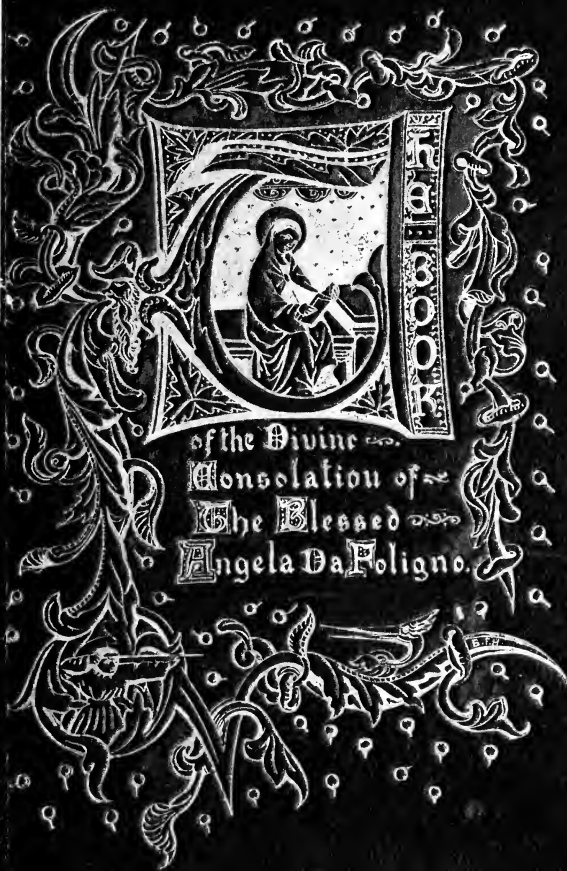


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THE BOOK OF THE
CONSTITUTION OF THE
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
OF THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA
AS REVISED AND
CORRECTED BY THE
COMMISSIONERS OF THE
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OF AMERICA
1875

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT is the secret and so potent attraction of the Saints? Renan says somewhere that he would have given everything he had to have seen St. Mary of Egypt pacing the desert in ecstasy, half-starved and turned to the semblance of Nebuchadnezzar. And Renan liberally discounted the value, not only of Theology, but also of the particular virtue, the loss of which had driven that Saint to such an unusual mode of life. The interest in sanctity evidently survives theological and ethical pre-occupations. Indeed, to-day, the Saint is perhaps an object of higher intrinsic interest to "unbelievers" than to the faithful. For to the faithful he is primarily *useful*, either as being efficacious in various troubles of life or, on a higher plane, as a sort of spiritual agent, obtaining graces for his clients. *O admirabile commercium!* But, like everything else, this celestial intercourse suffers from the defects of its qualities.

I do not wish to be understood as making light of superstition. The humblest blossom of that luxuriant garden is of infinite value, nor do the roots of our most highly rationalised opinions grow outside it. Nevertheless the important position of the Saint in the Catholic economy

does tend to conceal his real personality from his worshippers.' He inevitably tends to be considered more as a means to an end, than as an object intrinsically worthy of contemplation. In these circumstances the actual historical value of his personality is apt to be obscured by legend and fancy. Legend, of course, if at all contemporaneous, is of the highest value as illustrating his effect on those with whom he came in contact. We could ill spare in the life of St. Francis the Wolf of Gubbio. Modern devotional fancy is less illuminative. It throws no light upon the character of St. Anthony of Padua to learn that centuries after his death he recovered some papers lost by that devout man King Charles II. What then is it that constitutes the intrinsic interest of the Saint when his supernatural value has gone ?

One reason, I think, for this interest is that the Saint represents, in a quite unique manner, the satisfaction of a desire which all men more or less obscurely feel. Ever since man emerged from amid the labyrinth of irrational forces, which, until his appearance, determined the evolution of life on the planet, he has sought for power. Power at first over the hostile or indifferent nature which surrounded him, over the stream, the spark of fire, the wild bear : then over his fellow-men, and, at length, when he began to turn his gaze inwards, over himself. It is noticeable that all the really primitive myths divinised various aspects of power, celebrated the triumph of force. As the social arts began to develop, and, among them, of sheer

necessity, morality, men began to attribute moral qualities to the force which they felt around them, above them, and within them. "N'ayant pas pu faire que le juste soit fort, nous avons fait que le fort soit juste," says Pascal. This attribution, however, no less than morality itself, was an afterthought unconsciously conceived in the interest of his self-preservation—for, without morality of some sort, man would soon have disappeared before the wolf and the bear. And, by giving the ultimate sanction of force to his social rule of thumb, he naïvely betrayed his intuition that that ultimate force was the more fundamental reality. Now the Saint represents the achievement of this longing for power, carried to the highest and most difficult point, that of complete self-mastery. For while, to the primitive savage, the conquest of external foes of one sort and another is evidently the most pressing need of his position, a need recurring so constantly as to exhaust his store of energy, and veil from his attention other possible achievements, as life gets more secure and his attention is directed inwards, man becomes aware of those other dangerous foes of his own household, the appetites and caprices of his inherited brute nature. Turning to battle with these, he dimly but surely perceives one aspect of the ideal of sainthood. For the Saints of all religions, from the most elementary to the most highly developed, are ascetics. They live sparsely and chastely, and the mortification of the twin appetites of hunger and love represent to the ordinary man the acme of self-control.

The Saint is also more than the ascetic. Asceticism is a refusal, a limitation, a constraint—in a word, a negation ; and the Saint is eminently positive. Moreover, although negative qualities might impose on the imagination and create interest, they would not inspire the personal devotion that is invariably felt for him. The positive quality of the Saint is love, expressing itself in joy. Thus he is a fascinating combination of the familiar and the unfamiliar, for, if few of us are ascetics, we have most of us some experience of love. But the Saint drinks from the Castalian spring of his interior life while we hand about the Divinity to each other in treacherous and remarkably “earthen vessels.” His love is not as ours at the mercy of circumstances, it is not susceptible of betrayal or death, for he has found his treasure beyond time and space, where neither satiety nor caprice can corrupt, nor can rivals break through and steal.

There have been all kinds of Saints, from St. Paul, the first hermit, to Father Damian, but the “active” Saints seem less interesting than the “contemplative.” Certainly the Fathers of the Desert are very seductive. They lived in caves or on the tops of pillars, supporting their existences on roots and brackish water, while they exhaled their souls in a hymn of timeless ecstasy like Shelley’s skylark. Solitude was to them as water to the fish, and they preferred the society of beasts to that of men. St. Paul had his attendant lions, and St. Anthony Abbot spent twenty years in a tomb with serpents who turned into evil

spirits by night, and, in these unusual circumstances, became one of the most important personalities of his generation. The external conditions of their existence were often grotesque, almost always terrible. Their inner spirit was the most precious thing humanity possesses. For when everything else has failed a man, he arrives, if his courage holds out, at the joys of the spirit. The forces manifested in his experience, which succeeded in the long run in eluding his dominating grasp, answer submissively to the call of his mind in contemplation. Like fabled Adam naming the docile beasts, he sits in their midst, assigning to each its post and due perspective in the panorama of life. For he has arrived, if without the help of metaphysical analysis, by experience, at the conviction that nothing is real but thought which is the first—and perhaps the last—word of philosophy. Mystics and contemplatives of East and West of all creeds and rites have borne substantial witness to this truth. This is no doubt the reason why alike to the popular imagination as in the treatises of theologians the contemplative life is extolled at the expense of active virtue. For, to all of us, there come moments when we are aware of a psychological need, more profound, more urgent, than the desire for action. Before certain works of art, or occasional aspects of nature, or it may be at the exquisite climax of some mood of intimate personal emotion, a delicious paralysis steals over the will: we feel that we have done enough. In the calm that follows the whirlwind and earthquake of volition now, it

seems, definitely stilled, we are conscious only of the beauty of the situation on which we gaze, we have no desire to modify it, we only wish to gaze on for ever. The æsthetic sense has entirely replaced ethical striving.

Blessed Angela of Foligno was a true daughter of this ancient line. Born in 1248, she entered the family of St. Francis as a Tertiary Hermit, and became, through the spiritual autobiography, which she dedicated to her confessor Fra Arnaldo, one of its most striking illustrations. St. Francis and his "Knights of the Round Table"¹ seem from the first to have struck a new note in medieval religion. The Monastic Order, whether Benedictine or Cistercian, wrapped in the aloofness of its splendid cloisters, frequently governed by abbots who were great feudal lords, represented, it might be said, the aristocratic principle in spirituality. The aims of the monks were lofty, unintelligible no doubt to the villeins of the soil, who were their dependents; they fed and educated their humble neighbours, but their own life remained exclusive, a thing apart. St. Francis brought the spiritual life down to the people, the *popolo minuto*, and he did so—here was his splendid originality—without lowering the values of what he brought within their reach. The religious democracy that he created remained an aristocracy of the soul. His logic was amazing because so simple. In most men, thought and action move on different planes; with

¹ "Isti sunt fratres mei milites Tabulæ rotundæ." Spec. Perfec., p. 72.

them action implies at least some degree of compromise ; but when St. Francis, stripping himself of his father's cloak, and flying naked to the Bishop's arms, proclaimed the divine royalty of poverty, that most unusual phenomenon was seen—a man's thought and action in perfect harmony. Something of that divine simplicity, of that exquisite unison of thought and will, is what constitutes the Franciscan spirit, distinguishing all his authentic children and, not least of them, the simple woman who unfolds her wonderful experiences in this small volume.

We know little of her life. Born within thirty years of St. Francis' death, she entered on the life of penance after a youth passed in moral disorder. She lived in solitude with a religious companion in the neighbourhood of the Church of the Friars Minor at Foligno, until the year of her death in 1309. Her "Visions," which are of the most touching and beautiful description, appear to have been all of the kind described by mystical theologians as "intellectual," that is to say they were unaccompanied by any sensible manifestations. Some of them, indeed, as she notes herself, occurred during sleep. They are an extraordinary blend of naïve candour and passion. They indicate, with an accuracy which I feel tempted to ascribe at times to the editing of the possibly more analytical Fra Arnaldo, the moments of what may be called the dialectical process of sanctification. The point of departure of her conversion was a purely self-regarding dread of the penalties of sin : the contemplative mood of the love of

God, to which she ultimately attained, absorbed all the intervening emotional categories. This little book may in fact be called, in the Hegelian sense of the term, the Logic of sanctity. It is certainly one of the most important documents we have of medieval psychology, and illustrates in a very remarkable manner the completeness of that system of Mysticism which was at once the root and the blossom of the medieval intellect. Only in Angela the intellect is hidden under a succession of emotional moments, which develop by their own spontaneous dialectic out of the whole mood of which each of them is the passing but necessary expression. That Mysticism is the finest and, on the whole, perhaps the sanest there has ever been. It is far from being exclusively Christian. Deriving from the lecture halls of Alexandria, as well as from the hills of Galilee, it has come down to us through a series of great experimentalists, who have furnished to those of like mind with themselves its justification in their own experience. It is the classic Catholic Mysticism, as the Roman Church has always understood and still understands the term.

Few systems of thought have swayed the imagination more profoundly. Remaining a true Mysticism by nature of its goal, the "Beatific Vision," it has succeeded in incorporating in itself the ethical aspirations of Western energy. It thus mediates between the passive ecstasy of Hindu Pantheism and the restless volitional activity of the white race.

The dogma of the Incarnation has here been of the greatest service. The Unknown and Unknowable All is contemplated by the Catholic Saint in the person of Christ. The dogma gives him a lens with which he can focus the rays of Divinity and unite them in a shaft of light on which he can gaze without faltering. In this way he is provided with an inexhaustible object, adequate to his mind and will. On the one hand he can never know the tragedy of satiety, for, although he may faint with fatigue, his object is inexhaustible, and, on the other, his will is not ruled out as an illusion, but fortified by the prospect of an infinite perspective of effort and achievement. For Catholic Mysticism may perhaps be best summed up, in the phrase by which a great philosopher of our day has described life itself, as a creative evolution. The acts of Virtue, of Faith, Hope, and Charity of a Saint, are not waste of time or of merely negative use; they do not merely serve the purpose of withdrawing him from temptation, they actually constitute the spiritual life within him, like the words of consecration in the Mass, they create in his heart the Divinity which they assert. The mystic gradually passes beyond this mood into that profound and eternal rest of the soul, which theologians call the Beatific Vision, and which is, according to the teaching of Aquinas, enjoyed by some still in life with an even greater intensity than by others who literally "sleep in the Lord."

The Roman Church has ever regarded Catholic Mysti-

cism as the kernel of the *Depositum Fidei* of which she is the guardian. It was for it she fought through the long and wearisome controversies which brought to the birth at Nicea the orthodox dogma of the Incarnation. For, as has been said, without that dogma, Catholic Mysticism would have missed its specific and characteristic note and would have become a mere variant of Neo-platonist theurgy. The inherent tendency that all Mysticism has to Pantheism, indeed to Nihilism, would have inevitably asserted itself. Nothing short of faith in the descent of the Infinite into the finite could have saved the wavering lines of human personality, turned inwards to gaze upon itself. All, including that personality, would have become an unstable illusion, the web of Maia woven by the fallacious dreams of human desire. And European religion, at least at the point of its highest individual development, would have been indistinguishable from Buddhism. When Schopenhauer drew his parallel between Catholic and Buddhist Mysticism, he failed to see the enormous difference made by belief in the dogma of the Man-god. It is perhaps not without significance that he dwells so much on the value in that connection of Madame Guyon, whose Quietist tendencies, resting ultimately on a Docetic view of the Incarnation, were the cause of her difficulties with Bossuet.

At first sight perhaps the visions of the Blessed Angela may seem to have only an archaic value for us. The world in which she lived seems so remote from ours, the circum-

stances of her life so different from anything that could possibly occur to us, that her experience seems hopelessly irrelevant to our own needs. But this is a superficial view. The human heart is always the same : there exists a law of what may be called sentimental constancy. And nothing that has ever been believed by anybody is without value. It is enough if the faith and the experience were really genuine. Angela is an authentic specimen of a clearly-defined class of human beings. Mystics are very rare, but they exist. Moreover they are only rare in the West. Oriental bazaars are crowded with them ; they prophesy at the corners of streets surrounded by yellow dogs, picturesquely clad disciples, and occasional European tourists. Quite a considerable number of human beings pass their lives in a state of more or less constant inspiration. We are apt to forget this and limit the possibilities of all experience to our own. It is therefore enlarging to our minds to step sometimes into other people's worlds. In the world of Blessed Angela we shall find much to interest and astonish us, and perhaps to excite our admiration. We shall at all events enjoy the commerce of a pure and candid soul.

The translation here offered to the reader is that of the first Italian version which was made in 1510 from the Latin of Fra Arnaldo. This version is one of the rarest books in the world, and has a special value as being one of the earliest popular devotional works printed in the vernacular in Italy. It takes its place,

with the "Dialogo" of St. Catherine of Siena and the "Fioretti" of St. Francis, among the attempts to popularise Mysticism, which represented a too little known side of that complex movement which we call the Renaissance.

