in the Canticle of Canticles are uttered by love which speaks thus, and as such persons lack love, they might read the book every day and never use such expressions, nor even dare to pronounce the words whose very sound strikes one with awe, so sublime is their majesty. And this majesty is Thine, O my Lord ! in the most holy Sacrament, but as faith is no longer living but is dead in such souls, they, seeing Thee humbled beneath the species of bread and remaining silent (for indeed they are unworthy to hear Thee), dare thus griev- ously to outrage Thee. When I consider, 0 my God ancj

my Lord ! the dignity of Thy divine Majesty and the greatness of Thy Sovereign bounty which lead Thee to communicate so intimately with base creatures, I ask myself how it is that they are not beside themselves with wonder and do not seek Thy grace and friendship with all their heart. For, not content with cherishing the soul and giving Thyself for its food and nourishment, Thou dost delight in its treating Thee as its tender and beloved Bridegroom and asking Thee to kiss it with Thy sweet and divine mouth. In order to bestow Thy gifts and favours and to draw it to Thy love, Thou dost speak to it and teach it with such care that the words addressed by Thee to souls to show them their faults, their miseries, and to lead them to renounce earthly things are usually of a kind of which the very sound penetrates the mind with fear.^

14. If these words were taken literally they might well awe the soul, yet to one beside herself with love of Thee, Lord, Thou mayest pardon this and even

more, presump- tuous as it may be ! For if, my Lord, a kiss signifies peace, why should not souls ask it of Thee ? What more can we beg of Thee than what I plead to Thee for, O my Master, that Thou wilt kiss me with the kiss of Thy mouth ? This, daughters, is a most sublime petition, as I will explain to you.

5 This paragraph, from the words "When I consider," to "with fear," is only found in the manuscript of Baeza.

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CHAPTER II -

Of nine sorts of false peace ; of defective love and fallacious prayer. This chapter contains very important teach- ing on genuine love, and on how souls should examine themselves so as to discover the defects that hinder them from attaining the perfection they desire.

1 . Peace produced in souls by the devil. 2. Peace proceeding from laxity. 3. Examples of this peace among religious. 4. Life m.ust be a constant warfare. 5. Advantages of temptations and struggles. 6. Peace of soul and contrition. 7. Contrition a sign of spiritual life. 8. Preparation for this peace. 9. Dangerous peace. 10. Object of this treatise. 11. Riches disturb peace. 12. Peace and holy poverty. 13. Evils of flattery. 14. Its treachery. 15. Our own nothingness. 16. Dangers of flattery, 17. Bodily comfort and our Lord's example. 18. And that of the Saints. 19. Consequences of self-indulgence. 20. Self-indulgence in religious. 21. Various kinds of divine peace. 22. Peace with God. 23. Disposi- tions for obtaining it. 24. Habitual sin. 25. God is patient with us. 26. Venial sins and peace. 27. Their danger. 28. Worldliness and peace. 29. Renouncement of the world. 30. An instance. 31. Self-deception difficult in religious life. 32. Human respect and perfection. 33. Peace disturbed by care for reputation. 34. Cautious souls. 35. Their want of trust. 36. The religious life and peace^

I. God deliver you from many kinds of peace which the world enjoys ! may He prevent us from ever ex- periencing such peace, for it engenders a perpetual warfare 1 When worldly minded people feel very placid although they commit

heinous offences and are untroubled by their sins, so that conscience does not upbraid them, their peace, as you have read, comes from their being friends with the devil, who while they live will wage no war on them, for such is their malice that, to save themselves trouble, they would, to a certain extent, return to God although they do not love Him. Still, with such a motive as this, they

never remain long in His service. As soon as the evil one notices it, he flatters their humour again, and so regains their friendship, until he holds them fast in the place where they learn how false was his peace. But it is needless to speak of such persons — let them enjoy their tranquillity — and I trust in God that no such harm will be found among you.

2. The devil may give us another kind of peace re- specting insignificant defects, and we must fear him, daughters, as long as we live. When a nun begins to grow lax about what appear to be in themselves unim- portant things, and feels no remorse of conscience after some time, this is an evil peace, and Satan may bring her to a very wicked peacefulness.

3. Such is the breach of some Constitution, which in itself is no sin, or carelessness in obeying the orders of a superior who is the representative of God, for we came here prepared to respect her wishes. There are other little matters which do not seem to be sinful, but which are imperfections. Such things must occur, because of the miseries of our nature : I do not deny this, but I say that we ought to be sorry for them and to know that we have done wrong ; otherwise the devil may bestir him- self and gradually make the soul insensible to these small defects, and when he succeeds in this, I assure you, my daughters, that he has gained no small victory, and I fear he will not stop there.

4. For the love of God, watch yourselves very carefully. There must be war in this life, for we cannot sit with our hands folded among so many enemies, but must keep constant watch over both our outward and inward con- duct. I assure you that even though our Lord may grant you favours during prayer,

of which I shall speak later on, yet at other times there will be no lack of a thousand little stumbling-blocks and chances, such as breaking a rule through carelessness, not performing some duty as well as might be, besides internal troubles and temptations. I do not say this must always be the case, nor that it is very usual. Still, it is a signal mercy from our Lord when such trials occur ^ and the soul makes progress by their means. We cannot be angels in this world, for it is not our nature.

5. Therefore I do not feel alarmed at seeing a soul greatly tempted, which will benefit it if it has the fear and love of our Lord, for I know it will come out with great gain. When I see anyone, like some people I have met, always calm and never meeting with any conflict, although I do not witness her oñend God, yet I always feel misgivings about her, and, since the devil leaves her alone, I try to prove her in every possible way, so that she may discover what she really is. I have rarely known such cases, yet it is possible for the soul which God has raised to a high degree of contemplation to be in such a state,

1 Life, ch. XXX. 17. Castle, M. iv. ch. i. 3.

and enjoy constant interior happiness. For my part I do not believe that their case is thoroughly understood, and on investigating the matter, I have found that they have their little struggles at times, although not frequently. I have weighed the matter carefully, and I do not envy such persons, for I find others advance far more who sustain the combats that I have described, although their prayer is not such, in point of perfection, as we should expect it to be here.

6. I do not allude to those who have attained great holiness and mortification by their long years of warfare ; they have died to the world, and our Lord usually gives peace, which, however, does not prevent their perceiving and grieving deeply over their faults. God guides souls in many different ways, daughters, yet I am always sorry when you feel no sorrow for any fault you have

com- mitted, for you ought to take to heart every sin, even a venial one, as, glory be to God, I believe and see that you do.

7. Notice one thing, and remember it for love of me. If a person is alive, however slightly you prick her with a needle or with a little thorn, the most slender you can find, does she not feel it ? Now, if the soul is not dead, but has a living love for God, is it not a great grace from Him that she should feel pained at the least infringement of the vows she has taken or the obligations she is under ?; Oh ! is not the heart in which God implants such solicitude

prepared by Him as a couch of flowers to which He cannot choose but come and delight Himself, long though His delay may be ?

8. Alas, O my God ! Why are we nuns in our convent ? Why did we leave the world ? For what did we come ? How can we better spend our time than in preparing within our souls a dwelling-place for our Bridegroom, that we may be able to ask Him to " kiss us with the kiss of His mouth " ? Blessed will she be who makes this petition, whose lamp shall not have gone out when the Lord comes and who need not return to her home after having knocked.* O my daughters, in how high a state are we placed ! No one can prevent our saying these words to our Spouse, for we became His brides when we made our profession.

9. Let scrupulous persons understand that I have not been speaking of an occasional fault, or of failings that cannot always be known or regretted ; I allude to a religious who habitually commits faults and takes no notice of them, thinking they are of no consequence, and who neither repents nor tries to amend them. I say once more that such a peace is dangerous, therefore beware of it. What, then, will become of those who are very lax about their Rule ? God grant there may be none of this kind among us ! Doubtless, the devil often gives such peace, and God permits it as a punishment for our sins, but there

2 See Poem 13.

is no need to discuss it here, as I only wished to give you a word of warning.

10. We will now consider the peace which our Lord begins to grant us in prayer ; of this I will tell you as much as His Majesty shall be pleased to make me under- stand. On reflection, I think it best to say something here about the peace given by the world, and that pro- duced by our sensuality, for though it has been far better written about elsewhere, you may be too poor to buy the books, and perhaps no one will give them to you, but these writings will be kept in the convent and will contain both subjects.

11. We may be misled in many ways by worldly peace : from those I shall describe you may divine the rest. For instance — some people have all they require for their needs, besides a large sum of money shut up in their safe as well, but as they avoid mortal sin, they think they have done their duty. They enjoy their riches and give an occasional alms, yet never consider that their property is not their own, but that God has entrusted it to them as His stewards for the good of the poor, and that they will have to render a strict account of the time they kept it shut up in their money chests, if the poor have suffered from want on account of their hoarding and delay. We have no concern with this, except to ask God to enlighten such people lest they meet with the fate of the rich miser,‘

* St. Luke xvi. 19-31.

and to thank Him for making us poor, which we should hold as a special favour on His part. O my daughters ! what a solace to be free from such burdens, even as re- gards this world’s tranquillity,* and it is impossible to imagine what a difference it will make to us at the last day. The rich are slaves, while you are rulers : as a com- parison will show. Which is the more at ease, the gentle- man who finds his meals set ready for him or his steward who has to render an account of every maravedí ? The former enjoys his goods without counting the cost, but the burden falls on the poor steward’s shoulders, and the greater the wealth, the heavier the responsibility. How often he must lose his sleep,

especially when the time of reckoning comes, particularly if he has to balance up for several years, and has been more or less careless in the past. Then, if there is a large deficit, I cannot think how he can feel any peace.

12. Read no further, daughters, without first thanking God very heartily. Be more strict than ever in your custom of holding no personal property. We are con- tented to eat whatever our Lord provides, and as He will let us want for nothing,"^ we need not be anxious about

* Life, ch. xi. 3. Way of Perf., ch. xxxviii. 10, Castle, M. iii. ch. ii. 4. Letter to Don Lorenzo de Cepeda of January 2, 1577.