Libro vtile ⁊ deuo

ro nel quale si contiene la conuerfione/pe
nitentia/ tentatione/ dottrina/ visioni/ &
diuine cōfolationi della beata Ange
la de Foligni,ncuamente tra/
dutto de latino in lin/
gua volgare

1536



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Illuminatibe fatra alla. B. Angela.
 viue in lui/ & chi non: & mi difse in veri/
 ta che non e altra via dritta, cha quella chi
 feguira li miei vestigi: per che i questa via
 non calca inganno, & questa parola in ve/
 rita & grãde chiarezza/ piu volte & in mol/
 ti parlari mi fu detta. Amen.

**¶ Finiscono le visioni & consolationi
 della beata Angela de Foligni.**

**Omnes sta
 bimus an/
 re tribunal
 Christy, re/
 cepturi qđ**



**in corpore
 gesserimus
 sue bonū
 sue ma/
 lum, &c.**

Facsimile of page of original

Quē genuit, adorauit.

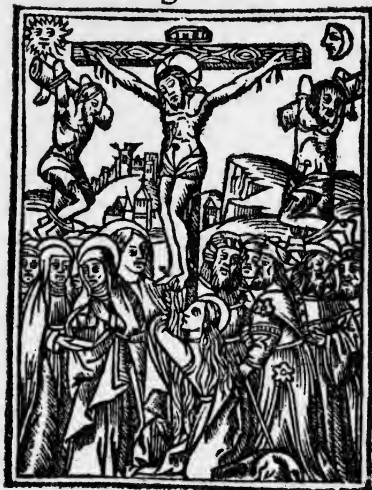


Partus, integritas discordes tempore lōgo

Virginis ī gremio, fœdera pacis habēt.

*[At end of book on first right hand
page after conclusion of text.]*

In hoc signo vinces.



VE XILLVM OMNIV M
CHRISTIANORVM.

*[At end of book, following the one
headed "Quē genuit, adorauit."*

A BOOK PROFITABLE AND DEVOUT
WHICH CONTAINETH THE CONVERSION,
PENITENCE, TEMPTATION, DOCTRINE,
VISIONS, AND DIVINE CONSOLATIONS
OF THE BLESSED ANGELA OF FOLIGNO,
NEWLY TRANSLATED OUT OF THE
LATIN INTO THE VULGAR TONGUE

1536

PREFACE BY THE OLD ITALIAN TRANSLATOR

Unto all Readers Beloved in Jesus Christ

ALTHOUGH in the Holy Gospel our most loving Lord hath plentifully shown unto us the means and the way whereby we may attain unto the perfection of Christian life, yet hath His consoling spirit (giver of all comforting and spiritual grace) nevertheless not ceased, nor ever will cease, to reveal unto us continually by means of His most worthy instruments—the which are saints and devout persons—divers ways and conditions of finding the most perfect and consummate union possible unto wayfarers in this life. And although by the facility of printing there hath been put forth an infinite number of books, so many that they do obscure the sun of justice upon earth (seeing that there are more evil books than good), because by reason of their perverse judgment and voluptuous desires men do delight more in imagining and in hearkening unto hurtful things rather than unto wholesome ones, and because through the world's abuses

evil men are more favoured than are good men, yet cannot malice overcome wisdom, neither can the many overcome the few. For this reason, also, hath God elected the weak to confound the strong, and thus in our own times hath He inspired many women of exalted spirit, and they did lead most holy and exemplary lives, walking upon the short and straight road. Amongst these is the Blessed Angela of Foligno, who, although a woman (and therefore of the weaker sex), did, nevertheless, by means of her humble, patient and steadfast despising of the things of this world and by her chosen and beloved poverty, overcome all the strong and powerful of her time. Unto whomsoever shall truly read and prudently consider them, her conversion, penitence, temptation, and doctrine (as set forth in this book), will be of exceeding profit for walking in the way and service of God, until he attaineth unto the happiness of glory. This book hath already been printed in Latin, divided into three treatises, namely—of penitence, of visions, and of doctrine. But because it was neither elegant nor learned in that language, it was neither read by scholars nor understood by the simple, and for this reason hath it been deemed well to translate it into the vulgar tongue, that it may be universally understood and be profitable unto a greater number of persons. The writer hath not sought to put it into elegant language, nor yet into the Tuscan or the courtly tongue, but only to render it intelligible. Wherefore each one is exhorted to read it solely for his profit and

for the good of his soul, which he will the more obtain the more he doth carefully read and digest, and put into practice that which he hath read and digested. For it is not the readers, but the doers, of good works who attain unto grace. And although it is to be believed that the writers of that time put down everything in the order in which it pleased God to recall it unto the memory of the Blessed Angela, yet hath it seemed more convenient in this translation into the vulgar tongue to put the treatise of doctrine into the second place, the which in Latin is given the third place, and to put here as third treatise that of the visions and consolations, which in Latin hath the second place. This hath been done because these consolations and visions are things most high, and it hath seemed right to leave them unto the last to be read by those who are more perfected and instructed, and first to set down her teaching (which is likewise that of Jesus Christ), as being more universally profitable, and especially unto beginners. The treatise of doctrine is further divided into several chapters, which was not done previously, in order that it may be more easy and less wearisome unto the reader, because certain of the chapters were exceeding long. Each one is now prayed and exhorted that (for his own good) he weary not of reading this most excellent book, wherein he will find pointed out that straight highroad (the road of poverty, of pain, and of contempt), whereby it is easy to find God, and from which none can excuse themselves as they might do

from the contemplation of the incomprehensible Trinity. And it will be unto him a joy to hear and know of those sufferings and other ills which Christ and the saints did willingly endure for our sakes, piously praying God that He will open the treasures of His mercy unto all. Amen.

THE BLESSED ANGELA OF FOLIGNO

TREATISE I

OF THE CONVERSION AND PENITENCE OF THE
BLESSED ANGELA OF FOLIGNO AND OF HER
MANY AND DIVERS TEMPTATIONS

AS I walked (said the Blessed Angela) by the way of penitence, I did take eighteen spiritual steps before I came to know the imperfection of my life.

The first step was that I did begin to reflect upon my sins, the knowledge of which did fill my soul with so great a dread that, fearing to be condemned unto hell, I wept bitterly.

The second was, that I did begin to be so exceeding ashamed of those my sins that for shame I could not fully confess them ; wherefore many times did I communicate whilst yet unconfessed and with all my sins did I receive the Body of our Lord. Being day and night reproached by my conscience because of this thing, I did pray the Blessed Francis that he would grant me to discover a confessor meet for my needs, who should be well acquainted

with my sins and unto whom I could fully confess myself. In that same night did the Blessed Francis appear unto me and say : " Sister, if thou hadst prayed unto me sooner thy prayer would have been sooner granted ; that which thou hast asked hath been done." Upon the next morning, therefore, I went into the church of Saint Francis and found there a friar preaching in Saint Feliciano, which friar was chaplain unto the bishop and did hold his authority ; and to him I did determine to make my confession immediately that the sermon should be ended. Wherefore I did confess myself most fully and was absolved of all my sins. And in this confession I did feel no love, but only bitterness, shame, and pain.

The third step was that I did consequently persevere in the performance of the penance imposed upon me, and as yet I was filled with pain and misery without any other consolation.

Fourthly, I did begin to consider and to know the divine mercy which had granted me the aforesaid grace and saved me from hell. Here did I begin to be enlightened and I did now weep and lament more than heretofore, forcing myself to do more severe penance, of the which I will not speak here.

The fifth was that, being thus enlightened, and finding nothing save faults in me, I did condemn myself, as one who knew and was most assuredly convinced that she was worthy of hell ; whereat I did again weep bitterly. It must be understood, however, that between the one step

and another there was a space of time, and I did ever weep and dolefully lament ; and there was nothing else vouchsafed unto me, only I did have some consolation in that I could weep, but truly it was a bitter consolation.

Sixthly, there was given unto me a constant and certain illumination of grace, whereby I was made to know my sins so profoundly that, having offended the Creator, I saw that I had likewise offended the creatures made for me. Therefore I did recall unto my memory all the sins which I had committed and in the confession (which I did make unto the Lord my God) I did most profoundly ponder over them. Wherefore I did beseech all the saints, with the Blessed Virgin, that they would intercede for me, and I did pray the merciful Lord (who had vouchsafed unto me so many good things), that He would have pity upon me, and, seeing that I did know myself to be dead in sin, that He would raise me to life again through His grace. Moreover, I did pray all creatures (seeing how that I had offended them inasmuch as I had offended the Creator), that they would not accuse me before God. Thus did it appear unto me that all creatures and all the saints did have compassion upon me, wherefore with a greater fire of love did I apply myself to praying unto God more than was customary.

The seventh was, that by an especial grace I did begin to gaze upon the Cross, whereon I did behold (as much with the eyes of my heart as with those of my body) Jesus Christ who had died for us, and I did feel great grief at

that sight, notwithstanding that this vision and meditation were as yet but little understood of me.

The eighth was, that as I did gaze upon the Cross I was granted a greater understanding how that Christ had died for our sins. Whereupon I did so clearly perceive all mine own sins, and with such exceeding great grief, that I did feel that I myself had crucified the Lord. Nevertheless I did not yet know how great a blessing was the Passion of Christ, nor did I understand as clearly then as I afterwards did, how that He had redeemed me from my sins and converted me unto repentance, and had died for me. In this beholding of the Cross I did so burn with the fire of love and remorse that, standing before the Cross, I did divest myself of everything and did thus offer myself unto Him. And although I feared greatly, I did nevertheless promise to observe perpetual chastity and not to offend with any of my members, accusing my members one by one of past sins. And I did pray Him that He would make me to keep this my promise, that is, to preserve chastity and to keep guard over my thoughts ; for upon the one hand I did greatly fear to promise, and upon the other hand the aforesaid fire compelled me, and I had no power to resist.

Ninthly, there was given unto me the desire to seek out and know the way of the Cross, that I might stand at its foot and find refuge there where all sinners find refuge. Unto which end I was enlightened and instructed after this manner : that if I did desire to find the way and come

unto the Cross, I must first pardon all those who had offended me, and must then put away from me all earthly things, not only out of mine affections but likewise in very deed, and all men and women, friends and kindred and every other thing, but more especially my possessions must I put away, and even mine own self. And I must give my heart unto Christ (who hath done me such great good), electing to walk upon the thorny path, which is the path of tribulation. So then I did begin to put aside the best clothing and garments which I had and the most delicate food, likewise the covering for my head. But as yet it was a shameful and a hard thing for me to do, seeing that I did not feel much love for God and was living with mine husband. Wherefore was it a bitter thing for me when any offence was said or done unto me, but I did bear it as patiently as I was able. In that time and by God's will there died my mother, who was a great hindrance unto me in following the way of God ; my husband died likewise, and in a short time there also died all my children. And because I had commenced to follow the aforesaid way and had prayed God that He would rid me of them, I had great consolation of their deaths, albeit I did also feel some grief. Wherefore, because that God had shown this grace unto me, I did imagine that my heart was in the heart of God and that His will and His heart were in my heart.

Tenthly, seeking to know from God what thing I could do, the which would be most acceptable unto Him, He did

of His mercy many times appear unto me, both sleeping and waking, and appearing fastened upon the Cross He did bid me gaze upon His wounds, and in a marvellous manner He did make me to know how that He had borne all things for me ; and this happened many times. And when He had showed unto me one by one all the things which He had borne for me, He said, " What canst thou do for Me that will suffice ? " Likewise did He appear unto me many times when I was awake, but in a manner more pleasing than when I was asleep (although I did always perceive His great grief and suffering), and He showed unto me the pains of His head and the hairs plucked from His eyebrows and His beard, counting over unto me all His scourgings and showing them unto me in the places where they had been inflicted, saying unto me, " All this was for thee." Then did I most clearly recall unto my memory all my sins, by the which it seemed unto me I had wounded Him afresh and therefore had cause for great lamentation, and I did doubtless feel much more sorrow than before. Thus showing His Passion unto me, He did say, " What canst thou do for Me that will suffice ? " Then did I weep and shed such burning tears that they did burn my flesh, wherefore it behoved me to lave it with cold water that it might be cooled.

The eleventh was, that because of my sins I was moved to do penance more severely, of the which it is not meet to speak here. And as I reflected and did oblige myself to wish to do this, it seemed unto me at last that I could not

sufficiently do penance the whiles I was possessed of worldly things, wherefore in order the more freely to do this and to come unto the Cross as I had been inspired to do, I did determine most certainly to forsake everything. The which determination was marvellously sent unto me by God after this manner. In mine imagination I did cherish a great desire to become poor, and such was my zeal that oftentimes I did fear to die before I could attain unto this state of poverty. Upon the other hand I was assailed by temptations, the which did whisper unto my thoughts that I was youthful and that begging for alms might lead me into great danger and shame, and that if I did this I should be forced to die of hunger, cold, and nakedness. Moreover all my friends did dissuade me from this thing. But at last the Divine mercy did send a certain great illumination into mine heart, wherefrom I did derive a certain assurance, the which, as I believed then and do believe now, I shall not lose even in eternity. Wherefore I did dispose and determine that, even though I should be forced to die of hunger, cold, and shame, because such a thing was pleasing or might be pleasing unto God—I would by no means leave from my purpose, even though I were certain that these aforesaid evils should befall me, choosing to die willingly for the love of God rather than to fall short of mine intention. So then I did resolve in good earnest.

The twelfth was, that I did afterwards pray unto the Blessed Mother of Christ and the Blessed John the

Evangelist that (for the sake of the suffering which they had endured), they would obtain for me a certain sign whereby I might always keep in memory the Passion of Christ.

The thirteenth was, that, persevering in the aforesaid prayers and desires, a dream was granted unto me wherein was showed me the Heart of Christ, and it was told me that in that Heart there is no falsehood, because therein all things are true. And it seemed unto me that this sign was sent because I had mocked at a certain preacher.

The fourteenth was, that being once at prayer, Christ did show Himself unto me as I kept vigil, more clearly and giving me greater knowledge of Himself than heretofore. Then it was that He did set me free, and it was after this manner. Firstly, He did question me; then He did say unto me, "Put thy mouth into the wound in My side." Then methought that I did put it there and did drink the blood which was running freshly from out of His side, and in the doing of this it was given me to know that I was cleansed. And here I did begin to receive great consolation, albeit I grieved when I did meditate upon the Passion. Then I did pray the Lord that He would cause my blood to be shed and poured out for His love's sake, as His had been shed for me, and I did desire that for His love all my members should suffer affliction and death, more vile and more bitter than His Passion. Wherefore I be-thought me and did seek to find one who should put me to death, in order that I might suffer for the sake of His faith

and love. But I knew that I was not worthy to die as the holy martyrs had died. Nevertheless, I did desire that He would cause me to die, and by a death more vile and more slow, and more bitter. I could not bethink me of a death as vile as I did wish for, or one that would differ from the deaths of the saints—for I did most surely deem myself unworthy of dying their death.

The fifteenth step was that I did fix my mind upon the Virgin Mother of God and upon Saint John, keeping them in my remembrance and praying them that (for the suffering which they had endured because of the Passion of our Lord) they would obtain for me the grace that I should always feel the pain of the Passion or at least of their sufferings. And they did obtain this grace for me in such a degree that one time Saint John did put upon me so great a pain that never did I feel a greater. Then did I perceive that the sufferings of Saint John and of the Mother of Christ (the which they did endure because of the Passion) were in very truth more than martyrdom. Then was it that the desire was given unto me to revile myself with all my might. And although I was much assailed by the devil and oftentimes tempted that I should not do this thing, and was forbidden by the Brothers Minor and by all from whom it was meet I should seek counsel, nevertheless by nothing either of good or of evil that could be done unto me was I prevented from giving all my possessions unto the poor. And if I had been hindered from doing this I would at least have forsaken

all things because methought I could not keep any thing for myself without greatly offending Him who did thus enlighten me. Nevertheless I was yet sunk in bitterness because of my sins, neither did I know if the things which I did were pleasing unto God ; but with much weeping I cried, saying : “ Lord, even though I be condemned, nevertheless will I not cease from doing penance, and I have put away all things from me in order to serve Thee.” But being, as I have said, still sunk in bitterness because of my sins and not yet feeling any divine sweetness whatsoever, I was changed out of this state in the manner hereafter written down.

The sixteenth was, that I did come again into the church to ask of God that He would bestow some mercy upon me. And whilst that I was praying and saying the Paternoster, God did implant that Paternoster in mine heart with so clear an understanding of the Divine goodness and mine own unworthiness that I could in no way describe it. Each word was written upon mine heart and I did speak it with great and enduring contrition and compunction. So that, although I wept because of my sins and mine unworthiness (the which I did here perceive), I did nevertheless have great consolation and did begin to taste somewhat of the Divine sweetness, because in the Paternoster I did see the Divine goodness better than in any other thing, and here likewise did I find it best. But because my sins and mine unworthiness were showed unto me in the aforesaid prayer, I did begin to be so greatly ashamed

that I did not presume to raise mine eyes either to heaven or to the Crucifix, or any other thing, but did commend myself unto the Blessed Virgin, that she should implore and obtain mercy for me and forgiveness of my sins, seeing that I was yet sunk in the bitterness of sin. Oh, sinners, how beset with difficulties and full of heaviness is the way of the soul unto repentance ! How art thou bound with strong chains and thy feet shackled ! How evil are thine helpers, or rather they who hinder thee, the world, the flesh, and the devil ! Ye must know that I did halt in each one of these aforesaid steps a good space of time before that I was enabled to move from the one unto the other ; albeit I did not remain equally long in each, but in some more and in some less time.

Then at the seventeenth step were these things made manifest unto me, that the Blessed Virgin had obtained for me the grace of a more than human faith ; wherefore did it seem unto me that until that time my faith had been almost dead, when compared with that which had been newly given unto me. Likewise did it seem unto me that the tears which I had hitherto wept had been shed almost unwillingly when compared with those which I now shed. Wherefore I did now lament for the Passion of Christ and for the sufferings of His Mother more earnestly than I had done before. And now everything which I did, howsoever much or great, did seem unto me but of little account. And I did desire to do greater penance, and I did fill mine whole heart with Christ's Passion, because unto

me had been vouchsafed the hope that I might thereby be redeemed. I did now, moreover, begin to find consolation in dreams, for I did have fair and pleasant dreams, so that I was thereby consoled. I did likewise now begin to feel the sweetness and consolation of God within mine heart, and outwardly in my body continually, both sleeping and waking ; but because I did not yet feel any assurance, my joy was mingled with bitterness, neither did my heart take any rest, but ever desired further mercies from God.

The eighteenth was, that I did at last begin to have the understanding and the visions and the words of God, and I so greatly delighted in prayer that I did forget to eat. Wherefore did I wish that there were no need for eating, in order that I might be ever at prayer. This desire did occasion a certain temptation not to eat, or, if I did eat, that I should eat but a small quantity. But I perceived this to be a snare ; and there was such a great fire of love in mine heart that I did never weary of being upon my knees, or of doing other penance. After this I was filled with a yet greater fire and fervour of Divine love, in such a degree that if I did hear any man speaking of God I did cry aloud, and even had there been one with an axe ready to kill me I could not have refrained. The first time that this happened unto me was when I did sell the little piece of land which was mine to give the money unto the poor (this was the best possession which I had), but in the beginning I did mock at myself for this crying, as one mocketh

at Petruccio ;¹ then I perceived that I could by no manner of means do otherwise. Wherefore it did oft-times happen that, hearing God spoken of, I did cry aloud, albeit that I was in the company of other persons, no matter who they might be. And when those persons did say unto me that I was disordered in that I should do such a thing, I did answer that I was sick and overwhelmed, and that I could not do otherwise. Neither could I convince those who spoke evil against me because of this thing, but I did feel greatly ashamed. When I beheld the Passion of Christ painted in a picture I could scarce contain myself, but was seized with a fever and fell into a sickness ; for the which reason my companion did hide such pictures of the Passion from me whenever it was possible, in order that I might not behold them. During the times of these cryings I did have many illuminations, understandings, visions, and consolations, of the which several will be written down in the following treatises.

CHAPTER I

OF HER MANY AND VARIOUS TEMPTATIONS

IN order, therefore, that I might not feel myself exalted by the magnitude and the number of the revelations, visions,

¹ Petruccio was evidently some noted personage of the time, whose identity it is impossible now to trace.

and conversings with God, and that I might not be puffed up with the delight thereof, the great tempter was sent unto me, who did afflict me with many and divers temptations, wherefore was I afflicted both in my soul and in my body. The torments of the body were verily numberless and were administered by many demons in divers ways, so that I do scarce believe that the sufferings and infirmity of my body could be written down. There remained not one of my members the which was not grievously tormented ; neither was I ever without pain, without infirmity, or without weariness. Always was I weak and feeble, and full of pain, so that I was compelled to be almost continually lying down. All my limbs were as though beaten, and with many troubles did the demons afflict me. Thus was I perpetually sick and swelled, and in all my limbs I did suffer pain, so that it was difficult for me to move myself. Nevertheless was I not weary of lying still, neither was I yet able to eat sufficient. In short, the sufferings of the body were great, but those of the soul were beyond all comparison more bitter and more numerous, and all were inflicted by the same demons. I can only liken myself unto one who is hanged by the neck, his hands tied behind his back and his eyes bound, and who is left hanging by a rope upon the gallows ; and although he hath no help or remedy or support, he doth nevertheless continue to live in that torment and cannot die. And I do affirm that even more desperately and with greater cruelty was I afflicted by demons, for they hanged my soul

and all its strength was overwhelmed and departed from it. And seeing how that I had no power to oppose them, my grief was so great that at times I was scarce able to weep for rage and for grievous suffering. Moreover, I wept without obtaining relief, and oftentimes was my rage so great that I could scarce refrain from rending myself and beating myself most grievously, thus causing my head and all my members to swell. When my soul beheld itself cast down and all its virtue departed from it, then it made great lamentation, and then did I cry unto my God.

After this I did endure another torment, for every vice was re-awakened within me. Not that—albeit re-awakened—they had power to overcome my reason, but they did occasion me much tribulation. And not only did I remember those vices which assailed me in times past, but many others which I did never before know entered into my body and did inflame me and cause me the utmost suffering. But because they had no lasting power over me they did afford me great consolation when they began to weaken and leave me. This was the work of the demons into whose hands I perceived I had been delivered, but when I do remember how that God was afflicted here below and in poverty, I would that mine own sufferings might be increased twofold.

At times was I thrown into a most horrible darkness of spirit by the demons, wherein it did appear that all hope of good was withdrawn from me. Then those vices which were dead inwardly in the soul were revived outwardly

in the body, both those which I did never before feel and those which I did have aforesaid. And I did suffer so greatly that I was constrained to put actual fire upon my body in order that it might quench the burning of desire ; and this I did continue to do until my confessor forbade me. And when I was in that darkness of spirit methought I would have chosen rather to be roasted than to endure such pains. Wherefore did I cry aloud and call upon death, desiring that it should come in any form whatsoever if only God would permit me to die. And unto God did I say : “ Lord, if Thou wilt send me into hell, I pray Thee tarry not, but do it instantly, and since Thou hast abandoned me, make an end of it now and plunge me into the depths.” Presently I perceived that this was the work of demons and that such vices exist not in the soul, for never would I have consented thereto. Howsoever, the body doth suffer violence, and so great is the grief and pain that if it should endure the body would not be able to bear it. Moreover, the soul doth find that all its strength hath been taken from it, and albeit it doth in no wise consent unto vice, yet can it not resist. And seeing that it doth act contrary to the will of God, it loseth all hope of being able to resist and is tormented by those vices.

Among others, God did permit one vice to enter into me the which I had never known before, but I did clearly perceive that it entered into me by Divine permission, and it was so great that it did exceed all the others. Upon the other hand was there given unto me a certain virtue,

manifestly wherewith to oppose the aforesaid vice and by means of which God did most potently set me free. Wherefore even if I had not already possessed a sure faith in God, this one thing alone would have inspired me with such a faith and a certain hope, of the which I could in no wise doubt. For virtue did increase and vice did diminish, and I was so upheld by that virtue that I could not consent unto wrong-doing, and likewise by means of that virtue was I so enlightened and strengthened that not all the men who were in the world, nor all the demons, could have persuaded me to commit the smallest sin. Hence proceedeth the aforesaid faith in God. The aforesaid vice was so great that I am ashamed to speak of it, and of such potency that if the virtue had tarried in coming to succour me, neither shame nor suffering nor any other thing whatsoever would have sufficed to restrain me from instantly falling back into sin. And all this did I bear for the space of more than two years.

Furthermore, beside this, was there a continual conflict betwixt humility and a certain pride, the which did increase in my soul and grievously vex it. The humility was because I did see myself fallen from all goodness and void of all virtue and grace, perceiving in myself such an infinite multitude of sins that I could not believe that God would ever desire to have me for His own. I perceived myself to have become an habitation of demons, their creditor and their child. Likewise methought that I had strayed from the right way and from all truth, and finally

that I was worthy of the nethermost depths of hell. It must be known that this humility brought no contentment unto my soul, neither any understanding of divine truth and goodness, but was a certain humble dejection the which was the cause of innumerable evils. For I did perceive the backsliding of both soul and body, on account of which I did know in my soul that I was surrounded by demons. Then was God hidden from me in all His power and grace, neither could I by any manner of means recall Him unto my mind, because He would not permit it. Thus did I perceive myself to be condemned, but I could not believe that I had been mine own damnation, because I did more grieve and lament for having offended my Creator than for any other thing. For this reason did I strive with all my members against the demons, that I might overcome the aforesaid vices, but I was not able, neither could I find any remedy or any way whereby I might escape or help myself, so deep did I perceive myself to have fallen. Wherefore was I oftentimes plunged into the abyss of this humility, wherein I did behold my sins and the superabundance of mine iniquities, but I did see no way whereby they might be made manifest and known unto all. And in order that I might make known my dissembling and my sins, it came into my mind to go throughout the cities and open places with meat and with fishes hanging about my neck, and to cry: "This is that woman, full of evil and of dissembling, slave of all vices and iniquities, who did good deeds that she might obtain

honour amongst men ! And especially when I caused it to be told unto those whom I had bidden to mine house that I did eat neither fish nor meat, and when—being the while full of greediness, gluttony, and drunkenness—I did feign to desire naught save what was needful. I did diligently make an outward show of being poor, but I caused many sheets and coverings to be put there where I lay down to sleep, causing them to be taken up in the morning in order that none might see them. Behold, therefore, the devil of my soul and the iniquity of mine heart ; hearken unto a daughter of hypocrisy and pride, a deceiver and an abomination of God who did feign to be a child of prayer. I was given over to pride and to the devil, but I did feign to have God in my soul and His consolation in my chamber, whereas I had the devil alike in my soul and in my chamber. And know ye, that during all the time of my life I have studied how that I might obtain the fame of sanctity, but verily I say unto you that through the iniquity and the hidden dissembling of mine heart have I deceived many, and have been the murderer of many souls, and of mine own soul likewise.”

Then, being still sunk in this abyss, I did turn me towards these my brothers (who are called sons), saying : “ Henceforth, oh my sons, ye will no longer believe in me ; do ye not see how that I am possessed of the devil ? Pray ye that the justice of God may compel the demons to go forth out of my soul, and that they may make manifest their most evil works in order that God may be no

more dishonoured by me. See ye not that all that which I have told unto you is false ? See ye not that if there were no iniquity whatsoever in the world, I should fill it out of the abundance of mine own iniquity ? Wherefore must ye no longer put faith in me, neither must ye worship this living image ; but pray that the justice of God may cause it to be cast down and broken asunder, so that its devilish works may be made manifest, its lies and its painted and gilded words, the which I did colour over and conceal with divine words in order that I might be adored and honoured as a thing of God. Pray ye finally that the devil may go forth out of this idol, and that by this woman the world may be no longer deceived. And I will pray unto the Son of God (whom I dare not name) that if it pleaseth Him not to show forth my sins Himself, that He will cause the earth to witness unto them by opening and swallowing me up, making of me such an example that men and women will say : “ Lo, how was she painted in false colours and a dissembler within and without ! ”

At times I had a mind to put a rope about my neck, verily a strong band, and to cause myself to be dragged through the city and the open places, crying : “ This is that woman who during all the time of her life hath showed the false in place of the true,” and that all persons then should say : “ Behold a miracle of God, for He hath caused this woman to reveal her sins of her own self and to declare her iniquities which have heretofore been hidden ! ” Yet did this not suffice unto my soul, for I

was fallen into a desperation such as had never before been seen in this world, the cause thereof being that I did despair of God and all His benefits by reason of having made conflict betwixt me and them. For which reason, also, was I certain that in the whole world there was no person more full of all manner of wickedness and more worthy of condemnation than was I. And all that which had been given me of God had been granted for the increasing of my despair and my condemnation. Wherefore pray ye unto God that He tarry no longer, for my head is already breaking, my body fainteth, and mine eyes are dimmed because of the abundance of my tears. And lastly, all my members are loosened and can no more give proof of the wickedness of my soul, but I do rejoyce that it hath been made manifest in part." And all this did I perceive in mine humility. Thou must know, however, thou who hast written down these matters, that what thou hast written is but a small thing in comparison with all mine iniquities and mine abuses, for I was yet very young when I did begin to do wrong. These and other like things was I constrained to say when I was sunk in the aforesaid humility.