^ The poverty practised by the holy Mother, says Yepes, was extreme, if such a word can be appHed to so great a virtue. She often left her convent without any provision for the journey, yet neither the things she needed nor her trust in God ever failed her. She took most pleasure in those convents that were founded

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superfluities. His Majesty has taken good care that we should possess nothing we might feel constrained to give away. The principal point is, daughters, that we should be satisfied with little ; we ought not to want anything for which we should be bound to render a strict account, as a rich man must, even though his money is not in his own care, but in that of his major-domo. And what a strict reckoning that will be ! If only he realised it, he would not enjoy his luxurious meals so much, nor squander his means in useless and frivolous ways. As for you, my daughters, always try to be as poor as you can, both in your food and clothing, otherwise you will cheat yourselves, for God will not give you more, so you will remain un- satisfied. Always endeavour not to take the food of the poor without having served His Majesty,® although all that you can do will be but a scanty return to God for the peace and rest which He bestows on you because you

in the deepest penury, and used to say that the only things required for a foundation were a small bell and a house on hire. Once, when founding a convent she rejected the offer of a counter- pane and a brasier, as she thought both these articles unsuitable for Discalced nuns. She also refused other gifts of greater value, for she shunned riches as other people seek them. An instance was told by the Duchess of Alva, Doña Maria Enriquez, who, knowing her need and poverty, gave her some valuable jewels which the holy Mother received with gratitude, as she did not like to appear to despise the presents, yet on taking leave of her hostess she handed them to the waiting maid with an injunction to return them to the Duchess {Life, bk. ii. ch. 36). ' Way of Perf., ch. ii. 6, 7.

will have to render no account of riches. I know that you understand this, but you must from time to time render special thanks to Him on this account.

13. It is needless for me to warn you against the earthly peace which comes from honours, because the poor never meet with much honour.^ However, unless you are careful, praise from others may harm you greatly, for when once it begins it never ceases, and generally ends in running you down afterwards. This usually takes the form of telling you that you are more holy than others, and such-like flattering speeches which seem to have been inspired by the devil. Indeed, they must be, sometimes, for if they were said in your absence it would not matter, but when uttered in your hearing, what other fruit can they produce but evil, unless you are most wary ?

14. For the love of God, I implore you never to find your peace in such speeches, for they might gradually do you so much mischief that at last you would come to believe them, or to think you had done all you need, and that your work was finished. Never let such things be said of you without strongly repudiating them ; you can easily do this if you make it your constant practice. Re- member how the world treated our Lord Jesus Christ, yet how it had extolled Him on Palm Sunday ! Men so esteemed St. John Baptist as to mistake him for the Messiah, yet how barbarously and for what a motive they

‘ Way of Perf., ch. ii. 5.

afterwards beheaded him ! Never does the world exalt any of the children of God, save to dash them down again !

15. I know this well by experience. I used to regret that people praised me so blindly, but now I laugh as at the words of a madman. Remember your sins, and that, even if there is some truth in what is told you, the good is not your own, but you are only under an obligation of serving God more strictly.* Dread lest you should take pleasure in this treacherous kiss given by the world ; look upon it as the kiss of Judas ; although no harm may be meant by it, the devü is always on the alert and may despoil your soul unless you defend yourself.

16. Believe me, in such a case you must stand ready with the sword of recollection in hand. Although you may think that no harm is done you, do not trust to that — remember how many who stood on the heights have fallen into the abyss. There is no safety during this life, but for the love of God, sisters, always struggle within your own heart against these dangerous flatteries ; then you will come forth with deeper humility, and the devil, who has been watching both you and the world, will be crestfallen.

17. I could say much about the peace our bodies can bring us, and the harm that results. I will give you some warnings upon certain points which will guide you about the rest.^ The body, as you know, is very fond of comfort,

8 lYay of Perf., ch. xv. 4, 5. Rel. i. iS, ig. * Ibid., ch. X. 4, 5 ; xi. 4.

and we ought to realise the great danger of pacifying it. I often wonder, and never can understand, how self- indulgent persons can feel so peaceful and at rest. Did the most sacred body of our great Model and Light merit less enjoyment than do ours ? Had He done aught to deserve the cruel sufferings it bore ?

18. The Saints are in heaven, this is certain ; have we read of any who got there by living luxuriously on earth ? Then, how can we feel so easy about doing so ? Who told us that it was right ? How is it that some men squander their time uselessly in eating and sleeping well and in amusement and ease ? I am amazed at it. One would suppose there was no future world, and that this was the safest way to live !

19. Daughters, if you only knew what harm there is in this ! While the body grows sturdy the soul becomes so enfeebled that, if we saw it, we should fancy it was about to become extinct. Many books warn us of the injury done us by finding our peace in bodily comfort. If men only realised it was wrong, there would be some hope of their amending, but I fear the idea never occurs to them, nor am I surprised, since the habit is so universal. I assure you that though they may enjoy physical ease, they will have a thousand struggles to go through in order to save their souls. It would be better for them to understand this and to do the penance by degrees which will one day come upon them all at once.

20 . I have told you this, daughters, to make you thank God for placing you where your body could not find such peace, even if you sought it. Yet it could harm you un- consciously under the pretext of illness, and there is need to warn you urgently against this. For instance, it might injure you to take the discipline on a certain day, but perhaps there is no necessity to leave it ofi a whole week. Again, it would harm you not to wear linen, but you need not do so for several days. On another occasion you cannot eat fish, yet it would not disagree with you when your digestion became used to it. You may fancy you are too weak for this and a great many other things. I am experienced, and I know that nuns are sometimes unaware of how important such things are when there is no urgent need of such dispensations. What I say is, that we ought not to be content with such relaxations, but should, from time to time, try whether we can fulfil our duties : flesh and blood are very treacherous, and there is need for us to recognise this. May God, of His great bounty, give us light ! Prudence and confidence in our superiors' judgment instead of our own are the important points.

21. To return to my subject. By describing the special peace she asks for in the words, " Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth," the Bride shows that our Lord has other ways of bestowing His peace and friendship. I will describe some of them so that you may see the differ- ence and realise the sublimity of this kind. 0 great God

and Lord of ours ! How profound is Thy wisdom ! Well might she say : " Let Him kiss me ! " Yet it seems as if she might have concluded her petition here, for what is the meaning of " the kiss of His mouth " ? Undoubtedly there is no superfluous letter in these words. I do not understand her reason, yet I will write something on the subject ; as I said, it matters little if it is not the exact meaning so long as it profits us.

22. Our King confers His peace and friendship on the soul in many ways, as we see daily, both during prayer and at other times, but our peace with Him hangs by a single hair, as the expression is. Consider, daughters, the meaning of these words, so that you may utter them with the Bride, if our Lord should draw you near to Himself ; if not, do not lose courage. Every kind of friendship with God WÜ1 leave you rich in gain, unless of your own accord you forfeit it. But how deeply should we grieve and regret it if, through our own fault, we do not attain to such close friendship with Him, but content ourselves with a slighter intimacy.

23. Alas, Lord ! Do we not remember how great are the reward and the goal ? A reward which, when our friendship has attained to this grade, is bestowed on us by God even in this world ! How many remain at the foot of the mountain who might have climbed to its summit ! I have often told you in the other little works I have written, and I now repeat it : always make courageou s resolutions.

for then God will give you grace to act accordingly.^* Rest assured that much depends on this.

24. There are people who, though they have attained to friendship with God, for they confess their sins sincerely and repent of them, yet before two days are over, commit the same faults again. This is certainly not the friendship for which the Bride petitions. O daughters ! try not to take the same fault to confession every time. It is true that we cannot help committing sins, but at all events let them not always be identical, lest they take root, for it would be hard to pull them up, and they may even send out many oñ-shoots. If we set a plant or a shrub and water it every day, it will grow so sturdy that we shall want a spade and a fork to tear it up. This appears to be the case with any fault, however small, that we commit daily, unless we amend it ; though it is easy to uproot it when it has only grown for a day or even for ten days. We must pray to our Lord to grant us this amendment, for on our own account we can do little, except add to our sins instead of giving them up. Remember that this will be of no small consequence to us in the terrible judgment at the hour of death, especially to those whom the Judge made His brides during their lifetime.

25. O great and marvellous condescension ! that God should invite us to endeavour to please our Lord and King ! Yet how ill do those requite His friendship who so

1″ Life, ch. xiiL 3. Way of Perf., ch. xxiii. i, 3.

soon again become His mortal enemies ! Great indeed is the mercy of God ! Where can we find a friend so patient ? When once such a severance has occurred between two companions it remains unforgotten and their friendship is never so close as before. Yet how often does such a breach occur between us and our Lord, and how many years does He await our return ! Blessed be Thou, my Master, Who art so long-suffering in Thy pity for us that Thou seemest to forget Thine own greatness, and dost not, as Thou hast the right, chastise such faithless treason ! The state of such souls seems full of peril, for though God's mercy is manifest, yet sometimes we see them die

us, daughters, from such danger !

26. A better sort of friendship is that of persons who are careful not to oñend God mortally — indeed, as the world goes, it is a great thing for souls to have got so far. Though such people avoid grave faults, yet I believe they fall into them occasionally, for they care nothing about venial sins, although they commit many every day, and are thus on the point of mortally offending God.^^ They ask : " Do you scruple about that ? " (as I have heard many people say) ; "this fault will be effaced with a little holy water and the remedies of our holy Mother Church." ^^ How very sad this is !

11 Way of Perf., ch. xli. 3.

^2 St. Teresa had great confidence in the efficacy of holy water. — Life, ch. xxxi. 4-5, 9-10.

27. For the love of God, be most watchful : never let the thought of so simple a remedy make you careless about committing a venial sin, however small ; what is good ought not to lead us into evil. If you remember this resource after you have fallen — well and good ! It is a great thing to preserve so pure a conscience that there is nothing to hinder your asking for the perfect friendship desired by the Bride. Most certainly, the state described is not this amity, but a very dangerous one for many people, tending to self-indulgence and likely to lead to great tepidity, nor are they always certain whether their faults are venial or mortal. God deliver you from such a friendship ! for these souls think they have not committed such grievous sins as they see in others. To hold others worse than oneself is a want of humility," while, perhaps, they may be far better, being deeply sorry and contrite for their misdeeds, and more firmly resolved than their critics to amend, so that in future, perhaps, they will offend God neither in light nor in grave matters. The first men- tioned, as they think that they do no serious wrong, are much more lax in indulging themselves : they rarely say their prayers devoutly, as they do not trouble themselves about such details.