After this came pride. Then was I filled with wrath and vanity, with melancholy and bitterness, and all puffed up with pride. Thereto was added another bitterness concerning the benefits which God had bestowed upon me, because I remembered no more any good thing of them whatsoever, but only remembered injuries and

dolorous grief, marvelling that there had been any virtue whatsoever in me and doubting whether in truth there had ever been any. Neither did I perceive any reason wherefore God should have permitted this, and for this cause was all goodness shut away from me and hidden. The temptation of this thought did make me to be filled with pride and anger, most bitter sadness and affliction and a grief greater than I can declare, so that if all the wise men of the world and all the saints of paradise had given me every assurance to comfort me and had promised me every blessing which could be named, not even they could have done aught for me or rendered me any help, if God had not changed my soul and worked differently within it. Neither should I have believed in them, but all would have worked together to increase mine anger, affliction, sadness, and pain more than I could possibly declare. Wherefore, if God would but have liberated me from these torments and temptations, in lieu thereof would I willingly have suffered every ill and would have borne all the infirmities and suffering which have ever been known, and verily do I believe that they would have been less hard for me to bear than were the aforesaid torments. Wherefore have I oftentimes said that, if only I might be set free from them, I would gladly have endured every form of martyrdom. This state of torments and temptations did begin some little while before the time of the pontificate of Celestino and did last more than two years, during the which I was oftentimes tormented, nor am

I even yet entirely freed, albeit I do now feel it but seldom, and that only outwardly, not inwardly as heretofore. But when I am in that state I do perceive that in betwixt that evil humility and that pride there is a great purging and purifying of the soul, by which and through which is acquired that true humility without which none can be saved; so that the greater the humility, the greater is likewise the purification. Thus came I to know that betwixt those two aforesaid extremes my soul must be burned and martyred, and through the knowledge of mine offences and my sins (which knowledge it did obtain through that same true humility) my soul became purged both of pride and of demons. For the which reason doth it come that the poorer the soul is made and the more profoundly humiliated, the more doth it abase and purify itself in order that it may be cleansed. And in no other way can a soul be cleansed save by deep humiliation and by being most profoundly implanted and rooted in veritable and true humility.

*Here endeth the Conversion, Penitence, and Temptation
of the Blessed Angela of Foligno.*

TREATISE II
OF THE EVANGELICAL DOCTRINE SET FORTH
BY THE BLESSED ANGELA

CHAPTER I

HOW IT MAY BE KNOWN THAT GOD HATH
ENTERED INTO THE SOUL

It must be known that God cometh sometimes unto the soul when it hath neither called, nor prayed unto, nor summoned Him. And He doth instil into the soul a fire and a love and a sweetness not customary, wherein it doth greatly delight and rejoice ; and it doth believe that this hath been wrought by God Himself there present, but this is not certain. Presently the soul doth perceive that God is inwardly within itself, because—albeit it cannot behold Him within—it doth nevertheless perceive that His grace is present with it, wherein it doth greatly delight. Yet is not even this certain. Presently it doth further perceive that God cometh unto it with most sweet words, wherein it delighteth yet more, and with much rejoicing doth it feel God within it ; yet do some doubts

still remain, albeit but few. For the soul possesseth as yet no perfect certainty, neither is it assured that God is truly within it, because such converse and such feelings can be produced likewise by other spirits. Wherefore is it still in doubt. And it seemeth unto me that this cometh either of its own malice and sinfulness, or else truly by the will of God, who desireth not that the soul should feel certain and secure. But when the soul doth feel the presence of God more deeply than is customary, then doth it certify unto itself that He is within it. It doth feel it, I say, with an understanding so marvellous and so profound, and with such great love and divine fire, that it loseth all love for itself and for the body, and it speaketh and knoweth and understandeth those things of the which it hath never heard from any mortal whatsoever. And it understandeth with great illumination, and with much difficulty doth it hold its peace ; and if it doth hold its peace, it holdeth it out of the abundance of its zeal, that it may not be displeasing unto God its Lover nor cause offence, and likewise by reason of its humility ; for it desireth not to speak of things so exceeding high that it may not draw attention unto itself. Thus hath it happened divers times unto me, that, out of my burning desire to work the salvation of my neighbour, I did speak things for the which I was reprov'd, and it was said unto me, " Sister, turn thee again unto the Holy Scriptures, for they say not thus, and therefore do we not understand thee." But with that feeling whereby it is certified unto

the soul that God dwelleth within it, there is given unto it a disposition so perfect that it doth most entirely and verily agree with the soul in all things, and in every way do all the members of the body agree with the soul and do truly form one cause together with it ; neither do they rebel against the will of the soul, but do perfectly desire those things which are of God, but which, nevertheless, they had not heretofore in any way desired. And this disposition is granted unto the soul through grace—whereby it doth perceive that the Divine Being hath entered into it, and hath granted it the assurance and the desire of God and of those things which are of God, after the manner of the true love wherewith God hath loved us. Thus doth the soul feel that God is mingled with it and hath made companionship with it.

Further, when God cometh unto the soul, it is sometimes given unto it to behold Him, and it beholdeth Him devoid of any bodily shape or form, and more clearly than doth one man behold another. For the eyes of the soul do behold a spiritual and not a bodily presence, of the which I am not able to speak because words and imagination do fail me. And in very truth the soul doth rejoice in that sight with an ineffable joy and regardeth naught else, because this it is which doth fill it with most inestimable satisfaction. This searching and beholding (whereby God is seen in such a manner that the soul can behold naught else) is so profound that much doth it grieve me that I cannot make manifest aught whatsoever

of it, seeing that it is not a thing the which can be touched or imagined or judged of.

Moreover, the soul doth know in many other ways that God hath without doubt entered into it, of the which ways I will now speak of two. One is an holy unction which doth so instantly revive the soul, make meek all the members of the body, and cause them to agree together with the soul, that they cannot be touched or offended by anything whatsoever the which could even in the smallest degree agitate the soul. Therefore doth it feel and hear that God speaketh within it, and by means of this great and in all ways unspeakable unction the soul doth understand with the utmost certainty that God is within it, because no saint nor any angel in Paradise would have power to grant this. But seeing how that it is a thing the which cannot be expressed, it grieveth me that I can find no words wherewith to describe it in comparison of that which it truly is. Wherefore I pray God that He will pardon me, for this is not of mine own will, and if I were able and if it were pleasing unto God, I would make manifest somewhat of His goodness.

The other way whereby the soul knoweth that God is within it is by an embrace which He doth give unto the soul. There is neither father, nor mother, nor son, nor any other person whatsoever who can embrace the object beloved with so great a love as that wherewith God embraceth the soul. For He doth embrace it with such love and draw it unto Himself with such sweetness and gentle-

ness that methinketh there is not a man in the world who can declare it, nor express it, nor believe it unless he hath himself experienced it ; and although he might perchance divine somewhat of this love, yet could he not possibly know it as it truly is. Of a surety, God doth implant most sweet love in the soul, the which doth make it burn for Christ alone. And it beareth with it so great a light (whereby it understandeth the fulness of the goodness of God which it experienceth within itself) that it hath understanding of much more than it feeleth within itself. Then hath it the assurance and certitude that Christ dwelleth within it ; but all that we can say is as nothing in comparison with that which it really is. Then the soul hath no more tears, whether of joy or of sorrow or of any other kind, seeing that when the soul hath tears it is in a lower state. For God poureth into the soul an exceeding great sweetness, in a measure so abundant that it can ask nothing more—yea, verily, it would be in Paradise if this should endure, its joy being so great that it filleth the whole body ; and all injury which the soul suffereth, whether by deeds or words, is esteemed as naught and is turned into sweetness.

Because of this change in my body, therefore, I was not always able to conceal my state from my companion or from the other persons with whom I did consort, because at times my countenance was all resplendent and rosy and mine eyes shone like unto candles, and at other times I was pale as death, according as the visions did vary. My joy

did endure for many days, and some joys have I the which I do think I shall never lose, for I hold them to be full and perfect, nor am I now without them. Wherefore, when sadness cometh upon me, I do instantly bethink me of those joys and am in no ways distressed. There are so many other ways whereby the soul knoweth that God dwelleth within it that I can by no manner of means relate them.

Through the aforesaid things and ways the soul doth know that God hath entered into it, but it hath not yet been told in what manner it doth lodge Him there. And all that hath been said is much less than was said when the soul did lodge the Pilgrim, who is God, because now hath it come to so full an understanding of the divine goodness and infinitude that when I do reflect within myself, I do sometimes perceive most clearly that those persons who do best know God (Who is infinite and unspeakable) are those who do the least presume to speak of Him, considering that all which they do say of Him, or can possibly say, is as nothing compared with what He truly is. Wherefore, if any preacher did verily understand divine things (as I have sometimes heard them declare they do) they would not be able to speak of them, neither would they presume to say aught whatsoever of God, but would remain silent and dumb. And because God is so much greater than the mind and all other things, we are not able by any means whatsoever to measure, nor speak, nor think of Him, seeing that His goodness cannot perfectly be explained. This

doth not happen because the soul hath lost all bodily sense, or hath cast off the body itself, but because it understandeth without the aid of the senses. Wherefore, when man perceiveth these things with his understanding he falleth into so great an amazement that (in so far as it may be expressed in bodily words) if some preacher were in this state and it behoved him to speak of God, however worthy and able he might be, he would say unto the people, "Get ye gone, for I know not how to speak unto you of God." Wherefore do I believe and declare that all that which hath been said either in writing or by the mouths of men since ever the world began hath in no wise described the true nature of the divine goodness, but is as the half of a millet seed compared with the whole world. But when the soul is assured of God and is refreshed by His presence, the body doth likewise receive health and satisfaction and nobility, and is refreshed together with the soul, albeit in a less degree. Then do reason and the soul, thus refreshed, speak unto the body and unto the senses, saying: "Behold how great are the benefits God hath bestowed upon thee through me, and bethink thee how infinitely greater are those which have been promised and will be faithfully paid if thou wilt only follow me. Consider likewise how many and how great benefits we have already lost, thou and I, because thou hast not conformed unto me, but hast gone contrary unto me. Wherefore must thou in future be in all ways obedient unto the things of God." And immediately the body doth submit

itself unto the soul and the senses unto reason, and perceiving how that it shareth in the delights of the soul it maketh answer thus : “ My delights have heretofore been bodily and vile, because I am a body ; but thou who wert of great nobility and able to enjoy divine delights, thou shouldst not have yielded unto me, causing us both to lose such great benefits.” Thus doth the body lament against the soul, and the senses against reason, with a long but most sweet lamentation, and perceiving the delights of the soul to be greater than it had imagined, it doth render obedience in all things.

CHAPTER II

HOW THE SPIRITUAL MAN IS DECEIVED

THERE are divers ways whereby spiritual persons may be deceived. One way, and the chief one, is when the love within the soul is not pure, but is mingled with a love which is personal and selfish—that is to say, with man’s own will. Then hath he certainly somewhat of the love of the world, and the world flattereth him and praiseth him. But all worldly flattery and praise on account of devotion is false, and the person whom the world doth single out and praise seemeth to be more fervent in devotion, and his tears flow more abundantly, and that sweetness and fear and trembling are increased which do

come in spiritual love which is not pure. And these things are not done inwardly in the soul but outwardly in the body, neither doth pure love enter into the soul, wherefore the sweetness speedily fadeth and the man forgetteth himself ; yea, he oftentimes turneth to bitterness.

All these things have I proved within mine own self, and I should not be able to discern these aforesaid things save that mine own soul hath attained unto the certain knowledge of truth. For when love is pure it doth in all ways deem itself dead unto the senses ; and it doth consider itself as nothing and it doth die in God and putrefy, and it doth reverence God and humble itself, neither doth it remember how that it was praised nor its own good. Yea, it doth find itself so downcast and so full of evil that it doth not believe it can be entirely saved by any saint whatsoever, only by God alone. Yet it doth oftentimes more readily pray for assistance unto the saints rather than unto God, not daring because of its unworthiness to pray unto God Himself, albeit it imploreth help from the Holy Virgin and all the other saints. And when it is praised by any person it deemeth such praise to be a mockery and a jest. And this love is pure and cometh direct from God and is implanted within the soul, to whom hath been thereby revealed its own defects and God's goodness. Wherefore the tears which are now shed and the sweetness which is enjoyed do never occasion bitterness, but assurance and sweetness ; and through this aforesaid love doth Christ enter into the soul, and the soul

doth thereby know that it can suffer no deception nor yet deceive itself. The other way wherein God permitteth spiritual persons to be deceived is this. When the spiritual and devout person feeleth himself to be greatly beloved of God and hath spiritual gifts and the works thereof, and doth openly speak of them, because he is too sure of himself and hath exceeded the right manner, God doth permit him to be in some way deceived in order that he may thereby learn better to know both God and himself.

Another way is when the spiritual man feeleth God to be very near and is filled with a perfect, pure, and excellent love ; when every day he doth most heartily perform good works and hath determined that he will in no wise seek more to please the world, or to gain the fame of sanctity, but in all things to please Christ and submit himself entirely unto Him. Nevertheless the soul must needs learn to keep that which is its own and to render unto God the things which are God's ; and if it faileth to do this then God permitteth deception in order to preserve it, and, because it is precious in His sight, that it should not overstep its proper limits. Moreover, the soul is not content with what hath been said, until God leadeth it unto the knowledge of Himself and the full understanding of His goodness—wherefore can there be no deception here, for the soul is so completely instructed of the truth that it doth deem itself to be as full as possible. It is first filled with the knowledge of God Himself, so that

it can neither see nor remember aught else, and thereafter it cometh immediately to the understanding of His divine goodness. Then doth it see the one and the other together in a way the which cannot be described, but since even this sufficeth not, God doth excite it to yet greater zeal and permitteth tribulations.

But the sentiment wherein He doth not permit the soul to be deceived is poverty of spirit, and verily, I have heard poverty of spirit so much commended in the divine words of God (and with such great and good proofs thereof) that it doth in all ways surpass our understanding. Verily, God spake thus unto me : “ If poverty had not been a most noble thing (said God) I myself would not have assumed it.” Certain it is that pride can only exist in those who do possess something, or who believe themselves to have something. For this reason, because they did believe themselves to be possessed of something, came the pride and the fall of the first man and the angel ; neither the angel nor the man did possess anything in themselves of themselves, for God alone hath this, and humility is found alone in those who are poor and who are persuaded that they do possess nothing. Wherefore is poverty a most excellent thing, and God Himself did cause His dearly beloved Son to be more poor than any man ever was before or will be hereafter ; and albeit He is greater than can be declared, yet did God nevertheless make Him as poor as though He were naught. And unto sinners and mortal men in whom was no true light this thing did seem

foolishness, but unto the wise and unto men of understanding it did seem just the contrary. For whosoever hath poverty can never be ruined, neither can he fall through deception, and if any person were truly to perceive the benefits of poverty he would love God, and if he were but to consider the immeasurable value of it he would no longer be able to keep any worldly possessions, and whosoever were to see how greatly God loveth true poverty, would retain nothing for himself. The proof of this is the proof of divine wisdom, which first maketh us to see our faults and believe ourselves poor in all merit and goodness, and thus honestly to esteem ourselves for what we really are. And in consequence we do make ourselves poor and do love that same poverty, and those who love it are enlightened by the gift of grace (which is given unto those who do perceive the benefits of poverty). Then doth it make us to see the divine goodness in order that we may all love God, and whosoever loveth doth esteem himself as possessing nothing. And as a man loveth so doth he work, and thus doth he lose all confidence in himself and trusteth in God alone; wherefore, because he confideth himself entirely unto God, he is enlightened by God Himself and all doubts fall away from him. Whosoever knoweth this truth cannot be deceived either by demons or by any other thing whatsoever, because in this poverty of spirit the soul receiveth a clear and perfect comprehension and hath a most enlightened understanding of all the matters of this life, so that it can never be

deceived the whiles it doth possess this truth. Wherefore do I know that poverty is the mother of all virtues and the revelation of the divine wisdom. For seeing how that the divine wisdom hath by the Incarnation taught us mortals to be blessed, it hath taught us more by poverty of spirit. Wherefore is all the wisdom of this world nothing worth if it hath not this truth in it, but turneth unto damnation ; and thus likewise are all the wise men nothing whatsoever if this truth is not in them, but they fall into damnation. Finally, it must be understood that when the soul knoweth not this truth it worketh with the spirit of vainglory and the hope of reward.

CHAPTER III

HOW, BEING LODGED WITHIN THE SOUL, GOD WORKETH
ALIKE UPON THE UNDERSTANDING, THE AFFECTIONS,
AND THE WILL

THE soul, therefore, heareth and understandeth only those matters into the inner meaning of which it can penetrate. For when the soul is illumined by the presence of God and doth repose in God's bosom and God in it, then is it exalted above itself and heareth and rejoiceth and doth rest in that divine goodness, concerning which none can report because it is above all intelligence and all manner of speech and above all words. But herein doth

the soul swim in joyfulness and in knowledge, and, thus enlightened, it comprehendeth the meaning of all the difficult and obscure sayings of Christ. It doth likewise comprehend how and wherefore in the soul of Christ there existed suffering without any relief whatsoever. For which reason mine own soul (the which was illumined, as hath been already said, and wholly absorbed in the Passion of Christ) did likewise experience such great suffering that here, neither, was there any relief. When, therefore, it remembered the suffering of Christ's soul, it could find nowhere any more joy, which doth not happen when it remembereth the passion of the body, because then grief is followed by joy. It understandeth these reasonings by virtue of its aforesaid exaltation ; it understandeth, moreover, that the sufferings in Christ's soul were sharp even while He was yet in His mother's womb, as sharp as were afterwards His sufferings upon the Cross, saving only that as yet He had had no experience thereof. Through the judgments and the unspeakable things of God doth the soul further understand that by the presence of God it is exalted even unto Himself.

Ofttimes doth God work within the soul in many marvellous ways, which none save He alone could perform. Sometimes the soul is suddenly exalted unto God with such joy that, if it were to endure, I do think that the body would not be able to bear it, but would lose all its members and its sensation. God doth ofttimes treat thus with the soul and in the soul, and when the soul desireth

to hold Him fast He doth instantly depart. There remaineth, nevertheless, great joy and assurance in the soul, verily such great joy that it doth in no wise doubt that God is yet present, but there is naught which I can liken unto that seeing and hearing, nor am I able to describe it. These revelations, however, and exaltations and delights, or joys, do not always happen after the same manner, but in divers ways and almost always accompanied with some new thing; yet none of them can be described. The revelations and visions are at one time thus and different at another time; so is likewise the delight, the joyfulness, and the happiness. Of all this I can say no more—in truth, were I to speak of them, by reason of mine unworthiness it would be speaking ill, spoiling, faultily describing, yea, even reviling them rather than making them manifest as I should. I am blinded and darkened in spirit and without truth; wherefore, oh my sons, hearken unto my words with suspicion as unto the words of an evil person, and take ye good heed of everything, neither believe ye in any saying of mine save those which are like unto the sayings of Jesus Christ, and which do work inwardly and lead unto the imitation of Him.

For the present, oh my sons, I take no delight in writing, but do continually bewail my sins and their redemption, the which was effected through the Passion of Christ the Immaculate; yet am I constrained to write unto you because of the letters which ye send unto me. Wherefore do I now write unto you that which is newly impressed

upon mine heart. Ye must know, therefore, oh my sons, that there is only one thing necessary unto us, which is God, to find God and wholly fix our minds upon Him. This is necessary unto us. But in order that our minds may be the better fixed upon God it is needful that we should cast off all perverse and useless habits, all superfluous familiarity with men and women of whatsoever nature, all superfluous knowledge and the desire to hear many new things, all superfluous labours and occupations. And, briefly, it is needful that man should put away from him all things which do distract his mind. Then must he instantly plunge into the abyss of his wretchedness and bethink him what things he hath done in times past, what he is doing in the present, and what he will do in the future, and how that his fate in the next world will be according unto his deserts. Then cometh death, which will be unto all eternity. And no day and no night must pass wherein he doth not think upon these things. Wherefore must he constantly think and meditate and use all his endeavour to comprehend the mercy of God, how that He did most mercifully ordain that Christ Jesus should suffer all this wretchedness with him, and he must take heed that he never forgetteth this great benefit.

CHAPTER IV

HOW THAT OUR PERFECTION DOTH CONSIST IN KNOWING
OUR OWN WRETCHEDNESS AND GOD'S MERCY

OUR perfection doth certainly consist in knowing God and ourselves ; there is nothing in the whole world whereof I do still delight to write or speak save these two things, namely, the knowledge of God and of ourselves. For this must a man lie ever within the prison of his own self ; and if he obtaineth no profit from this, he must seek another prison.

Oh my beloved sons, every vision, every revelation, all sweetness and emotion, all knowledge, all contemplation availeth nothing if man knoweth not God and himself ; for which reason I tell ye truly that without this knowledge all those other things will profit you nothing whatsoever. Wherefore do I marvel that ye desire to have letters from me ; I perceive not in what manner my words can bring you comfort, seeing that I write of naught else save of this knowledge, for I take no more delight in speaking of other things—yea, I have even imposed upon myself silence concerning any other matters. I do beseech you, therefore, that ye pray unto God that He will grant this light unto all generations and that it may remain unto you for ever.

That the knowledge of God is necessary unto us can be proved and made manifest, because that which we strive

after is the Kingdom of Heaven. And since we cannot nor ever should strive after it save in the same manner in which the Son of God did attain unto it, it is necessary to know the Son of God and His life and works and those things for the which He did obtain grace, in order that through the imitation of His works and the transforming of ourselves in Him, we may finally follow Him by virtue of His merits and grace, and with Him possess the Kingdom of Heaven. I say unto you that before all things it is necessary to know Christ, how that He was crucified for us and did suffer the Passion, thereby pointing out unto us the right way of life. For herein hath His infinite charity and His inestimable love been revealed unto us more clearly than in any other of the benefits He hath conferred upon us. For this reason, therefore, and in order that we may not be ungrateful, it is necessary that we should transform ourselves in His love, that is, that we should love Him as He hath loved us, and should love our neighbours ; and likewise that we should lament for the Passion of this our Beloved, seeing how that He was crucified for love of us. Considering, moreover, how many things God hath done for us (and especially for our redemption), we are required, led, and instructed to reflect upon our condition ; that is to say, to reflect that our condition is most noble, being so beloved of the most high God that He was willing to die for our sake, which He would not have done if man had not been a most noble creature and of great worth. We are further required by

this consideration of Christ crucified to work out our own salvation ; for God Himself, so exalted (and so far removed and strange unto us), did use such diligence in obtaining our redemption and salvation that it is our bounden duty to take heed for ourselves and our salvation and to further the will of God, showing penitence for our sins.

The knowledge, therefore, doth afford us infinite profit in many ways, but chiefly in that we are saved through His Passion and are filled with His great love.

CHAPTER V

THE NECESSITY OF A CONSTANT CONSIDERATION AND PROFOUND KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED

A CONSTANT consideration and a profound knowledge of Christ crucified are here necessary, for as we behold so do we love, and the more we do behold of the Son of God, Jesus Christ the Crucified, the more perfectly and purely do we love Him and for love do become one with Him. And according as we do become one with Him through love, so do we likewise share in the sufferings which the soul witnesseth in God, the Man of Sorrows. And seeing that we do love according as we see and know, so doth the soul lament according as it beholdeth the sufferings of its Beloved, and doth suffer with His suffering. Likewise, the more intimately any person knoweth this Man of Sorrows, the more doth he love Him and

suffer with His sufferings, and through grief is made one with Him whom he loveth. And as the soul is made one with this most sweet Christ through love, so is it likewise united with Him through suffering ; and all this cometh about through perfect vision and the knowledge of God and of ourselves. In truth, moreover, since the soul beholdeth the infinitude of the divine majesty (of the which I will not speak for fear I should rather disgrace it than speak of it worthily), and since it beholdeth, upon the other hand, the vileness and great unworthiness of sinners (whose friend and kinsman the most sublime God hath deigned to be, and for their sake, moreover, hath borne the most shameful death), it doth sincerely transform itself in the love of the Son of God, Jesus Christ ; and the more it knoweth and doth profoundly and inwardly consider and behold Him, the more doth it then enter into His love. When it further beholdeth the sinners and the creature full of faults, it perceiveth and discerneth that these faults are so numerous that its comprehension of them is as nothing in comparison with their number. When, however, being illumined by the divine light, the soul recogniseth that it hath itself been the only cause of such great and sublime suffering as Christ Jesus did bear for its sake, and reflecteth upon the infinitude of the divine goodness which for the sake of so vile a creature did so abase itself that it became mortal man and was tormented with great and immeasurable suffering—and this not only once, but continually the

while He did live—and how in the end He who was the Creator of heaven and earth was willing to die a shameful death, when the soul perceiveth and understandeth this it is itself overwhelmed with grief—and the more clearly it doth perceive, and the more profoundly it doth consider, the more is it moved unto yet greater grief.

More deeply moved yet is the soul when it perceiveth how, by reason of his sins, miserable man is deprived of all good things and benefits, that he hath merited eternal suffering, and is despised and derided of that sublime Divinity, and of the angels and demons and of all creatures, and that, in order to raise man up again from out of this adverse poverty, the most high God, Christ Jesus, the most rich in all things, did make Himself poor for our sake ; how He, the most beatific and most joyful, did make Himself most wretched in order that through His infinite suffering He might redeem man and save him from everlasting and unspeakable pain. The soul doth perceive, moreover, how the God of Glory, worthy above all things to be praised, did make Himself obedient and humble, willing to be despised, mocked at and reviled, seemingly of no account and thus reputed, and He did this in order that despised man might thereby be made glorious and honourable. When the soul doth well consider and more clearly perceive these things, the more doth it incline itself unto Him and suffer with His suffering. For the more clearly the soul doth know God and His exaltedness, His mercy and infinite goodness and

worthiness (which things it maketh known unto man and proveth them by means of their effect), and the more clearly it beholdeth the wretchedness of man, his faults, his unworthiness, his ingratitude, infirmities, and vileness, the more deeply is it moved towards the love of Christ and the grief of His Passion, and is transformed into the likeness thereof, wherein consisteth all the perfection of man.

It hath thus been made clear, therefore, that the knowledge of God and of ourselves is absolutely necessary and above all other things profitable. Wherefore must we constantly dwell upon such knowledge, day and night, and the more profound man's contemplation of the afore-said things, the more perfectly can he transform himself into the likeness of Christ, both in sorrow and in love, as hath already been said.

CHAPTER VI

HOW ALL THE WAYS OF THE PASSION MUST BE DIGESTED
WITHIN THE HEART, OR AT LEAST BE REPEATED BY
THE MOUTH

My beloved son, I do entreat thee, and with all mine heart do supplicate thee, that thou turn not away the eyes of thy soul from gazing upon this God, this Man of Sorrows. For this sight and this consideration do enlighten the soul and inflame it with love and the fervour of devotion,

keeping it there fixed. And if thine eyes should stray, do thou use all thine endeavour to bring them back and hold them there with good attention. Further do I exhort and pray thee that, if thy mind be not exalted to behold the Man of Sorrows, thou do inquire and meditate upon all the ways of the Passion and the Cross. And even if thou art not able to do this with thine heart, at least with thy mouth shalt thou earnestly and diligently repeat those things which belong unto the said Passion, because when a thing is oftentimes spoken with the mouth it doth in the end impart warmth and fervour unto the heart. If any person were perfectly to behold this One, so often called the Man of Sorrows, as He truly was, and were to consider how He became most poor and despised, and upon every side filled with unspeakable and unceasing pain and grief, consumed and cast down for our sake (which beholding cometh only of grace), he would assuredly follow after Christ, and cheerfully bear alike poverty, scorn, reviling, and unceasing pain.

None can excuse themselves for not having found and obtained divine mercy, for the Lord is generous and doth most abundantly give it unto all who do seek and desire it. I desire, oh my son, that thou fill thine heart with naught else save with God uncreated and the knowledge and love of Him, and that naught else be found therein save God uncreated. Nevertheless, if thou canst not have this, do thou hold fast to the love and knowledge of Christ crucified, and if this should be taken from thee,

then rest thou not, oh my son, until thou hast verily filled thine heart with one of these two things, which do entirely fill and satisfy both heart and mind. Wherefore, my son, do thou hold fixedly unto me and believe my words concerning that which is needful unto him who would follow the way of God, and draw nigh unto God and enjoy His benefits in this world and the next.

Before all things it is necessary that he should know God in very truth, and not only outwardly and superficially, as though it were through the colour of writing, or the sound of words, or the likeness of some creature ; which manner of knowing Him, according to the common way of speech, is assuredly a simple knowledge of God. But man must know Him in very truth ; he must understand His supreme worthiness, His supreme beauty, sweetness, exaltedness, virtue, goodness, liberality, mercy, and pity, and he must understand that God is the supreme good and highest of all. True it is that these things are understood of a wise person otherwise than of a simple person, for the wise doth verily understand the matter as it is, whereas the simple understandeth it only as it doth appear outwardly. It is like unto a precious stone which hath been found and which the wise and the simple do covet in different ways. The simple man knoweth not its virtue and desireth to possess it only for its beauty and its brightness, and for no other reason ; but beyond the splendour and the brightness of the precious stone, the wise man knoweth its virtue and its worth, and when he

hath found it he loveth it with the utmost intelligence and fervour. In like manner doth the wise soul seek to know God, not only according to the outward appearance and with only careless reflection, but using all its endeavour to know Him in very truth, to taste of His supreme goodness and to know His worth. For not only is He good, but He is the Supreme Good—and knowing Him, man doth in all ways love Him for His goodness—and loving Him, seeketh to possess Him—and He, who is supremely good, giveth Himself unto the lover, and the soul feeleth Him and tasteth of His sweetness and enjoyeth that greatest of all delights. Then doth the soul participate in that supreme good, the which is supreme love; it entereth into it with affection, and being enamoured of the love of its Beloved, it desireth to hold Him fast, wherefore it embraceth Him and presseth Him unto itself; it uniteth itself with God and draweth Him unto itself with the utmost sweetness of love. Then, by the virtue of love, is the lover transformed in the beloved and the beloved is transformed in the lover, and like unto hard iron which so assumeth the colour, heat, virtue, and form of the fire that it almost turneth into fire, so doth the soul, united with God through the perfect grace of divine love, itself almost become divine and transformed in God. Nevertheless, it changeth not its own substance, but its whole life is transformed in the love of God, and thus doth it almost become divine in itself.

Behold, how greatly it doth profit us to possess a know-

ledge of God. And truly is it needful, as hath been said, that man must know God before he can walk in His ways and desire to possess Him. Thereafter cometh love, which doth transform the lover in the beloved, and of this nature is the soul who knoweth God in very truth, and fervently loveth Him whom it knoweth so well.