28. There is another kind of friendship and peace that our Lord bestows partially upon certain persons who wish not to offend Him in any way, yet who do

13 Cattle,]VL iii. ch. ii. 19.

not completely withdraw themselves from occasions of falling.^* They keep their set times for prayer and God grants them the gift of devotion and tears, yet they wish to spend good and regular lives without giving up their pleasures, which they think will conduce to their living in peace even in this world. But the events of life bring many changes and it will be hard for such souls to persevere in virtue ; for, not having given up earthly joys and pleasures, they soon grow lax on the road to God, from which there are many powerful foes to turn us. This, daughters, is not the amity asked for by the Bride, nor that you wish for yourselves. Avoid every slight occasion of evil, however insignificant, if you are anxious for your soul to grow in grate and to live in safety.

29. I do not know why I tell you all these things, except to teach you the danger of not resolutely leaving all worldly things, by which we should free ourselves from many sins and troubles. Our Lord has so many ways of contracting friendship with souls that I should never finish telling about those I know, though I am only a woman. Of how many more, then, must confessors and those who study the subject be aware ?

30. I am astonished at some souls, for there seems nothing to prevent their becoming the friends of God. I will mention one person of this sort whom I knew

1* Way of Perf., ch. xxxvi. 2-7.

very intimately a short time ago. She Hked to receive Holy Communion very frequently ; never spoke ill of anyone, and felt great devotion during prayer. She lived alone in continual solitude, for she had a house of her own, and she was so sweet-tempered that nothing that w as said ever vexed her, which is a

very great virtue, nor did she ever say anything wrong. She had never married, and was now too old to do so. She had suffered much annoyance from others, yet had kept her peace. These appeared to me signs of a soul far advanced in the spiritual life and in a high state of prayer, so that at first I had a very good opinion of her, for I never saw her offend God, and I was told that she carefully avoided doing so. But, on knowing her better, I began to discover that she was peaceful enough as long as nothing touched her self-interest, but when that was in question, her conscience lost its sensitiveness and became extremely lax. She bore patiently what was said to her, but was jealous of her honour and would not wilUngly yield one jot nor tittle of her dignity or the esteem of the world, so wrapt up was she in this miserable senti- ment. Her anxiety to know all the current gossip was so great that I wondered how she could remain alone for an hour ; besides which she was very fond of comfort. She gilded over all her actions so that they seemed blame- less, and, according to her own account of some affairs, I thought it would have been wrong of me to judge

otherwise, yet in certain matters it was notorious that she. was in the wrong ; — however, perhaps, she did not understand it. At first I hked her very much, and most people took her for a saint, yet afterwards I thought she ought to have owned that she herself was partly in fault as regards some of the persecutions she told me she had suffered. I did not envy her sanctity nor her mode of life ; indeed, she and two other persons I have known who considered themselves saints, when I became intimate with them struck me with greater fear than all the sinners I ever met.

31. Let us beg God to enlighten us ; and thank Him fervently for having brought you to this convent, where, however hard the devil tries, he cannot deceive us as if we lived in our own homes. Some souls seem quite ready to soar to heaven, since they are perfect in every way in their own opinion and there is no one to know better ; yet in a religious community they are always detected, for there they must obey instead of following their own way. But in

the world, although they sincerely wish to know themselves in order to please God, yet they cannot do so, because they follow their own will in everything they do, and although it may be crossed at times, yet they are not so exercised in mortification. Certain persons are to be excepted who for many years have received divine light to seek some one who under- stands them, to whom they submit although they may

be more learned than he, for their great humihty destroys all self-confidence.

32. There are other people who have left everything for our Lord ; they possess neither home nor belongings, and care nothing for pleasure or worldly matters, but are penitent, because our Lord has shown them the worthlessness of all these things. Still, they are very tenacious of their honour and value their reputation ; they will do nothing that does not please men as well as God. How discreet and prudent they are ! These two objects are hard to reconcile, and the mischief is that, half-unconscious of their error, they always take the world's side in preference to our Lord's. They are generally very grieved if anything is said against them. They do not carry the cross but drag it after them, and so it pains and wearies them, but when it is loved it is undoubtedly sweet to bear. Neither is this the friend- ship the Bride asked for ; therefore, daughters, since you have made the sacrifice I spoke of in the beginning of this book,[1] do not fail or hesitate to yield the rest. All such things would burden you if you have forsaken the chief thing in giving up the world with its joys, its pleasures and riches, which, false as they are, still delight us — what have you to fear ?

33. You do not understand the question. To free yourself from the vexation of being found fault with,

1^ Supra, § 7.

you burden yourselves with a thousand cares and obligations. These are so numerous, if we seek to please society, that it would take too long to describe, nor do I even know them all.

34. To conclude with, there are other souls in whom, if you examine them attentively, you will find many signs that they are beginning to make progress, yet they stop midway. They care little for what is said of them, or for honour, but are unused to mortify themselves or to renounce self-will, and have not yet lost all fear of temporal evils. Prepared to suffer all things, they have apparently reached perfection, yet in grave matters, when our Lord's honour is at stake, they prefer their own interests. They do not realise it, but imagine that they fear God and no one else. It seems as if the devil must suggest to them the drawbacks they prophesy a thousand years beforehand concerriing the great harm that may result from some good work.

35. These are not the souls to imitate Saint Peter when he cast himself into the sea,^* or to follow many other of the saints. They wish to draw others to God, but to do so peacefully without running into danger them- selves, nor does their faith inñuence their motives very powerfully. I have noticed that we rarely see anyone in the world (I am not speaking now of religious) who trusts to God for maintenance ; indeed, I only know

^® St. John xxi. 7.

two such persons. People know that they will want for nothing in religion, although I believe that no one who enters it purely for the sake of God even thinks of this. Yet how many are there, daughters, who but for this assurance would not forsake all they possess ! However, as in my other writings I have spoken fully about such cowardly souls ^^ and the harm they do themselves, and also of the great advantage of having high aims although our actions may not correspond with them, I will say no more about them, though I should never grow tired of the subject.

36. Since God has raised souls to this high state, let them serve Him in it and not remain shut up in themselves. If religious (and nuns especially) cannot help their neighbour personally, they have much power to do so by prayer, if their resolutions are heroic and their wish of saving souls is sincere. Our Lord may even permit them to be of some service to others, either during this life or after death, as He did the holy friar Saint Diego, ^* who was a lay-brother and only did manual work. Yet,

" W^ay of Perf. See chapters ii., iv., xxxiv., and xxxviii.

^* St. Diego (or Didacus), born in Andalusia, became a Franciscan lay-brother at Arizafa, where he led a most holy life. Though uneducated, he obtained so much light in prayer that theologians from all parts consulted him on difficult questions. Having been sent to the Canary Islands, he converted many infidels. Still a lay-brother, he was made Guardian. He was eventually re- called to Spain and died at Alcalá de Henares, November 12, 1463. Among other miracles he cured Don Carlos of a mortal wound.

many years after his decease, God has revived his memory to be our example. Let us give thanks to His Majesty. Therefore, my daughters, if our Lord has called you to the religious state, there is little wanting to obtain for you the friendship and peace desired by the Bride. Ask for it unceasingly with tears and longing ; do all you can on your part to gain it from God. You must understand that the state of religion is not in itself the peace and amity begged for by the Spouse, although such a vocation is a signal and divine favour ; but this friendship is the result of much practice in prayer, penance, humility and many other virtues. May God, the Giver of all things, be praised eternally ! Amen.

CHAPTER in.

Of the genuine peace, oneness with Christ, and love for God which spring from the prayer of union, called by the Bride " the kiss " from the divine " mouth."

1. Fervour produced by the " kiss." 2. Signs that a soul has received it. 3. Comparison of the slave's ransom. 4. St. Paulinus of Nola. 5. Difjidence and contrition. 6. Holy confidence. 7. Friar Juan of Cordobilla. 8. Graces left by the " kiss." 9. The flesh wars against the spirit. 10. This appears in the Passion. 11. Strength won by determination. 12. Our blindness to divine love. 13. A prayer for peace.

" LET HIM KISS ME WITH THE KISS OF HIS MOUTH."

I. O HOLY Bride ! Let us now ponder over the kiss you

for which reason the latter's half-brother, PhiKp II., obtained his canonisation in 1558. His feast is kept on November 13. 10

ask for, which is that sacred peace that encourages the soul to wage war with the world, while yet preserving perfect confidence and calm within itself. What a happy lot for us to win this grace ! It consists in so close a union with God's will that He and the soul are no longer divided, but their will is one ^ — not in words and wishes only, but in deeds as well. When the Bride sees that she can serve the Bridegroom better in any way, so ardent are her love and desires that she discusses no difficulties raised by her mind nor hstens to the fears which it suggests, but allows faith to act, seeking no profit or comfort of her own, having learnt at last that her welfare consists entirely in this.

2. This may not seem right to you, daughters, for prudence is always commendable, but the point to con- sider is whether, as far as you can tell, God has granted your petition and kissed you with " the kiss of His mouth." If the effects prove that He has done so, you should no longer curb your zeal in any way, but forget self altogether in order to please so gentle a Bridegroom. His Majesty reveals Himself by many signs to the sovl which enjoys this favour.^ You must examine this point for yourselves — at least as far as the thing is possible — by noticing the effects produced in the soul. Evidently

1 Life, ch. xviii. 4 sqq. Castle, M. v. ch. ii. 4-6 ; ch. Hi. 6 sqq. * The following passage, till " I will mention some " — is only in the manuscripts of Las Nieves and Consuegra.

we cannot know for certain, for it concerns a state superior to the state of grace and resulting from a very special aid from God. I say that we can, to a certain degree, ascertain by the effects whether His Majesty has bestowed this favour on us, because God grants so high a blessing to the soul in proportion to the strength of its virtue. Such a soul, while recognising by its interior light that the Lord has given it the peace craved for by the Bride, cannot but doubt the fact at times on realising its own miseries. When you are aware, sisters, that you have received such a grace, let nothing daunt you, but forget self entirely in order to please so tender a Spouse. Perhaps you will ask me to explain myself more fully, and to tell you which virtues I allude to ; and you will be right, for there are divers kinds of virtue. I will mention some. One is a contempt for all earthly things, which the mind rates at their true price, no longer caring for worldly possessions as it realises their futility. Such a person takes no pleasure in the society of those who do not love God, and is weary of life, holding riches at the esteem they deserve, and showing other sentiments of the same kind, taught by God

to those whom He has led so far. Once raised to this

state the soul has nothing to fear, except that it may

fail to deserve that God should make use of it by sending

it crosses and occasions of serving Him at however dear

a cost to itself. Here, I repeat, love and faith take

control, and the soul does not choose to take counsel from reason. For the union between the Bridegroom and His Bride has taught her things to which the mind cannot attain, so to say, so that she holds it subject beneath her feet.