CHAPTER VII

HOW THE SOUL MAY SPEEDILY AND EASILY FIND GOD BY
MEANS OF DEVOUT, PURE, CONSTANT, HUMBLE, AND
FERVENT PRAYER

YE must know, however, that the soul cannot obtain this knowledge of its own power, neither by writings, nor learning, nor by any created thing—albeit it may use and profit by them—but solely by divine grace and the light thereof. Wherefore do I hold that the soul cannot find it more speedily nor implore it and obtain it more easily from the most high God, perfect Good, perfect Light, and perfect Love, than by devout, pure, constant, humble, and fervent prayer, and that uttered not only with the mouth alone, but with the mind and heart and all the strength of the soul and the feelings of the body, asking and imploring with most ardent desire. It followeth, then, that the soul who desireth to find this full and true knowledge and light of God must offer its own prayers, read-

ing, meditating, and studying continually in the Book of Life, which Book is the whole life of Christ during the time that He did live this mortal life.

God the Father, dearly beloved, hath shown and set forth unto the soul the form, manner, and way, whereby it may obtain the knowledge of God Himself through love. God the Father, most high, wise and all knowing, hath given us His beloved Son as a sign and as ensample. Wherefore, my dear children, if ye are eager for the light of divine grace, if ye will free your hearts from all cares, if ye will escape all hurtful temptations, if ye will perfect yourselves in the way of God and set your feet verily upon this way, then haste ye to fly unto the Cross of Christ, for verily there is no other way reserved unto the sons of God whereby they may find God, and, having found Him, keep Him, save the way of the life and death of Christ crucified. This do I hold to be the Book of Life, unto the reading of which (as I have already said), none can attain save by continual prayer. For continual prayer doth illumine, exalt, and transform the soul, and illumined by that light and uplifted by prayer, it doth clearly behold the way prepared for it and trodden already by the feet of the Crucified. Thus walking upon this way with an awakened heart, not only do we escape from the heavy cares of this world, but we are uplifted above ourselves and do taste of the divine sweetness—and being thus uplifted we are kindled with divine fire, and, burning with love, we are made one with God. And all this cometh of

gazing upon the Cross through the medium of continual prayer.

Wherefore, my beloved son, haste thee unto this Cross and pray that He who died upon it for thy sake will so enlighten thee that thou mayst fully know both Him and thyself, and that, profoundly knowing thine own faults, thou mayest raise thyself unto the divine sweetness, rising from a love of thy faults unto the divine mercy and casting away all falseness. For seeing how that the incomprehensible and incomparable God hath adopted thee, who are so full of sin, and hath elected thee to be His son, deigning to be thy Father, thou shalt not show thyself ungrateful, but thou shalt study how in all ways to obey the commands of so marvellous and loving a Father. For if the Father's will is not fulfilled in His lawful sons, how shall it be fulfilled in the unlawful? Unlawful sons are they who, by reason of the evil desires of the flesh, do break loose from the discipline of the Father, and lawful sons are they who, by reason of their ardent love, do endeavour to follow their Master in poverty, suffering, and disgrace. And these three things, my beloved sons, must ye know and take for the foundation and completion of all perfection, because through these three things is the soul illumined, purged, and perfected, and made ready for the divine transformation.

I do repeat, therefore, that all the perfection of man and the knowledge of God and of himself—that is to say, the understanding of the immensity of God in all per-

fection and goodness, and of his own nothingness—this manifestation and knowledge of God and of himself is only granted unto the lawful sons of God, who do pray truly, and fervently do read and meditate in the Book of Life. Unto these true sons doth God the Father open and present the Book of Life, which is the life of Jesus Christ, God and Man, within which Book they will find all things that they can possibly desire to know. Herein can they learn of the blessed wisdom of God which maketh not proud, and herein will they find set forth all doctrine needful for themselves or for others. If thou dost desire, therefore, to be well enlightened and instructed, read this Book of Life, and if thou goest slowly and dost not read lightly nor pass things over, thou wilt be enlightened and instructed in all things necessary for thyself and for others according to their condition. And if thou dost carefully read and meditate, using no haste, thou wilt be kindled and consumed by the divine fire in such a degree that thou wilt hold all tribulation to be the greatest consolation, and wilt deem thyself to be utterly unworthy of suffering tribulation. And what is more, if any human praise or prosperity should come unto thee through some talent which God hath bestowed upon thee, thou shalt not be puffed up with pride nor raise thyself on high, for if thou readest the Book of Life thou wilt see therein and verily comprehend that this thing cometh not of thine own merit. This is one of the signs whereby man may know that he hath the grace of God, that he groweth not

puffed up or haughty whatsoever may happen, but remaineth ever humble.

Ye see then, my son, how before all things ye must endeavour to attain unto a veritable knowledge of God and of thyself, which knowledge is not attained save through constant and fervent prayer and diligently reading in the Book of Life. Amen.

CHAPTER VIII

OF THE BOOK OF LIFE, WHICH IS CHRIST, WHEREIN MAN
LEARNETH TO KNOW GOD AND MAN, HIMSELF, AND ALL
THINGS NEEDFUL FOR MAN'S WELFARE

YE must know, therefore, that this Book of Life is naught else save Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is the Incarnate Word and the Wisdom of the Father, and He appeared amongst us in order that we might be instructed by means of His life, His death, and His teaching. For which reason it behoveth us to see what was the manner of life and conversation which He did practise whiles He did dwell within this mortal body.

His life is an ensample and a pattern for every mortal who desireth to be saved. But His life was naught save a most bitter penance, which did ever accompany Him throughout His mortal life, so that from the hour wherein the soul of Christ was created and placed in His most holy body within the womb of the Virgin undefiled, until that

last most holy hour wherein His soul departed from His body by cruel death upon the Cross, He was never without this companionship of penance. But it was not thus with the other saints, nor with the apostles nor the Blessed Virgin.

The companions which God the Father in the Highest did in His most wise dispensation give unto His Beloved Son in this world were these. Firstly, the most perfect, complete, and continual poverty; secondly, the most perfect, complete, and continual contempt; thirdly, the utmost suffering. These were the companions who did accompany Christ during the whole of His life in order to furnish an ensample unto us, that we may choose, love and endure these same companions until we die. For this is the way whereby the soul must reach unto God, and other direct road is there none. Needful is it, therefore, and seemly that the members of the body should follow the same road which had been taken by the head, and that the same companions which had accompanied the head should likewise accompany the members.

CHAPTER IX

OF THE GREAT POVERTY OF CHRIST

THE first companion of Jesus Christ, the Book of Life and our salvation, was, therefore, constant, supreme, and perfect poverty. This poverty was of three degrees: one

was great, the second was yet greater and was joined with the first, but the third kind, joined with the first and the second, made up the most perfect poverty.

The first degree of this perfect poverty of Christ, who is the Book, the Way, and the Leader of the soul, was that He deigned to be poor in all the temporal things of this world. Thus did He own neither land, nor vineyard, nor garden, nor other possessions ; He had neither gold, nor silver, nor money whatsoever, nor any other thing of His own, neither would He consent to accept of the things of this world aught save what did suffice to succour Him in the depths of His great poverty and supply the needs of His body, that is to say, hunger, thirst, and want, cold and heat, great weariness, austerity and hardship. Yet of bodily necessities would He accept naught that was delicate or pleasant to the taste, but only coarse and common food such as was found in those places and provinces wherein Christ did live as liveth a beggar, without house or habitation.

The second degree of Christ's poverty was greater than the first, seeing that He did desire to be poor in friends and kindred and in all familiarity with the great and powerful, and finally in all worldly friendship. Wherefore did He not possess, nor desire to possess, any friend whatsoever of His own, nor yet of His mother or His putative father Joseph, or His disciples. For this reason did none hesitate to kick Him, strike Him, and scourge Him, and to speak hurtful words unto Him. And He

deigned to be born of a poor and humble mother and to be brought up subject unto a poor carpenter, His putative father. He did likewise deprive Himself of the love and familiar intercourse of kings and rulers, of priests and scribes, and of the love of friends and kindred—so that neither for His mother's sake, nor for any other person, would He leave undone aught the which could be pleasing unto His Almighty Father or according unto His will. Amen.

CHAPTER X

HOW CHRIST REVEALED HIMSELF POOR IN POWER

THE third and supreme degree of poverty was that He did put away from Him His own nature. Firstly, because He made Himself poor and needy, laying aside His own power, He, the Omnipotent, unto whom naught was impossible, desired to appear and to live in the world as a man, weak, infirm, and impotent, in order that beside the human miseries, the helpless childhood and other burdens which He did take upon Himself for our sake, He who was without blame or sin might appear as but a feeble man. Verily He endured much weariness in His journeyings, visitations, and disgrace.

And what is more, not only did sinful man rise up against Him, but even the elements and senseless bodies received power from their Creator to cause Him suffering and affliction, and, as though He had no power to resist,

He endured all for our sake. He gave power unto the sharp thorns to enter and most cruelly wound His divine and trembling head ; He empowered the bonds and bitter cords to bind Him fast unto the pillar and tie His hands together ; He whose death awoke the thunder and shook the earth, He who was the true and perfect Light, the Light which illumined all things, gave power unto the veil to hide Him, and unto the scourges that they should long and cruelly beat Him ; He gave unto the hard nails power to pierce and enter His tender feet and the hands wherewith He had given light unto the blind and hearing unto the deaf ; He empowered the lofty Cross that it should bear Him on high, His body scourged and bleeding and pierced as He hung there, and that it should show Him naked unto all. And in order that He might suffer the most cruel and ignominious death, He caused the vinegar and hyssop to make bitter His mouth ; He caused (oh, marvellous to hear !) the lance to enter and pierce through His divine side and heart, so that blood and water issued from out His heart and body and fell upon the earth. Moreover, He did give unto the soldiers who crucified Him, unto the Jews and unto Pilate and others yet worse, the power to judge, accuse, revile, and insult Him, to beat, mock at, and finally to put Him to death, He who with a single word could have prevented all things. With a single sign of His head He could have overthrown and destroyed them all ; if He had but given command unto His angel, an infinite multitude of the heavenly

host would have come down, and would in an instant have cast all things into the depths of the sea. If He had not verily granted them the power and had not shown Himself as being helpless and weak, there is no manner of doubt that no single creature would have been able to do hurt unto its Creator, yea, it would have abhorred such a deed.

A yet greater thing was it that He did submit Himself unto the elements, unto cold and heat, hunger and thirst, and other insensible creatures, concealing His power and despoiling Himself thereof in the likeness of man, in order that He might teach us weak and wretched mortals with what patience we ought to bear tribulation. He deprived Himself of power in order that He might save man, and by the glory of the resurrection did He make him strong to resist and to endure.

A thing even greater still was, that He did give the devil power over Him that He might be tempted and led into danger and persecuted even unto death, in order that He might thereby liberate man from the devil's power.

Thus did the invincible Lord of all become a sufferer ; the Creator of all things became impotent ; the strong King became weak. Neither did He oppose the devil, but became subject unto him, to all insensible creatures, to tribulation, injury, and pain, to all manner of grief and affliction, thereby putting to confusion us miserable wretches, who do esteem ourselves so tender that not

only do we refuse all voluntary tribulation and penitence but as often as we can we do put away from us those tribulations and afflictions which are sent unto us by divine command, murmuring against God most iniquitously.

CHAPTER XI

HOW CHRIST LAID ASIDE HIS WISDOM AND HIS OWN NATURE

SECONDLY, He did lay aside His own nature, making Himself poor in wisdom because He desired to appear as a simple man, one senseless and vain in the sight of men. He appeared not as a philosopher or a doctor of many words, or as one who disputeth noisily, nor yet as a scribe renowned for wisdom and learning ; but in the utmost simplicity did He talk with men, showing unto them the way of truth in His life, His virtues, and His miracles. Seeing how that He is the Wisdom of the Father, the Creator and Inspirer of all learning, He might have used all the subtilty of knowledge and of argument, and, had He desired, He might have shown forth His wit and obtained glory ; but with such simplicity did He declare the truth that He was esteemed of almost all people to be not only simple and foolish, but even ignorant and vain. Herein did He show unto us the way of truth, that is to say, that neither in learning nor in wisdom should we take glory unto ourselves, for being puffed up with this pride

we seek to obtain the name of master before men and to cover ourselves with vainglory.

Thirdly, He did lay aside His own nature in that He did make Himself poor of the fame of His holiness, goodness, and innocence. Which thing is exceeding marvellous, because He did so walk in the way of justice that not only did very few persons esteem Him holy, but He was held to be a sinner and the friend of sinners, a destroyer, seducer, and conspirator against His country, and albeit He was working out our salvation upon earth, He was reputed and condemned as a blasphemer and numbered amongst thieves and evil-doers. He might have revealed Himself in all the fame of holiness, so that He would have been universally held to be the greatest of all saints and one in whom there was no sin ; but He did choose to take upon Himself the sins of us all and the fame of holiness did He give unto His servant John. He who was the chief of all saints, and king of all virtues, in whom was united all goodness, He did this thing, and did deign to put away from Him all His fame of holiness (saving only the truth of His teaching, life, and judgment), and to become poor in order that He might lay bare our hypocrisy. For we do seek glory in the sight of men ; we do feign to possess those good things which we have not ; we do endeavour to beg for ourselves the fame of holiness and innocence, falsely denying our wickedness, and with lies attributing unto ourselves good works, lawfully and unlawfully, as often as we can.

Fourthly, He did lay aside His own nature in that He did renounce His kingdom, His princely estate and lordship, and all things which He did possess. He, the King of kings and Lord of lords, whose kingdom is without end, deigned to live amongst men, and be as an humble servant, one dejected, cast out, and sold—and when they did desire to make Him king, He would not, but unto the kings of this world did He remain subject even unto death, obediently paying tribute unto the courts, judges, and tax-gatherers who did ask it of Him ; subjecting Himself not only unto kings, but likewise unto the lowest of their servants, officers, and ministers, ever obedient, even unto scourging and death upon the Cross.

And He, the King of kings, did say before Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world. He sought not after the kingdom of this world or the temporal lordship over men, but was ever willing to be in subjection ; not to be lord or king or prince, but the most humble servant, casting Himself entirely aside. Moreover, He was subject unto His most poor and humble Mother and His putative father, obedient unto them and humbly serving them until His thirtieth year. He was obedient in the midst of His disciples, who were few in number, ignorant, and poor, and albeit He did choose to be as a king or ruler over them, He said that He was not come to be ministered unto, but to minister unto them, even unto the rendering up of His spirit for them and for the other sinners who were to be redeemed. Yea, He, the Head and Master of

those disciples, did suffer hunger and thirst and tribulation ; for He was not their Master in order that He might be set above them, but that He might be the first amongst them to suffer affliction and be cast down ; and so humble was His intercourse with them that He did minister unto them as they sat at meat, even washing their hands and their feet.

Alas, how great is our folly ! The mighty Lord and King of kings was despised and rejected of men, but we do ever seek to be exalted and preferred, and to live in liberty, free from all yoke whatsoever. Neither doth His love constrain us to be subject and obedient unto any person, but we do always desire to be set above the others. Not thus, not thus, oh Christ, didst Thou act, for Thou knewest that the judgment would be hard exceedingly, for those in authority and power will suffer great torments, and of their lives, their deeds, their sins, and of those in subjection unto them will they be required to render the most strict account.

Thus will our pride be confounded by the Book of Life, who is Himself an ensample. And we do desire to subject ourselves unto those set in authority over us (as He hath ever done), not doing aught according unto our own will, but submitting for love of Him who submitted unto all things for our sake. And for our safety will we not only endure the state of subjection, but, fleeing from all preferment, we will seek with whole hearts and fervent desire to be in subjection and an humble state.

Such, then, was the supreme, constant, and perfect poverty of Jesus Christ our Saviour, who, albeit He was Lord of all riches, did nevertheless choose to be poor amongst us, that He might teach us the love of poverty. And verily He was poor in possessions, in will and in spirit, beyond man's comprehension, and all for the deep love wherewith He loved us. He was poor in riches and needy of all worldly things ; He was poor in friends and power, poor in worldly wisdom, in the fame of holiness and in all dignities. And finally, being poor in all things, He preached poverty and said that the poor were blessed and should judge the world. Upon the other hand He did condemn the wealthy and their riches and abundance, saying that they did deserve condemnation. He did preach this in deed and by word of mouth and by example, with all His might.

CHAPTER XII

HOW POVERTY OF SPIRIT IS DESPISED BY MANY

Oh, the shame, oh, the pain of it ! In these days is poverty of spirit thrust forth and put to flight by almost all persons. And what is worse and yet more detestable is, that those same persons who do read of it in that Book of Life and understand and preach and glorify it, do utterly reject it in deed and will and in all their acts and intentions. And this they do because the world hateth

that poverty, and God loveth and approveth it, choosing that most blessed thing for Himself and for His followers. But what man is there, what woman, or other creature, who in these days could declare themselves accompanied by such glorious companions as those by whom Christ elected to be accompanied? Blessed is he whose repentance hath led him to follow Christ's example and choose poverty in this world.

Alas, alas, we do hear and know and steadfastly believe in what manner the Son of God (our Creator and Redeemer, the Master given unto us for an illumination and an ensample) was clothed, with what food and drink He was satisfied, with what garments He was adorned, in what palaces and chambers He was lodged, by what family and friends He was surrounded, what learning and knowledge He did pursue, and what goods of this world He did enjoy. All this do we know, yet nevertheless, even whilst we do say we are Christians, desiring to be so called—by no manner of means will we share Christ's poverty, neither do we desire to be like unto Him. Although with words do we say many things glorifying poverty, yet in actual deeds and works we do blaspheme against that condition of Christ and the perfection of His poverty. Woe unto us, who, together with so great an ensample, teacher, and master, do truly thrust away from us our own salvation, turning from it and from His teaching to seek after the abundance of this world, and are left empty at the last! Wherefore neither our penance

nor our Christianity do follow the straight way of Jesus Christ, but are most shamefully opposed unto it.

Blessed (saith He), verily blessed is, and shall be, he who loveth poverty in all the aforesaid things and who desireth to be truly poor in worldly things, in deed and not only in words ; poor in friends, in familiar intercourse, in all delights, vain knowledge and curiosity, poor in the repute of holiness and in all preferment and dignity. And if any should not be able to put away from himself utterly all these aforesaid things, he should at least endeavour with all his might to withdraw his affection from them. Of a surety these poor are blessed, for they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. And those who have done the contrary in all things, and have only preached with their lips and uttered empty words, shall be left cursed and lamenting ; because theirs shall be the utmost poverty, eternal hunger and the house of hell, where there is everlasting hunger and thirst, where there is neither friend, nor brother, nor father to redeem them, nor any help whatsoever. Neither will they have power to issue forth, and all the wisdom of the world will not avail them ; but all things will be taken from them in very deed, as in very deed they did desire to keep them, contrary to the teaching of Christ. Wherefore shall they live in torments everlastingly. Amen.

CHAPTER XIII

OF THE HUMILITY AND CONTEMPT OF OUR SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST

THE second companion by whom Jesus, the Son of God, was continually accompanied whiles He did live upon the earth was the voluntary and perfect contempt, dejection, ignominy, and shame which He did choose constantly to endure in this world. For He did live as a base servant who had been sold and not redeemed; scarce even as a servant either, but rather as one who was reputed evil and wicked, knowing that He was to be mocked with insults, covered with scorn, derided, bound and scourged, and that finally without justice and without defender He was to be led forth, together with thieves and sinners, and with them condemned and slain, dying an ignominious death. Whiles He did live He did ever rebuke with words and deeds whosoever desired to do Him worldly honour, fleeing from the honour of this world and enduring shame, the which He did accept willingly, yet never of His own self giving either cause or occasion for it.

For almost all persons did persecute the Giver of the world; they did deride and mock at Him, without reason and without cause. Even from His cradle and swaddling clothes did they begin to persecute Him, driving Him forth into a barbarous country. And when He was grown to man's estate they did call Him Samaritan and idolater; some did even assert He was possessed, a glutton, seducer,

and a false prophet, saying: "Behold the devourer and drinker of wine, who is neither a prophet nor just, who performeth miracles not by the power of God, but casteth out devils through the prince of devils." Others did lead Him unto the summit of a mountain that they might cast Him down; others took stones wherewith to stone Him. Beside these things were there divers rumours against Him, divers injuries, mockings, and calumnies, and evil reports that He did blaspheme. Much sorrow and suffering did they prepare for Him both in words and deeds, driving Him forth from their habitations, and presently they did basely take Him and bind Him and bring Him before divers judges and councils. Some spat in His face, others did kick Him; others put His white robes upon Him; others crowned Him with thorns, smote Him, and, kneeling down before Him, mocked at Him. Others did smite Him upon His head with rods, and veiling His face they did deride Him in all manner of ways. Others beat Him with whips; others did gnash their teeth at Him, like unto dogs hungering for blood, cursing and rebuking Him as a malefactor. Finally, He was led naked unto His Passion. He was forsaken of all His disciples; one of them had denied Him, another had betrayed Him, the others were fled, and He remained alone and naked in the midst of the multitude. Seeing how that it was a feast day, the people were all gathered together, and as an evil-doer betwixt evil-doers they did raise Him on high and did cruelly slay Him. And as He hung there, dying,

weeping and praying, certain of them did deride and mock at Him, saying, "Ah, thou that destroyest the Temple!" and others reviled Him, saying, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save!" Others did cast lots for His raiment; others gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall, offering it unto the dying who humbly did implore water wherewith to quench His thirst. Others did pierce His dead side with a spear, and when He was brought down from the Cross He lay naked upon the ground, lacking even a sepulchre, until one came and sought Him, and took Him up and buried Him. Some there were who did speak against Him, saying, "We remember what that deceiver said." Some did conceal the resurrection, others denied it. And thus in life, in death, and after death He did receive naught save continual scorn and ignominy and baseness, and all this did He seek and endure in order that man might attain unto the glory of the Resurrection and be exalted unto the supremest glory.

For this reason was the Son of God given unto us for a pattern and an ensample, a teacher and master, that we might learn to despise the glory of this world, and, not only that we might not seek after it, but that we might refuse it even though it were offered unto us. For He sought not His own glory, but that of the Father; yea, He did even despise and refuse it, and He who was descended from heaven did humble Himself even unto the feet of His disciples, making Himself like unto a servant

and rendering obedience even unto the death of the Cross, that death most bitter, most despised, and most vile.

Alas, who is there in these days who loveth such a companion as this, fleeing from honour and dignity? Who chooseth the shame which cometh of poverty, of an humble estate, an humble office or other lowly things, and who chooseth to be overcome, cast down and reviled rather than to be commended and praised for the good which he hath, or doth, or speaketh, or deemeth himself to have, and who giveth no welcome or good words unto flatterers? Verily, each one goeth his own way and there is not one who doeth this good thing. And if there should be any, it can only be because he is united in love with Christ his Head, and a true, living member of Him. For seeing how that Christ, his King, his Master and his Head loveth such company, he desireth to love it likewise. But there are many who say, "I do love and desire God, and I care not if the world doeth me no honour; but I would not that it should put me to shame, neither would I that it should cast me to the ground, or revile me, or put me to confusion in the presence of others." This is a manifest sign of little faith, of little judgment, and of great lukewarmness. For either he hath truly committed that for the which he deserveth to be put to confusion, and to suffer pain and shame (from the which few can justly excuse themselves), or else he hath not committed it. If he hath committed any sin, manifest or hidden, and doth verily repent him

thereof, he must bear the punishment. And not only with patience shall he bear it, but with joy of soul and body, and this especially for two reasons. Firstly, because that shame, confusion, and pain which he endureth is pleasing unto God, and unto his neighbour, according unto the ordination of divine justice. And if he hath not committed that evil either in word or in deed, then must he bear and endure all confusion, shame, and pain, if God hath permitted it. And he must bear it with an hundred times greater patience and cheerfulness than he would have done in the first case, because that pain, confusion, and shame do but serve to increase the grace, and the greater the merit of the grace, the greater is likewise the gift and reward of glory.

Without any doubt it is by thus enduring shame and confusion (which do come without sin), that the holy souls and the friends of God do grow in grace and are made perfect, in the same manner as poverty and other afflictions sent of God do make perfect those who endure them. For Christ did love shame and refuse honour in order that He might show unto His friends how they could grow in virtue and in grace.

For this reason, therefore, doth this second companion ever accompany us through life, and if we would clearly behold the beginning, middle, and ultimate end of the life of Jesus Christ the Son of God, we must be all humility and must live in the world without honour, despised and rejected of the world and the lovers thereof.

CHAPTER XIV

OF THE CONSTANT AND MANY SUFFERINGS WHICH
CHRIST DID BEAR IN DIVERS WAYS

His third companion was that of the which He had the most experience and which did endure continually. This was supreme suffering, the which did instantly afflict His soul when it was joined unto His body. For in that moment wherein His soul was united with His human body it was instantly filled with supreme knowledge. Wherefore was Christ possessed of understanding even in the womb of the Virgin mother. He did instantly begin to feel the utmost suffering; He possessed a universal and singular knowledge, foresight, consideration, and understanding of all the pains which His soul and body were presently to undergo, and bear for our sake, and, as though nigh unto death, He was filled with such agony and sadness that His body did give forth a bloody sweat which dropped even upon the earth, foreshowing the bitterness of death, and His soul did lament in its great affliction, albeit His body felt not so great a suffering as when it was more nigh unto its Passion. That holy soul did foresee the knives of those most evil tongues, and the sharp and cutting words of each especial tongue. He knew and did constantly consider by whom, and when, and how, and in what degree He was to be afflicted, scoffed at, put to

death and slain, and for this end He knew that He was born into the world, and therefore could not escape suffering. He did foresee how He should be sold, betrayed, taken, bound, denied, forsaken, derided, beaten, accused, reviled, cursed, scourged, judged, rejected, and condemned, how He should be led to the Cross like unto a thief, divested of His raiment and left naked, crucified and done to death and pierced with a spear. He did know, moreover, of all the blows and scourgings, the holes of the nails and the drops of blood, and how many tears He should shed ; He knew of the sighs and weeping and dolorous lamentations of Himself and His mother ; all things were foreseen by that sacred soul of Jesus Christ. All this lay before Him and He did meditate thereon, which meditation could doubtless not be without exceeding great sadness and supreme suffering both of heart and mind. Wherefore was the whole life of Jesus Christ filled with the utmost suffering, sadness, and affliction.

Beside all this, the Lord Jesus Christ, veritable Book of Life, did endure countless other sufferings. For when He was born He was not washed, neither cradled upon feathers not wrapped in skins ; but He was laid upon straw in a stable, He did lie in a hard manger betwixt beasts of burden. Thus from the moment of His birth did the young and tender infant begin to endure the afflictions of the body. He wandered forth with the sweet and tender Virgin, His mother, and with the old

man Joseph. He was carried even into Egypt by way of a great desert, wherein the children of Israel sojourned forty years without food prepared by human hands. Afterwards He did appear in the Temple according unto the law, walking thither on foot whiles He was yet a child, for His dwelling was in Nazareth, distant two days' journey from Jerusalem. When He became a man He received baptism before He did begin to preach; then He entered into the desert, where He fasted forty days and forty nights, and where He hungered so greatly that the devil did think by means of His hunger to persuade Him into sin, and thereby did he first tempt Him. He journeyed throughout the villages, hamlets, and cities, enduring hunger and thirst, rain and heat and cold, sweating and weariness, and at last the torture of a bitter death. And all this weariness did He endure in order that He might preach the way of truth, and cast out the falseness of demons and their vain worship, that He might prove unto men how profitable is repentance, and lead them thereunto, showing them how in the enduring of pain and affliction lieth man's true happiness, good, and glory, and that He might furnish them an ensample for the bearing of the aforesaid things.

No tongue sufficeth to describe, no heart can imagine the sufferings which He endured at the time of the Passion; for Christ did bear ineffable sorrow in many ways. There was a most deep and sharp sorrow caused by the compassion He did feel for the human race, which

He loved with a surpassing love, and not as man loveth. He did lament for the whole human race, lost, cast down and condemned, but He did also bestow especial compassion and love upon each person in particular. And not only did He lament for the sins of all persons in general, but likewise for each especial sin, according to its sum and nature, and for the punishment which He knew of a certainty that each one had deserved, or would deserve hereafter. Howsoever many men there have been, therefore, and whether they be now sinners or will be hereafter, and however many grievous sins each man hath committed or hath yet to commit, so many sorrows hath Christ borne, which sorrows proceeded from His surpassing mercy and compassion. And seeing how that the number of men and their sins and the punishments they must endure or have already endured is infinite, it is manifest that He beareth a most supreme and infinite sorrow for love of us.

Christ did of a certainty love His elect with a deep and ineffable love, continually feeling within Himself, according unto the measure of each one, the offences they had committed or were hereafter to commit, feeling likewise the punishment they should suffer for such offences. Wherefore did He lament for them, taking compassion on them, and all the while bearing their pains with the utmost grief. With such great grief and compassion was the most sweet Jesus afflicted for our sake that He was thereby constrained to bear the torments

of the Cross, a horrible death and infinite suffering, in order that He might offer satisfaction for our offences, that He might redeem us and liberate us from punishment.

Without doubt Christ did likewise endure sorrow for Himself, deeply bewailing Himself because of the dolorous and unspeakable pains which He did clearly behold coming upon Him without fail, and because He beheld Himself sent into the world by the Father unto this end, that in His own person He might bear the grief and pain of all His elect ; nor was it possible for Him to escape the bearing of the aforesaid pain and grievous sorrow. If any person did know of a certainty that exceeding great and unbearable grief and suffering was about to fall upon him and that he would have such suffering without intermission ever before his eyes, without doubt he would feel compassion for himself ; and the greater he expected the suffering to be, and the more clearly he did understand and know it, the greater would be his misery. All this did Christ feel, more deeply than we can describe, but this example hath been given in explanation because of the dulness of the human understanding.

Christ did, moreover, suffer grief for His most merciful Father, the Lord of mercy and of all pity, whom He loved with an infinite love. He saw that God His Father, whom He so greatly loved, was moved to such compassion and mercy for us that He was willing to send His dearly

beloved Son to suffer death for our sake. Christ did suffer for His exceeding great grief, and therefore, in order that the Father's will might be fulfilled, He did humiliate Himself and was obedient even unto the death of the Cross.

Suffering like unto this cannot by any means be explained. Therefore I can only say that the unspeakable suffering which Christ did endure was conceded, permitted, and assigned unto Him by the ineffable wisdom of the Divinity, which divine dispensation, unspeakable and eternal, unspeakably and eternally one with Christ, did ordain that He should endure this supreme suffering. And the more admirable this divine dispensation, the sharper and more intense were Christ's sufferings, wherefore hath there never been any mind so great that it was able to understand these sufferings.