3. Let me explain this by a comparison. The Moors hold captive in their land a man whose only hope of rescue lies in being redeemed by his father or an intimate friend ^ who is so poor that all his belongings would not suffice to emancipate the slave, so that this could only be done by the ransomer exchanging places with the prisoner. The strong affection of the former prompts him to prefer his friend's freedom to his own. Then discretion steps in with its many pleas, declaring: " You are bound to care for your own interests first ; perhaps you are weaker than he and you might deny your faith ; it is wrong to run into danger," with many other objections of the kind. Oh, powerful love of God ! nothing seems impossible to one who loves ! Happy the soul that has

3 This comparison must have had a much greater force in the days of St. Teresa than it can have at present. Father Gratian, who first pubhshed the Conceptions, fell himself into slavery among the Moors, and the picture he draws in his Peregrinaciones de Anastasio makes one realise the horror of the situation, the barbarous treatment of the captives, the dangers to life, limb and faith, the difficulties of ransom. The church of San Juan de los Reyes at Toledo contains an object lesson : its walls are hung with thousands of heavy chains offered up in thanksgiving by ransomed captives.

won this peace from its God ! It holds sway over all the trials and dangers of the world, and fears nothing when there is a question of rendering any service to its faithful Spouse and Lord. Well may it be thus confident, for even the father or friend of whom I spoke felt such love !

4. You have read, daughters, of a certain Saint * who, not for the sake of a son or a friend, but because he must have won the happiness of having received this divine grace, desired to please His Majesty and to imitate, in some degree, the many sufferings He bore for us. This holy man went into the country of the Moors, and exchanged places with the son of a poor widow who had come to him in great distress about her child. You know of the success and the reward with which he met.^ Doubtless his mind presented to him many more objections than those I enumerated, for he was a bishop and had to leave his flock ; indeed he was probably beset by great misgivings.

* St. Gregory the Great narrates that St. Paulinus of Nola, having spent all the money he could raise in ransoming other captives, sold himself to the Vandals to redeem the son of a poor widow, and that he laboured as a slave, working in a garden until his master, discovering his merits and the spirit of prophecy with which he was endowed, set him at liberty {Dialogues, bk. iii. ch. i.).

5 The passage beginning " Doubtless his mind," to the end of paragraph 6, is only in the manuscripts of Las Nieves and Consuegra.

5. I must mention something which applies to those who are naturally timid and wanting in courage, as are most women constitutionally, so that, though their souls have genuinely been raised to this state, nature takes alarm. We must be on our guard, lest through our inborn frailty we lose a priceless crown. When these fears assault you, have recourse to faith and humility, and proceed to act with the confidence that God can do all things now, as when, in the past. He enabled many noble maidens to suffer the grievous torments they

had resolved to undergo for His sake. What He wishes for is the resolution which makes Him Master of your free will, for He needs no strength of ours. Indeed, His Majesty prefers to manifest His power in feeble souls, where it has more scope for work, and where He can better bestow the graces He longs to give. Profit, then, by the virtues He has implanted in you, to act with determination and to despise the obstacles raised by your reason and by your natural weakness, which will increase if you stop to wonder " whether you had better venture upon this course or no, for perhaps you are too sinful to deserve the same aid from God that He gives to others " !

6. This is not the time to think about your sins ; such humility is out of time and place. When some great honour is offered you or the devil tempts you to a self-indulgent life, or other things of the same sort, then

fear that your misdeeds would prevent your doing so with rectitude. But when it is a question of suffering, either for your God or your neighbour, feel no misgivings because of your sins. Perhaps you may perform this action with such charity that God will forgive you all your bad deeds, and this is what Satan fears, and there- fore reminds you of all your former wrongdoings. You may be sure that God will never desert those who love Him, when they incur danger solely for His sake. But let them examine whether they are influenced by selñsh motives : I speak only of those who seek to please God more perfectly.

7. I knew a man in our own times, Fray Juan of Cordo- billa,* whom you saw when he came to visit me, who was inspired by our Lord with such charity that he was bitterly grieved at not being allowed to go and exchange places with some captive. Juan was a lay- brother of the Barefooted Franciscans reformed by St. Peter de Alcantara, and told me himself all about it.

* The chronicle of the Friars of St. Peter de Alcantara says that Juan de Cordobilla (near Mérida), who after the death of his wife had become a lay-brother, asked for leave to offer himself as a ransom for some Christian captive among the Moors. The superiors at first demurred, thinking him mad, but finally

con- sented. His ship, having come within sight of the African coast, was driven back by a gale, and Juan, who was seized with fever, was landed at Gibraltar, where he died, October 28, 1566. As some of the nuns at Segovia had come from Avila, St. Teresa could well say : " You saw him when he came to visit me."

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After a great many appeals, he obtained leave from his General, but at about fifteen miles from Algiers, while on his way to accomplish his good purpose, God took him to Himself. Doubtless Fray Juan was gener- ously rewarded. How many prudent people must have told him that he was very foolish, and we who do not share his love for our Lord agree with them, yet what could be more unwise than to end our life's dream with such prudence ? God grant that we may deserve even to enter heaven, not to speak of ranking with souls so far advanced in their love for God !

8. I realise the need of strong help from Him that we may perform such deeds, therefore I advise you, my daughters, to persevere in begging from Him this delightful peace, which dominates the silly fears of the world, peace- fully and quietly making war on it. Is it not evident that God has endowed with great graces the soul which He has favoured so highly as to unite it to Himself in this close friendship ? For, most certainly, this is not our own doing : we can only pray and long for this mercy, and we need His help even for that. As for the rest, what power has a worm whose sins make it so cowardly and mean that we fancy all the virtues must be measured by the baseness of our human nature ? What can be done, daughters ? Pray with the Bride : " Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth."

9» If a poor little peasant wench were to marry the

king, would not her children be of royal blood ? Then, if our Lord favours a soul by uniting it thus absolutely with Himself, what desires, what deeds, what heroic virtues will be the children born of the union, unless the soul put obstacles in the way ? ' Therefore I repeat it :• if God shows you the grace of

giving you an occasion of performing such actions for Him, do not recall to mind your past sins. Here faith must overcome our misery. Do not be alarmed if you are nervous and timid when first you determine to undertake such deeds, or even if these feelings should last, take no notice of them except to be on your guard more watchfully — let the flesh have its say. Remember the prayer of the good Jesus in the garden : " The flesh is weak,"* and think of His wonderful and grievous sweat. If, as His Majesty said, His divine and sinless flesh was weak, how can our flesh be so strong, while we live in this world, as not to dread the persecutions and trials that menace it ? When they come, the flesh will become subject to the spirit ; for after our will has become united to the will of God, it will lament no more.

10. It has just occurred to me that although our good Jesus showed human weakness before His sufferings, yet He was intrepid when plunged into the midst of them,

' The passage beginning " Therefore I repeat," to the end of paragraph 11, is only in the manuscripts of Las Nieves and Consuegra.

^ St INIatt. xxvi. 41 ; Caro autem infirma.

for not only did He utter no complaint, but He showed no weakness in the way He bore them. On entering the garden He said: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death," ' yet while dying on the cross He never murmured. He went to wake His Apostles during the prayer in the garden, but He had better cause to speak of His pain to His Mother while she watched at the foot of the cross, for she did not sleep — her soul suffered and died a bitter death. Yet the greatest consolation is to be found in seeking sympathy from those we know share our sorrows and love us most deeply.

II. Let us not trouble about our fears nor lose heart at the sight of our frailty, but strive to fortify our humility and be clearly convinced of how little we can do for ourselves, for without the grace of God we are nothing. Let us confide in His mercy and distrust our own strength in every way, because reliance on

this is the root of all our weakness. It was not without strong reason that our Lord showed weakness, for it is plain that He Who is power itself could never feel fear. He acted thus to comfort us, to show that good desires must be carried out in deeds, and to make us recognise that when the soul first begins mortifying itself, it finds everything painful. It is a pain to give up pleasures ; a torment to forgo honour ; an intolerable trial to bear a hard word ; — in short, nothing but mortal sufferings. But * St. Matt, xxvi. 38 : Tristis est anima mea usq'ue ad mortem.

when once determined to die to this world, it is freed from all these ills, and no trials can make it complain. Now it has found the peace for which the Bride petitions.

12. The " kiss of His mouth." Undoubtedly we should be enriched if we approached the most Holy Sacrament but once with great faith and love ; how much more as we receive it so often ? Apparently we frequent it only out of custom, and therefore gain but little light. O wretched world, who dost obstruct from thy dwellers the sight of the treasures by which they might purchase eternal wealth ! Ah, Lord of heaven and earth, is it then possible, during this mortal life, to enjoy such close friendship with Thee ? Clearly as the Holy Spirit states it in these words, we do not even wish to understand the meaning in the Canticle of Canticles of the caresses, the wooing, and the dehghts Thou dost bestow upon the soul.

13. One speech of this sort should suffice to make us all Thine own. Blessed be Thou, O Lord, for nothing is wanting on Thy part ! In how many ways, by how many means and manners dost Thou show Thy love ! By Thy labours, by Thy bitter death, by the tortures and insults Thou didst bear, by the pardon Thou dost grant us, — and not by these alone, but by the words Thou dost utter and teach us to utter in these Canticles, which so pierce the soul that loves Thee, that I know not how

it could endure them unless Thou didst afford it succour, not according to its merits, but as its weakness needs. I ask, then, O Lord, no more of Thee in this life except that Thou " kiss me with the kiss of Thy mouth," in such a way that, even if I wished, I could not separate myself from union and friendship with Thee. Grant that my will may be subject to and may never swerve from Thine, leaving nothing to prevent my saying with truth, O my God and my Glory, that " Thy breasts are better" and more delicious " than wine."

CHAPTER IV.

Of the sweet and tender love of God which proceeds from His dwelling in the soul in the prayer of quiet, termed here " the divine breasts."

1. " Thy breasts are better than wine." 2. These words apply to the prayer of quiet. 3. Its effects. 4. It confers happiness. 5. Other benefits. 6. Mother and babe ; a comparison. 7. Earthly and heavenly joys. 8. Rewards of self-surrender. 9. A prayer for divine union. 10. Insigni- ficance of our service. 11. Self-oblation.

"THY BREASTS ARE BETTER THAN WINE "

I. O MY daughters ! What great mysteries are con- tained in these words ! May God permit us to experience them, for they are indescribable. When His Majesty in mercy answers this prayer of the Bride, He begins to enter into a friendship with her soul which, as I said, can be

1 Cant, i I ; Meliora sunt ubera tua vino.

understood only by those who have enjoyed it. I have written very fully about it in two books ^ which, if it be the will of God, will be given you after my death. The subject is there treated minutely and thoroughly, which I knew you would need, therefore I shall do no more than touch upon it now. I do not know whether I shall explain it here in the same words that our Lord was pleased that I should use then.

2. The soul is now convinced, by a feeling of extreme internal sweetness, that it must be near our Lord.* This sweetness is not a simple feeling of devotion

which moves us pleasantly so that we shed tears abundantly either over the Passion of our Lord or our past sins. In this state, which I call the " prayer of quiet " because of the peace it brings to the powers, the soul receives great consolations. Yet sometimes, when the spirit is not so

2 Life, chapters xiv. and xv., xviii. and xix. Way of Perf. chapters xxx. and xxxi.

3 " The soul in quietude before God insensibly imbibes the sweetness of His presence without reasoning about it. . . . It so joys in the sight of its Bridegroom's presence that reasoning on the subject would be superfluous. . . . The soul has no need of the memory during this repose, for her Lover is with her. Nor does she want the imagination, for what use is it to recall the image either exteriorly or internally of Him who is before us ? . . . O God, eternal God, when by Thy sweet presence Thou dost cast Sweet perfumes within our hearts . . . the will, like the spiritual sense of smell, remains peacefully employed in realising, un- wittingly, the matchless blessing of having God present with the soul " (S. Francis of Sales, Treatise of the Love of God, bk, vi., oh. ix.).

absorbed by sweetness, it enjoys in a different manner. The whole creature, both body and soul, is enraptured as if some very fragrant ointment, resembling a delicious perfume,* had been infused into the very centre of the being, or as if we had suddenly entered a place redolent with scents coming not from one, but from many objects ; we do not know from which it rises nor what it is, although it entirely pervades our being. ^ So it is with this most sweet love of our God : with the greatest suavity it enters the soul, which feels happy and satisfied, but cannot understand the reason nor how this great good entered it.

3. The soul fears losing it, and is loath to move or speak or even to look about, lest it should disappear. But I have explained in my other writings how to behave in order to benefit by this favour, which I only mention here that you may understand what I am describing. I will therefore merely say that our Lord thus shows that He desires so close a friendship with the soul that nothing

may come between them. Great truths are here im- parted to the mind, which, although too dazzled to realise what the light is, now perceives the vanity of the world.

^ Castle, M. iv. ch. ii. 6 ; M. vi. ch. ii. 14.

s " Often, by the sudden visitation of God, we are filled with perfumes sweeter than any made by man, so that the soul is enraptured with delight and, as it were, caught up into an ecstasy of spirit, becoming unconscious that it still dwells in the flesh" (Cassian, Conferences, iv. ch. v. Migne, P.L., t. xlix. c. 589).

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The soul does not see the good Master who teaches it,' although clearly conscious of His presence. Still, it is left with greatly increased knowledge and such growth and strength of virtue as to be unable to recognise its former self. The one desire of such a person is to praise God, and while in this excess of delight she is so inebriated and absorbed as to appear beside herself. Indeed, she seems in a state of divine intoxication, and does not know what she wants, or says, or for what she asks. In short, she is unconscious of self, and yet not so absorbed but that she understands something of what is happening. 4. When, however, this most wealthy Bridegroom wishes to enrich and caress her still more. He so draws her to Him that she is like a person fainting with extreme joy and pleasure." The soul appears to itself to be upheld in those divine arms and pressed to His sacred side and divine breasts. It only knows how to enjoy, sus- tained as it is by the divine milk with which its Spouse continues to nourish it,^ and to increase its

® Life, ch. xiv. 8, 9. Way of Perf., ch. xxxi. i. "The Babe himself gave Simeon hght to recognise Him, as He enlightens the soul to recognise Him during the prayer of quiet."

' Way of Perf., ch. xxv. i.

8 Isaias Ixvi. 12, 13 : Ad ubera portabimini, et super genua blandientur vobis. Quomodo si cui mater blandiatur, ita ego consolabor vos, et in Jerusalem

consolabimini. St. Thomas Aquinas remarks that in the preceding degrees the soul loves and is beloved in return ; it seeks and is sought for, calls and is called. But in this, in some wonderful and unspeakable manner, it rises and

virtues that He may caress it more, and that it may deserve daily to receive new favours from Him. On awaking from this slumber and heavenly inebriation, it feels amazed and confused, and I think that, in a sacred frenzy, it might then utter the words : " Thy breasts are better than wine."

5. For when first the spirit felt carried out of itself, nothing higher seemed possible of attainment ; but now, finding itself in a higher state and plunged in the unspeak- able greatness of God, and seeing how it has been nour- ished, it makes the tender comparison : ' ' Thy breasts are better than wine." For, as an infant does not know how it grows or is nourished — indeed often, without any effort of its own, the milk is put into its mouth — so it is in this case with the graces infused into the soul ; it knows nothing itself, nor does anything, and is unable to perceive whence, nor can it imagine how, this great good came to it. It only realises that this is the keenest delight that can be felt in this life, even if all the world's joy and happiness could be enjoyed at once. The soul finds that it has been strengthened and benefited without knowing how it has merited such a boon. It has been taught great truths without seeing its Teacher, and been confirmed in virtue and caressed by Him Who best knows how, and Who has the power to do so. It knows not

is upraised, seizes and is seized, and is united by the bond of love to God, in solitude with Him. Opuse. 65.

to what to compare this except the endearments of ■$ mother who tenderly loves her child, and feeds and fondles it.'

6. This metaphor is most appropriate, for the soul is upraised without using the powers of the mind, much in the same way as a babe, who when he is thus feasted and pleased, yet has not the intelligence to grasp the reason why.

But the soul was not quite so passive in the preceding state of slumber and intoxication, for it was not entirely quiescent, but both thought and acted to a certain extent. Realising its nearness to God, it cries with truth : ‘ ‘ Thy breasts are better than wine.“ ^‘ What a favour is this, my Spouse ! what a delicious banquet and what precious wine dost Thou give me, one drop of which makes me forget all created things and go forth from all creatures and from myself, no longer to crave for the pleasures and delights that my sensual heart has longed for until now ! Great is this favour and unmerited by me! Since His Majesty has

*‘Way of Perf., ch. xxxi. 7. Castle, M. iv. ch. in. 9. The following paragraph is from the manuscripts of Las Nieves and Consuegra.

^^ Way of Perf., ch. xviii. i. Castle, M. v. ch. i. 10 ; ii. ri. “ The bodily pleasures,” says St. Bernard, “ which used to intoxi- cate us like wine, are superseded by the spiritual delights that flow from Thy breasts. The plenitude of grace which flows from Thy breasts profits my soul more than the scathing rebuke of superiors “ {On the Canticles, serm. ix. 6. Migne, P.L., t. clxxxiii. c. 817). See also St. John of the Cross, Dark Night of the Soul, bk. ii. ch. xxiii. II, 12. II

increased it and drawn me still closer to Him, well may I cry : “ Thy breasts are better than wine.” Thy mercies in the past were great, O my God, but this far surpasses them, as I take less share in it myself, therefore it is much more sublime in every way.

7. Great are the joy and delight of the soul which advances thus far, O my daughters ! May our Lord grant us to understand, or rather, I should say, taste, for in no other way can we understand the happiness of the soul in such a case. If the earth could collect together all its riches, its pleasures, its honours and its feasts, — if all these could be enjoyed simultaneously without the trials that accompany them (which is impossible), yet in a thousand years they could not bring the bliss that is enjoyed in a single moment by the soul God has brought thus far. St. Paul declares that “ the sorrows of this world are not worthy to be

compared to the happiness that we look for," " but I say that they are not worthy to be compared nor could they earn one hour of this gladness, satisfaction, joy and delight here given to the soul by God Himself. I do not think they can be weighed with one another, nor can the baseness of earthly things merit such tender caresses from our Lord, nor a love so demonstrative and so tasted by the soul.

" Rom. viii. 18 : Existimo enim quod non sunt condignae passiones hujus temporis ad friiuram gloriam quae revelabitur in nobis.

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8. How trivial are our sorrows compared with this ! Unless borne for God, they are worthless, and even then His Majesty proportions them to our strength, because our misery and cowardice make us dread them so keenly. Ah, Christians ! ah, my daughters ! For the love of God, let us arise from sleep ! Remember how He does not wait until the next life to reward our love for Him, but begins to pay us even here ! O my Jesus ! who can express all that we gain by casting ourselves into the arms of our Lord and plighting with Him this troth : " I to my Beloved, and His turning is towards me," ^^ and " He cares for my affairs and I care for His." ^* Do not let us be so self-seeking as to put our own eyes out, as the proverb says.

9. Again do I ask Thee, O God, and beseech Thee, by the blood of Thy Son, to grant me this grace, " Kiss me with the kiss of Thy mouth," for what am I without Thee, Lord ? What worth do I possess apart from Thee ? If I wander but one step from Thee, where shall I go ? O Lord of mercy, my only Good ! What more do I seek in this life than a union so close that there can be nothing to divide me from Thee ? With such a companion, what can be hard ? With Thee by my side, what dare I not attempt for Thy sake ? What thanks do I deserve ? Have I not rather incurred great blame

^^ Cant. vii. 10. Ego dilecto meo, et ad me conversio ejus. 1* Castle. M. vii. cb iii. i. Rel. iii. 20.

for my remissness in Thy service ? Thus, with my whole heart, I beg Thee, like Saint Augustine, to " give what Thou askest and ask what Thou wilt ! " ^* and with Thine aid I will recoil from nothing.

10. I see indeed, 1* O my Bridegroom, that Thou art mine, nor can I deny it. For my sake didst Thou come to earth ; for my sake didst Thou undergo so many trials ; for me wast Thou scourged with many stripes ; for me dost Thou remain in the most Blessed Sacrament and now Thou dost show me such signal favours ! Yet, O holy Bride, how can I utter these words with thee ? What can I do for my Bridegroom ? Truly, sisters, I do not know how to escape from this dilemma ! What can / be for Thee, O my God ? What can a soul do for Thee which is given to such evil habits as mine, except lose the graces Thou hast given it ? What service canst Thou hope for on my part ? And even if, by Thine aid, I should accomplish something, what need can an all-powerful God have of the deeds of a wretched worm ?

11. O Love ! In how many ways do I long to say these words, and it is love alone which dares to cry with the Bride : "I love my Beloved ! " and which gives us the right to believe that this our true Lover has need of us.

" Da quod juhes, et juhe quod vis (St. August., Confess., bk, x. ch. xxix.).

1^ From here to the end of the chapter from the manuscripts of Las Nieves and Consuegra.

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and that He is my Spouse and my chief good. Then, since He gives us leave, daughters, let us cry again : " My Beloved to me and I to my Beloved." ^^ Thou to me. Lord ? Then, if Thou comest to me, why doubt that I can do much to serve Thee ? Henceforth, Lord, I desire to forget self, to seek only how to serve Thee, and to have no other will but Thine. But, alas, my strength has no power ! Thou art all-powerful, my God ! All that I can give Thee is my firm resolve, and henceforth I give it Thee, to serve Thee by my actions.

CHAPTER V.

The strong, trustful and faithful love born in the soul through the consciousness that it is protected beneath the " shadow " of God, which knowledge is usually given by Him to those who have persevered in His love and have suffered for Him. Of the great benefits produced by this love.

1. I sat down under His shadow. 2. The " shadow " of God. 3. Such favours rarely shown io the imperfect. 4. The prayer of union. 5. The tree of the Cross. 6. Further favours. 7. Our unworthiness.

" I SAT DOWN UNDER HIS SHADOW WHOM I DESIRED, AND HIS FRUIT WAS SWEET TO MY PALATE."

I. Now let US question the bride. Let us learn from this

blest soul, drawn to the divine mouth and fed at these

^^ Cant. ii. 16 : Dilectus meus mihi, et ego illi. Exclam. xv. 5, 6.

heavenly breasts, what we should do, and how we must speak and behave, if our Lord should ever bestow on us so great a favour. She answers : " 1 sat down under His shadow Whom I desired, and His fruit was sweet to my palate.^ . . . He brought me into the cellar of wine. He set in order charity in me." ^

2. She says : "I sat down under His shadow Whom I desired." O my God ! how this soul is drawn into and inflamed by this Sun itself ! She declares that she sat under the shadow of Him Whom she desired. And again she calls Him an "apple tree," and says "His fruit is sweet to my palate." O souls who practise prayer, ruminate upon these words ! In how many differ- ent ways we can picture God ! In how many manners we can feed our souls on Him ! He is the Manna Who knows how to take whatever flavour we wish to taste. ^ How heavenly is this shadow ! Who can explain all that our Lord signifies by it ? I remember how the angel said to our most blessed Lady : " The power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." * How safely the soul must

1 Cant. ii. 3 : Sub umbra illius quern desideraveram sedi, et fructus ejus dulcis guituri meo. St. John of the Cross, Living Flame, st. xxxiv. 6.

2 Cant. ii. 4 : Introdtixit me in cellam vinariam ; ordinavit in me charitatem. — Life, ch. xviii. 17.

3 Wisdom xvi. 21 says that the manna had "in it all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste ' ' ; that it served every man's will and was turned to what every man liked.

* St. Luke i. 35 : Virtiis Altisiimi obitmbrabit tihi.

feel protected when God shows it this immense grace ! Well may it sit down, assured against all danger !

3. Notice that, except in the case of people to whom our Lord gives some special call, like St. Paul, whom He at once raised to the heights of contemplation, mani- festing Himself and speaking to the Saint in such a way as to place him at once permanently in an advanced state of holiness, God, as a rule — indeed, nearly always —keeps these very sublime caresses and consolations for those who have laboured greatly in His service. These souls have longed for His love and striven to please Him in every way, have fatigued themselves by many years of meditation and search for their Bridegroom, and are thoroughly weary of the world. They do indeed " sit down " and rest in the truth, seeking neither comfort, quiet nor rest except where they know these are really to be found. " Resting under the protection of the Almighty," ^ they desire no other. How right they are to trust in Him, for He fulfils all their desires. Happy he who deserves to shelter beneath this shadow, even as regards temporal matters, but happy in an infinitely greater way when such matters relate to the soul itself, as I have often been given to understand.

4, During the joy which I described, the spirit feels itself utterly surrounded and protected by a shadow

^ Ps. xc. I : Q^li habitat in adjutorio Altissimi, in protectione Dei coeli commorahitur.

and, as it were, a cloud of the Godhead from whence the soul receives such a delicious influence and dew as, at once and with good reason, to lose the weariness caused by earthly things. This peace is so deep as to render even breathing troublesome, the powers being so soothed and quiescent that the will is disinclined to admit of any thought, even though it is a good one, nor does it seek for any, nor try to reflect.* Such a person need not endeavour to raise her hand, or stand to reach the fruit — I mean she need not make use of the reason — for our Lord gives her the apple from the tree to which she com- pares her Beloved," already picked and even assimilated. Therefore she declares: "His fruit is sweet to my palate," for here the soul simply enjoys, without any work of the faculties.

5. This may well be called the "shadow" of the Divinity, for we cannot see it clearly here below, but only veiled beneath this cloud, until the radiant Sun, by means of love, sends out a message making known to the soul that His Majesty is near in nearness ineffable. I know that anyone who has experienced it will recognise how truly this meaning may be ascribed to these words of the Bride. I think the Holy Ghost must here be the Medium between God and the soul, inspiring it with

" • Castle, M. v. ch. i. 3 in fine.

'' Cant. ii. 3 : Sicut mahts inter ligna silvarum, sic dilectus m&us inter filios.

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such ardent desires that it becomes ignited by the divine fire to which it is so close. What are these mercies, O Lord, that Thou dost bestow upon the soul ? Blessed and praised be Thou for ever, tender Lover as Thou art ! Is it possible, my God and my Creator, that there are souls who love Thee not ? Unhappy creature that I am ! It is / who have lived so long without loving Thee ! Why did I not deserve to know Thee better ? Now this divine apple-tree bows its branches so that, from time to time, the soul may gather its fruit by considering Christ's marvels, and the multitude of mercies He has shown, and may see and

taste the fruit that our Lord Jesus Christ produced by His Passion, when with wondrous love He watered the tree with His precious blood.

6. The Bride told us that she joyed in the nourishment from His breasts, and that the Bridegroom thus sup- ported her when she was new to the divine mercies. Now that she grows older. He makes her capable of receiving still greater gifts, maintaining her with " apples," for He wishes her to understand that she must work and suffer. But He is not content even with this. It is a wonderful thing, and we should often meditate upon how, when He sees that a soul is all His own, serving Him solely and free from all self-interest, simply because He is its God and because of the love it bears Him, He never ceases imparting Himself in different ways and manners, befitting Him Who is Wisdom itself. After

the kiss of peace there seemed no more to give, yet the favour I have just related is far more subUme. I have not described it thoroughly, having only touched upon the subject. You will find a much clearer explanation in the book I mentioned,' if God is pleased that it should be read.

7. Is there anything left to wish for after all I have enumerated ? Alas, how impotent are our desires to obtain Thy wondrous gifts. Lord ! How abject should we remain, didst Thou merely give us that for which we asked ! Let us now see what else the bride says.

CHAPTER VL

Treats of the ecstasy of love, and of raptures, during which the soul imagines that it is idle, while God " sets in order charity within it," bestowing upon it heroic virtues.

1. How God repays the soul's desire for suffering. 2. Christ the King. 3. The wine. 4. He sets in order charity. 5. The soul during divine union. 6. Love and the will. 7. Merits and graces coming from this prayer. 8. Our Lady overshadowed. 9. Our Lord's delight in the soul. 10. The divine Goldsmith and the jewel. 11.

Secrecy of divine union, 12. Its effects upon the soul. 13. Zeal and love produced by it.

"THE KING BROUGHT ME INTO THE CELLAR OF WINE, HE SET IN ORDER CHARITY IN ME."

I. Now that the bride is resting beneath the shadow that she desires — as well she might desire it — what

8 Life, chs. xvii to xix.

more remains for which a soul so promoted can wish, except that she may never lose what she possesses ? There seems to her nothing left for which to long, yet there is still far more for our most holy King to bestow, nor does He ever cease filling the heart that can hold more. As I have already told you, daughters, and as I wish you never to forget, God is not content to measure His gifts by our petty desires.^ I have sometimes noticed that when a person asks our Lord to give him some means of meriting and suffering for Him, although he does not ask for more than he thinks he can bear,^ yet His Majesty, Who is able to increase our strength, repays the resolve to serve Him by sending him so many trials, persecutions and illnesses that the poor man does not know what to do.* This happened to me when I was very young, so that sometimes I used to say: " O God, I did not ask for all that ! " But He gave me such fortitude and patience that I am astonished now at thinking how I bore these crosses, which I would not change for all the treasures of the world.

2. The Bride says: " The King brought me." How the name of the almighty King dilates the heart which recognises His powers and supremacy over all, and the eternity of His kingdom ! When the soul is in this con-

^ Supra, ch. iii. 5 sqq.

2 Life, ch. V. 3, 4.

3 lYay of Perf., ch. xviii. i.

dition, doubtless it realises something of the greatness of this King, though to understand it completely is im- possible during this mortal life.

3. The bride exclaims : " He brought me into the cellar of wine, He set in order charity in me."* I believe that the grandeur of this particular favour is immense. A person may be given a larger or a smaller draught, either of a good or a superior kind, so that the soul is more or less intoxicated or inebriated. Thus it is with our Lord's favours. To one He gives a little of the wine of devotion, to another more, to another still He gives so full a cup that the spirit begins to rise above self and sensuality and all earthly things. Again, God bestows on souls either a great zeal for serving Him, impetuous fervour, or ardent charity for others, rendering them toó inebriated to feel the severe trials through which they pass. A great deal is implied by the bride's declaring that " she was brought into the cellar of wine," from which she emerged endowed with inestimable riches.

4. The King does not appear to bring her into the cellar of wine and to leave her thirsting, but wishes her to drink and to be inebriated as much as she chooses, and to be intoxicated with all the wines that are in the storehouse of God. Let her enjoy its pleasures, and admire His grandeur, nor fear to lose her life by drinking more than human weakness can bear, — let her die in

* Life, ch. xviii. 17. Castle, M. v. ch. i. 10 ; ch. ii. 11.

this paradise of delights ! Blest is the death that pur- chases such a life ! Indeed, this really is the case,® for the soul, without knowing how, learns such marvellous truths that it is beside itself, as the Bride says in the words: "He set in order charity in me ! " O words never to be forgotten by the soul which our Lord has thus caressed ! O sovereign mercy which we could never buy unless God gave us the purchase-money !

5. True, the soul is not even awake enough to love,-— but blessed is the sleep, and happy the inebriation, which make the Bridegroom supply what the soul cannot do. He " sets " it in such wonderful "order" that, -though all its powers are dead or asleep, love remains active. Without knowing how, it works,

yet by the ordinance of God it works in so wonderful a way that it becomes one with the Lord of love. Who is God Him^ self. All this takes place with infinite purity, because there - is no obstacle in the senses or powers — I mean, either in the understanding or the memory — nor does the will assert itself.*

■ 6. I have been wondering whether there is any difference between the will and the love. I do not know whether it is nonsense, but I think there must be, for it appears to me that love is an arrow shot by the will, which, if

* Castle, M. v. ch. ii. 5 ; ch. iii. 5.

^ Life, ch. XX, sqq. Rel. viii. 8. Way of Perf., ch. xxxii. 11. Casi/e, M. vi. ch. iv. 17.

aimed with all its force, freed from all that is earthly, and directed solely towards God, must wound His Majesty in good earnest. When it has pierced God Himself, Who is Love, it rebounds, having won the precious prize I will describe. This is really the case, as I have heard from those to whom our Lord has shown the great favour of putting them, during prayer, into this state of sacred inebriation and suspension of the faculties. From what can be observed, it is evident that, at the time, such souls are transported out of themselves ; yet afterwards, if questioned as to what they felt, they cannot describe it, for they did not know, nor could they understand, this operation of love. The great benefits thus gained by the soul are demonstrated by the after-eñects, by the virtues, lively faith, and contempt of the world gained. But nothing is known of how the soul obtains these gifts, nor what it then enjoys, except in the first stage when it feels excessive sweetness.

7. This is clearly what the Bride means, for the wisdom ci God here supplements what is lacking in the soul and so ordains matters that it gains extraordinary graces meanwhile ; or, how could the soul, being carried out of itself, and so absorbed that the powers are incapable of action, otherwise gain any merit ? Yet, is it possible that God, while showing it so immense a favour, should cause it to lose time and obtain nothing by it ? Such

a thing is incredible.'' Oh, these divine secrets ! We must submit our reason and own that it is utterly in- capable of fathoming the wonders of the Lord.

8. It would be well to remember how our Lady the Virgin acted, wise as she was. She asked the angel : " How shall this be done ? " * and when he answered: " The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee," she debated no more about it. Being possessed of strong faith and judgment, she recognised at once that, when these two Powers intervened, there was room neither for inquiry nor doubt. She was not like some learned men who have not been led by God in this way of prayer and cannot understand the first principles of spirituality. They want to reduce everything to reason, measuring all matters by their own intellects, so that it seems as if they, with their knowledge, would be able to com- prehend all the mysteries of God. If only they would imitate in some degree the humility of the most blessed Virgin ! O my Lady ! How perfectly Thou showest us what takes place between God and the Bride, according to the words of the Canticles ! You know, my daughters,

' " It is remarkable that a saint so distinguished for humility and circumspection when writing on spiritual matters should speak so decidedly on the question of the soul gaining merit during ecstatic union" (A. Poulain, Graces d'oraison, ch. xviü. ; p. 255 French ed. of 1906).

• St. Luke, i. 34 : Quomodo fiet istud ?

how many quotations there are from this book in the antiphons and lessons of the Oihce of our Lady we recite weekly.' As for other souls, each one can interpret these words for herself, in the sense in which God wishes her to take them, and can easily ascertain whether she has received any graces corresponding to the words of the bride : " He set in order charity within me." Such souls do not know where they have been nor how, during so sublime a happiness, they pleased God, for they gave Him no thanks for this favour.

9. O soul beloved by God ! Trouble yourself no more ! While His Majesty raises you to this state and utters such tender words as He often addresses to the Bride in the Canticles — as for instance : " Thou art all fair, O my love!"^ " and many others, in which He shows how He delights in her, we may feel sure that He will not allow you to grieve Him at such a time, but will supply for your incapacity that He may take still keener pleasure in you. He sees that the Bride is quite lost to herself, bereft of her senses for love of Him, and that the vehemence of this affection has deprived her of the power of thought, so that she may love Him better, and could

* From ancient times it was customary among the Carmelites to recite once a week the Office of our Lady, preferably on the Saturday. This commemoration was raised, in 1339, to the rite of a double.

1″ Cant. iv. 7 : Tota pulchra es, arnica mea.

He bear to withhold Himself from one who wholly gives herself to Him ?

10. I think that His Majesty is here enamelling the gold which He has refined by His gifts and tested in a thousand different ways (which the soul itself could describe), to prove the quality of its love for Him. The soul, symbolised by the " gold," is meanwhile as motion- less and as inactive as the precious metal itself. Divine Wisdom, content with this, for few love Him thus vehe- mently, sets in the ore many jewels and countless enamelled decorations. And what is the soul doing meanwhile ? Of this we know nothing, and there is no more to be learnt, save what the Bride tells us : " He set in order charity within me."

11. If the soul actually loves at the time, it does not know how, nor does it understand what it loves. The extreme affection borne for it by the King Who has raised it to this sublime state must unite its love to Himself in a way that the mind is not worthy of com- prehending. These two loves have now become but one, " the love of the soul having become truly incorporated with that of God. The intellect cannot attain so far as to grasp it : in fact, the mind loses sight of the spirit during this time, which never lasts long but passes quickly.

Meanwhile, God "sets the soul in order" that it may know how to please Him, both then and

11 Exclam. xv. 7. 12

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afterwards, but, as I repeat, without the mind being aware of it. Yet later on the intellect recognises the fact on dis- covering that the soul is enamelled and set with the jewels and pearls of the virtues. Then in its astonishment it might well exclaim : " Who is she that cometh forth . . . bright as the sun ? " ^^ O true King ! Well may the Bride call Thee by this name, for in a single moment Thou canst so endow and fill the soul with riches that it enjoys them for evermore. What marvellous " order " love sets in such a soul ! ^'

12. I could mention good examples of this, for I have witnessed several. I remember how God gave in three days such great graces to a certain person ^* that, had I not learnt by personal observation that they lasted year after year, and that she continued to make progress, I could not have believed in them, for they seemed to me beyond credence. Another person received the same graces in three months, — both of them were very young girls. I have seen others who were long before they obtained this favour, but I could mention several cases resembling the two first described, and in which the same thing happened. I spoke of the former to prove to you that there are exceptions, although our Lord

^2 Cant. vi. 9 : Quae est ista quae progreditur . . . electa ul sol ? ^^ Life, ch. xvii. 4. Way of Perf., ch. xix. 6. Castle, M. v. ch. ii. 10, II.

1* Life, ch. xxxvi. 26. Found., ch. i. i sqq.

seldom grants such favours unless a soul has passed through long years of suffering. It is not for us to set limits to a Lord so great, Who longs to confer His graces. 13. This is what usually happens when God favours a soul with these graces — that is, when they really are divine graces and not illusions or melancholia, or the result of any natural effort, which is always detected later

on by the effects, as are also divine favours which have resulted from God thus drawing near the soul, for in the latter case the virtues are too vigorous and the love too ardent to remain concealed.^* Such a person always helps other souls even when not intending to do so. The King " set in order charity within me," and He so sets the soul in order that all love for this world quits it, self-love changes into self-hatred and affection is felt for kindred solely for the sake of God. As for the love borne for enemies, it would be incredible unless proved by facts. The soul's love for God has grown so boundless as to constrain it beyond the limits endurable by human nature, and, realising that she is fainting and at the point of death, such a person exclaims : " Stay me up with flowers, compass me about with apples : because I languish with love.' ' ^®

15 " The soul cannot bear with itself unless it is suffering some- thing for God" (Letter to Don Lorenzo de Cepeda of January 17,

'¡-577)- ^* Cant. ii. 5 : Fulcite me floribus, stipate me malis, quia amore lan^ueo.

CHAPTER VII.

Of a zealous love for God, which belongs to a very high grade of love and is of two kinds. In the first, the soul performs great deeds in God's service solely in order to please Him ; in the second, it desires and asks for crosses in imitation of Christ crucified.

1. The soul languishes with love. 2. As does the bodij. 3. How death is warded off. 4. The flowers symbolise good worhs. 5. Good works and self-interest. 6. Contrasted with pure zeal for God. 7. The woman of Samaria felt this pure zeal. 8. Sublime favours produce sublime virtues. 9. The apple-tree of the cross and its fruit. 10. This favour produces love for our neighbour. 11. Beginners do not understand this. 12. St. Teresa's aim in writing this treatise. 13. Gratitude due for such favours.

"STAY ME UP WITH FLOWERS, COMPASS ME ABOUT WITH apples: BECAUSE I LANGUISH WITH LOVE."

I. Oh, what divine language in which to express my meaning ! Are you slain, then, by this sweetness, holy Bride ? I have been told that sometimes it is so exces- sive that it exhausts the soul and seems to deprive it of life. And yet, you ask for flowers ! What flowers are these ? They would bring you no relief, unless you beg for them in order to end your life at once. And indeed, when the soul has reached this state, it has no dearer wish.^ Yet, this cannot be your meaning, for you say : " Stay me up with flowers," and to ask to be " sustained," does not seem to me to ask for death, but rather to seek

1 Castle, M. vi. ch. xi. i-6 ; M. vii. ch. iii. 14. Exclam. vi. and xiv. Poem, " I die because I do not die."

for life that you may render some service to Him to Whom you are conscious you owe so vast a debt.

2. Do not suppose, daughters, that I exaggerate when I say that such a person is in a dying state, as I repeat that this is really the case. Sometimes love is so strong as to dominate over the powers of nature. I know someone who during this state of prayer heard a beautiful voice singing,^ and she declares that unless the song had ceased she believes that her soul would have left her body from the extreme delight and sweetness which our Lord made her feel. His Majesty providentially stopped the singer, for the person in this state of trance might have died in consequence, yet she could not say a word to check the songstress, for she was incapable of any bodily action nor could she even stir. Although realising her danger, she was like one in a bad dream who tries to wake from it but cannot cry out, in spite of all her efforts.' I was told for certain by a person who I know is incapable of falsehood, that on several occasions she was at the point of death in consequence of her extreme longing to see God, and the excessive sweetness ex- perienced by her at feeling herself caressed by Him and melted by love for Him. While plunged in this delight.

2 This is the incident described in the Castle, M. vi. ch. xi. 8, g, and Rel. iv. i. See also Poems 2, 3 and 36.

3 The following passage until the end of this paragraph is from the manuscripts of Baeza and Consuegra.

her soul desired never to emerge from it, and death was no longer painful, but most delicious, for she lived by longing to die. The joys of this state of prayer and degree of love are incompatible with any sort of pain.

3. The soul does not now wish to rouse itself, nor would death be grievous, but would bring it great joy, since it is for this that it longs. How blest the death inflicted by such love ! Did not His Majesty at times bestow the light to see that it is well to live, weak nature would succumb if this favour lasted long. Thus, to be delivered from this overwhelming boon, the soul petitions for another grace, crying : " Stay me up with flowers ! " These blossoms have a very difierent perfume from those of the world.

4. I understand by this that the Bride is begging that she may perform great works in the service of God and her neighbour,* for the sake of which she gladly forfeits

* Yepes, in a long letter to Fray Luis de Leon (Fuente, Obras, vi. 139), says that though St. Teresa vehemently longed for the sight of God, yet she wished to live in order to suffer for Him. She cried, like the Bride in the Canticles : " Stay me up with flowers," which she thus explained : Wh}^ Bride of God, do you ask to be strengthened so that you may live ? What better end could you desire than to die of love ? Do you love and see that love is killing you, and yet want to live ? " Yes, for I desire to preserve my life in order to serve God and to suffer for Him." Burning with this flame of love, St. Teresa asked our Lord : " How can I live while I am d^áng ? " His Majesty replied : " Daughter, thou canst do so by reflecting that, once this life is ended, thou canst no longer serve Me nor suffer for

her own joys and consolations. This appears proper' rather to the active than to the contemplative life, and apparently she would lose rather than gain by her prayer being granted ; yet when the soul has reached this state, Martha and Mary always act together, as we may say.^ For the soul takes its part in the outward actions which seem merely exterior, and which, when they spring from this root, are lovely, odoriferous flowers growing on the tree of a love for God solely for His own sake, unmixed with self-interest. The perfume of these blossoms is wafted to a distance, blessing many souls, and it is lasting, for it does not pass away without working great good.

5. I will explain myself more fully for your benefit. A preacher delivers his sermon for the profit of soiils, yet is not so free from desire of worldly advantages as not to try to please his audience,' either to win honour and credit for himself, or to obtain preferment by his eloquence. It is the same in other ways ; certain people are anxious to help their neighbour notably and with a good intention, still they are very wary about losing by it or giving ofience. They dread persecution, wish to keep on good terms with royalty, the higher classes.

Me " {Rel. ix. 19). By means of these " flowers " and " apples " God strengthened her weakness and rendered life pleasant to her, although she was sick of love. See also Exclam. ii. 3, 4.

* Life, ch. xvii. 6 ; ch. xxii. 13. Rel. viii. 6. Way of Perf., ch, yivii. 4 ; ch, xj^xi. 4. Cattle, M. vii, ch, i. 14 ; cji. iv. 17.

and the general public, and act with the moderation highly rated by the world, but which screens many imperfections under the name of prudence. God grant that it is prudence !

6. Such people serve God and do great good, yet I do not think that these are the flowers for which the Bride begs, but that she is petitioning for an intention of seeking solely for the honour and glory of God in all things. For truly, as I have seen in several cases, souls raised by Him to this state are as oblivious as if they no longer existed, of their own loss or gain.- Their one thought is to serve and please God, for, knowing his love for His creatures, they delight in leaving their own comfort and advantages to gratify Him by helping and teaching their neighbour in order that they may proñt his soul. They never calculate as to whether they will lose by it themselves, but think about the welfare of others and of nothing else, forgetting themselves for the sake of God in order to please Him better, — and they will even lose their lives if need be, as did many of the martyrs. Their words are interpenetrated with this supreme love for God, so that they never think, or if they think, they do not care, whether they offend men by what they say. Such people do immense good. 7. Often have I thought of the woman of Samaria,

® Castle, M. v. ch. iii. 8 ; M. vii. ch. iv. 10, 11.

who must have been intoxicated with this draught.' How well her heart must have mastered our Lord's teaching, since she actually left Him that she might profit her fellow-citizens by winning them to Him ! How this striking

instance enforces the reality of what I have described ! In return for her fervent charity, her neighbours believed her words, and she witnessed the great good that Christ worked in her town. I think that to see souls helped by our means must be one of the greatest joys in this world ; then it is, as it appears to me, that we eat the most delicious fruit of these flowers. Blessed are the souls on whom our Lord bestows these graces ! How strictly are they bound to serve Him ! 8. The holy Samaritan, divinely inebriated as she was, cried aloud as she passed through the streets. I am sur- prised at men believing her, for she was only a woman and must have belonged to the lower classes, as she went to fetch water herself. She was indeed most humble, for when our Lord told her of her sins, she showed no such resentment as the world does nowadays, when people can hardly endure to hear the truth, but she told Him that He must be a prophet. In fact, her neighbours believed her word, and, with no other evidence, large numbers flocked out of the town to see our Lord. I maintain that, in the same way, those persons do great good who,

‘ St. John iv. 5-42. Life, ch. xxx. 24. Way of Perf., ch. xÍ3^. 4. Castle, M. vi. ch. xi. 5. Found., ch. xxxi. 42.

after having been in intimate converse wish His Majesty for several years, now that they receive caresses and consolations from Him, do not hesitate to undergo fatiguing labours for Him even at the cost of these delights and joys. In my opinion these flowers * are good works, springing from and produced as they are by the tree of fervent love ; therefore they have a far more lasting perfume, and one such soul profits others in a wider manner by its words and actions than do the deeds and words of a number of people whose intentions are soiled by the dust of human sensuality and are not unmixed with self-interest.

9. These are the flowers that produce fruit ! these are the apples of which the Bride cries : ‘ ‘ Compass me about with apples ! — Send me crosses, Lord ! Send me persecutions ! “ Indeed, she sincerely desires them and comes forth from them with profit ; for as she no longer cares for her own pleasure, but

solely for pleasing God,‘ she delights in imitating, in some degree, that most painful life led by Christ. I believe that the apple tree signifies the tree of the cross/ for in another part of the

8 Exclani. ii. 3, 4.

9 “ As it was by the forbidden tree of paradise that our nature was corrupted by Adam and lost, so it was by the tree of the cross that it was redeemed and restored. The apple tree is the wood of the cross where the Son of God was conqueror, and where He betrothed our human nature to Himself, and, by consequence, every soul of man. There, on the cross, He gave us grace and

Canticles the words occur : ‘ ‘ Under the apple tree I raised thee up,“ ^^ and a soul that is compassed about with crosses of sufferings expects to benefit greatly by them. As a rule it does not enjoy the delight of contem- plation, but finds keen joy in its trials by which the bodily strength is not enervated and wasted as it usually is by frequent suspension of the faculties during contem- plation.^^

10. The Bride is right in making this request, for we ought not to spend all our time in joy without any work or suffering. I have often noticed in certain persons, — there are very few of them on account of our sins, — that as they advance farther in this prayer and receive more consolations from our Lord, they become more anxious about the happiness and salvation of their neighbour, especially as regards his soul, for, as I said above, they would sacrifice their lives again and again to rescue one soul from mortal sin.

11. Who could teach this to people to whom our Lord is only just beginning to give consolations ? Perhaps they fancy the others have made but little progress and that to stay in a corner enjoying these favours is the essential thing. I believe that it is by divine Providence

pledges of love “ (St. John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle, Stanza xxiii. i, 2).

^^ Cant. viii. 5 : Sttb arbore malo suscitavi ie,

W (Castle, M. vii. ch. iv. 14-16.

that such persons do not realise how high these other souls have risen, for in their first fervour they would rush after them. This would not be well for beginners, because they are still children and need to be fed with the milk of which I spoke. Let these souls keep close to those divine ‘ ‘ breasts ‘ ‘ : our Lord will take care, when they are strong enough, to advance them farther, but at present they would not do good to others as they imagine, but would injure themselves.“

12. From the book I spoke of you will have learnt when the soul ought to wish to help others, and the danger of doing so before the proper time ; I will say no more about it now.^‘ My intention, when I began to write the present book, was to show you how to enjoy the words of the Canticle of Canticles when you hear them, and the way to meditate on the great mysteries which they contain, obscure as they may seem to you. It would be audacious of me to attempt to say more. God grant that I have not committed this audacity already, although this has been written only in obedience to authority.

13. May it all tend to serve His Majesty ! If there is anything good in these writings you may be sure it is not my own, as the sisters here can bear witness, for

12 Life, ch. xiii. II. Castle, M. i. ch. ii. 19, 21 ; M. iii. ch. ii. 19.

13 Life, ch. xiii.

they know how hurriedly I have written it, because of my many duties. Beg His Majesty to teach me to understand it by experience. Let any one among you who thinks that she has received some of these favours thank our Lord for them and ask Him to grant them to me, so that she may not be the only one who profits. May our Master uphold us with His hand, and teach us ever to fulfil His will ! Amen.