This divine dispensation was the true cause and origin of all suffering, wherein it all beginneth and endeth. And just as it is impossible for any mind to comprehend the infinite charity of Christ (here made manifest), because, by His own death, He hath redeemed us, so is it impossible to comprehend the infinite suffering which He had to endure and for which He did lament. And this suffering did proceed from the ineffable light with which He was filled. It is certain that by this enlightening, Christ, by making Him one with this divine dispensation, and transforming Him with divine illumination in His sufferings, this divinity and ineffable light did inflict upon Him such pain that no words can suffice to describe it.

Christ likewise suffered pain because of His compassion for His most sweet mother, seeing that He loved her above all other creatures. He had been born of her virgin body, and she did bewail her most sweet Son more deeply than did any other creature. Wherefore Christ had compassion upon her when He beheld her weeping and lamenting exceedingly with body and heart and soul. Before all things His mother did bewail the sufferings which Christ endured in Himself and which were ordained by the divine dispensation.

Christ did also suffer because of the Father's anger, seeing that He loved Him (as hath been said) with a surpassing love. For He perceived that in crucifying his Lord and Creator, man had deeply offended God the Father with a greater sin than had ever been before or would be hereafter, the sin of slaying and crucifying the Son of God, and consequently God's anger was greater than ever before, for the which Christ did lament without measure.

Thus moved by grief and compassion, alike for the offended Father and offending man, Christ spake these words, *Pater ignosce illis quia nesciunt quid faciunt*, that is to say, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Perchance the Father would have condemned the whole human race for this deed if Christ, almost forgetting all His other sufferings, had not in His death appeased His Father with this gracious prayer, offered unto Him with tears, and with love. Likewise did He endure

sorrow for His disciples, knowing how they and the women who had followed Him from afar were lamenting with exceeding deep grief, and seeing how that He loved them with a great love, He did grieve that they were scattered apart and in tribulation.

Beside these sufferings Christ did also endure many others.

CHAPTER XV

OF THE MANY AND DIVERS CRUELITIES USED TOWARDS CHRIST

HE who doth well consider the matter will find that Christ Jesus, the Son of God, was pierced and wounded with four kinds of knives and spears.

Firstly, there was the perverse and continuous cruelty inflicted wilfully upon Him by obstinate hearts, for they did diligently seek, meditate, and conspire in what manner they could most dishonourably and with the greatest cruelty drive Him from the earth, He and His name and all those whom He was come to save, and all those who followed Him.

Secondly, there was the wickedness, anger, hatred, and malice borne Him by those who crucified Him. As many, therefore, as were the evil thoughts, perverse intentions, and wicked designs conceived against Him, so

many also were the knives and spears which did pierce the soul of Christ.

Thirdly, there was the malice and falseness of the tongues which spake against Him ; for as many as were the accusations, evil counsels, deridings, mockings, blasphemies, maledictions, false witnesses, and false judgments, even so many pains did His soul endure.

Fourthly, there was the most cruel deed of the Passion, most cruelly inflicted upon Him, the which is manifest unto whosoever doth meditate upon the whole matter thereof. And certain is it, that as often as He was dragged hither and thither, His hair and beard plucked, as often as He was bound, spit at and scourged, even so many were the different sufferings which He did endure. But especially did He suffer from the nails, for they did use nails of the largest kind, rough and square, and therewith did they most cruelly pierce through His hands and feet. And by thus piercing them quite through and utterly laming them, men did most cruelly fasten them upon the Cross. This kind of nail did cause pain worse than any other ; and even had they been simply passed through His hands and feet and not driven into the wood, they would have occasioned the most acute pain. But not content even with spreading out His hands and feet, with stretching His bones and sinews and drawing all the joints of His body asunder, making Him fast unto the hard wood, they did also raise the Cross on high, exposing Him naked in the air and the wind, unto the gaze of all

people. And the weight of His body did thus hang from His hands and rest upon His feet, so that He felt more acutely the hardness of the nails, and the blood flowed unceasingly from the wounds they made.

Thus He died in the greatest suffering, and thus was accomplished all the wickedness of men. And in order that this same Jesus, God and Man, might manifest somewhat of this intense suffering (and not for His own sake, but for us, just as for us He was bearing it, and that we might enter fully into that suffering), He cried aloud, saying, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me." It was not possible that He should be forsaken of God, seeing that He Himself was God, but inasmuch as He cried that He was forsaken He did bear witness unto His manhood.

Thus He showed forth the unspeakable and surpassing pain which He endured for our sake, and without doubt God did share that pain with Christ who bore it. Wherefore for our sake alone did He cry aloud, that He might make it clear unto us that He was bearing that supreme suffering for us and not for Himself, which did provoke and move Him frequently to grieve and lament.

But none must imagine that He only suffered when He was on the Cross ; because the formation and organisation of the body, the infusion into it of the soul and union of the Word, did take place at one and the same time. This union marvellous beyond belief, and this soul full of ineffable wisdom, do in themselves represent all those

things in which we ought to believe as though we beheld them here present ; and therefore, He beheld coming upon Him that pain of unspeakable bitterness, for the which He had been begotten and conceived. And because of this He did constantly lament, and inasmuch as it was laid upon Him by the divine and perfect wisdom, He did bear this great suffering from the time when His soul entered into His body until it departed therefrom. To this do His words testify, for He did often say how that He had to bear the Cross and that He must bear it even unto death. He said, " My soul is sad even unto death," and these things said He not for Himself, but for His disciples and for us, that we might be moved the more perfectly to suffer with His suffering. And this suffering, together with all that had gone before, was more intense and more keen because of the nobility of His soul. For in proportion as His soul was most holy, most tender and most noble, so were the sufferings wherewith He was tormented most keen and most intense.

The injuries, afflictions, and supreme suffering wherewith this most noble soul was tormented were all laid upon Him by the aforesaid supreme and unspeakable divine dispensation. And so deeply did they torment the soul of Christ, that each particular pain in itself did likewise afflict the body. Moreover, because this virgin body was more noble and more delicate than any other body born of woman, the pain was more intense, and it was more deeply afflicted by it.

Christ did feel this pain the more acutely because He Himself was the true God ; wherefore every affliction and injury done unto Him was a boundless offence, inasmuch as it was not done unto man alone, but unto the true God. For this reason had He cause for infinite lamentation, inasmuch as He did endlessly grieve over every wickedness and affliction done unto Him.

Whiles that He was suffering all these things, the Saviour of the world, Christ Jesus, God and Man, did neither threaten nor curse, neither did He defend or vindicate Himself, nor excuse Himself when He was accused. He hid not His face when it was spat upon ; He withdrew not His hands and arms when they were stretched upon the Cross, He sought not to escape death ; but wholly and in all ways did He deliver Himself into the hands and unto the will of men, in order that, because of their iniquity, the work of redemption might be fulfilled, notwithstanding their opposition and ingratitude.

The most wondrous thought of all is, that in this dreadful deed of the Passion committed against the Innocent One, He did furnish an example of patience ; He taught the truth unto those who slew Him, and with cries and tears did pray unto the Father for them, and in return for this greatest of sins (for the which the whole world and human nature deserved to perish), He did bestow upon them the greatest benefits. Thus by the pain and suffering which they inflicted upon Him did

He save us from pain and suffering ; He opened the gates of Paradise unto those who crucified Him and unto all others, reconciling them unto the Father, and such grace did He obtain for us that we are thereby become the Sons of God. This reconciliation was effected through that self-same deed for the which the whole world and every creature was worthy of damnation for His sake, because the creature had been found guilty of committing such a great sin against its creator.

Oh, pity ! Oh, mercy immense ! Oh, incredible benignity which did cause such infinite grace to abound there where only infinite iniquity had hitherto abounded ! Verily, this mystery hath no end, but hath been ordained by that infinite Goodness and Mercy in order that we might have an example of endurance in all tribulations and adversity, and to teach us not only that we should never render back evil unto our enemies, but that for love of Him we should do good unto them. If some patriarch or prophet, or other saint, or even one of the angels, had given us such an example, we should of a certainty ascribe much merit unto it ; but that the infinite wisdom of God should have appeared amongst us incarnate, that the infallible truth (which can neither deceive nor be deceived) should have given us such an ensample of life is a thing to be on no account passed over carelessly, but with all heed and diligence it must be followed with the utmost perfection.

We know, we have heard, and all the day long do we

speak and discourse of how the Son of God did spend His whole life in suffering, and how that He not only patiently bore the tribulations which chanced to fall upon Him, but that, never having committed sin, He did choose it, and of His own will did take it upon Him. Yea, He sought tribulation, and having found it He loved it and submitted Himself unto it, showing His endurance in words and deeds, and preaching that all they were blessed who endured it likewise. Neither did He only with empty words praise and glorify these afflictions of body and soul patiently borne for God's sake, but He did actually bear in His own body and soul that which none other has ever borne. And He saith that through these tribulations He did enter into His kingdom and His glory, affirming that by no other way or means save that of suffering, pain, and tribulation is it possible to attain unto grace eternal.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW THAT WE SHOULD FOLLOW THE INFALLIBLE
GUIDE AND REDEEMER UPON THE STRAIGHT ROAD
WHICH HE HATH SHOWN UNTO US

VERILY, this is the true and straight road pointed out by God, and foolish exceedingly is he who doubteth, or who reckoneth not (seeing how that the Son of God did walk

upon that road), to follow the Lord, his ineffable Guide and Redeemer. Of a certainty He knew how much of good there was in pains and tribulations. For which reason He did assume and choose these woes, fleeing from joy, censuring worldly consolations and declaring them to be hateful. Wherefore doth it not unreasonably appear that before the Son of God did in His own person take these sufferings upon Himself, it did in some ways seem as though there might be found some excuse for those who followed their own wills and fled from tribulation (albeit He had nevertheless through His saints and prophets shown forth the contrary a long time before), but when the Son of God Himself did choose to bear such great adversities, the man would truly be both miserable and mad who doubted or neglected the truth so clearly set forth, and so loudly preached, and of which the Lord Himself hath given an example unto the world. Of a certainty none would doubt, saving he were void of sense and worthy of all damnation.

Of this damnation, therefore, are we wretches worthy. For, being vile sinners, not only do we refuse to take those sufferings upon us as a penance, but we do resist even when God in His supreme mercy and wisdom sendeth them upon us in order thereby to save us and purge us of evil ; we do flee from them and refuse them impatiently, murmuring and lamenting grievously against them, eagerly seeking consolations and remedies whereby we may be relieved from these tribulations. Oh wretched

and truly miserable are we, who not only seek to escape those worldly pains and afflictions which are the remedy and cure for sin, but we do even refuse the assistance of our most wise physician Jesus Christ. If the supreme wisdom of God ordaineth that there should come a little cold, we do immediately draw nigh unto the fire, and do cover ourselves with many garments ; if it chance to be hot or scorching, then we seek the cold ; if our head or our stomach do hurt, we cry and weep and sigh and run unto the physician ; we seek remedies, we lie softly in bed, eat delicate food, and in order that the pains may be relieved, we do weary God and the saints with constant prayers, with promises and vows of fasting, pilgrimages, and atonements. Thus merely that we may be spared those pains and afflictions which are profitable unto us and are sent from God, we do all these and many other things which we would not do for the remission of our sins or the good of our soul. If God doth further permit that for our profit we should suffer adversity or injury at the hands of some man, we are instantly troubled and moved thereat, we grow angry and lament and do judge that person wickedly, speaking evil against him, and if we can, we do take revenge. Fleeing from harm and injury, we do refuse as far as we are able all suffering, affliction, or adversity which the Eternal God, our heavenly Physician, hath sent unto us, and nothing will we endure with patience or resignation.

How many things are done and how much money is

spent in order to avert those pains, afflictions, and adversities which God in His mercy sendeth or permitteth to fall upon us ! It would doubtless be more salutary and meritorious were we to accept and endure these things willingly instead of choosing other penances and afflictions for ourselves. It is better to wait for God and patiently to bear that which He sendeth ; He is the heavenly Physician who sendeth affliction and adversity to purge and teach and make perfect the soul, and He knoweth better than sick and ignorant man. Wherefore are those afflictions and penances which we ourselves seek and choose often, if not always, an excuse for vaingloriousness, but those which man is apparently forced to bear of necessity and against his will are those which are sent by divine dispensation, and those should be borne with great patience and willingness, albeit their heavenly source is hidden from him.

Wherefore do I say and counsel you, oh my children, that ye shall endure cold and ice, heat and scorching, vermin and sweatings, pains in the head or stomach or other parts of the body (saving, however, that which concerns the maintenance thereof), not being curious to seek remedies, save in urgent necessity, for they hinder the good of the soul. I say unto you, moreover, that when God ordereth or permitteth poverty, the death of friends, oppressions, persecutions and shame, beatings and rapine to fall upon us, that we should not bewail ourselves ; but inasmuch as they are given and administered

by the supreme Physician, our Saviour, we should not only bear them with patience, but for His love and our own great good we should accept them very willingly. For if we do gladly and readily accept them of our own free will, it is an act far more meritorious than if we accepted them only to do penance, albeit of our own will.

Oh, wretched that we are, what more can we say? Not only do we seek to escape the pains, afflictions, and adversities, sent unto us by a most wise and merciful God (and like unto what He bore Himself), but we do endeavour day and night to enjoy bodily luxury and softness, diligently seeking worldly consolations and continually begging for vain delights. Verily, this is not the way of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of all. How shall a miserable soul who is ever seeking consolation in the world approach Him who is the way and the example of suffering? Of a truth, the wise soul who desireth to live wisely should regard naught else in this world save suffering; yea, if it did gaze upon Jesus its Beloved and possessed naught save one drop of love, it should seek for no other gain and no other state in this world save His; that is to say, the state of pain, anguish, and tribulation. And this should be its whole consolation, not only in earthly, temporal, and bodily things, but in spiritual things likewise.

CHAPTER XVII

OF HOW PLEASING UNTO GOD IS THE SERVICE OF
THE POOR, WHO SERVE FOR LOVE'S SAKE WITHOUT
LOOKING FOR A REWARD

IN the service of God we should not always be thinking of the spiritual consolations therein to be found. Can it be supposed that when Mary, the mother of Jesus, beheld her beloved Son upon the Cross, crying aloud and dying, that she asked sweetness or consolation of Him in that hour? Assuredly not; she accepted the anguish, bitterness, and pain, and such anguish should be likewise in our souls. It is a sign of little love, yea, of great presumption, if the soul should desire to feel in this world aught of Christ save pain. Wherefore doth God doubtless take greater pleasure in the service of the poor, who serve Him faithfully without reward or benefit whatsoever, than in that of the rich, who every day receive great rewards. And those who serve Him for the sake of reaping spiritual benefits, whose souls are fat and full of spiritual sweetness which they derive from the service of God, who run unto Him and serve Him for love's sake, these have not as great merit as have those who run unto God and serve Him likewise for love's sake, but without any consolation whatsoever, indeed, rather with pain.

Thus, methinketh, doth the divine light which proceedeth from the life of Christ instruct me concerning the

way whereby I may through suffering reach God and be in God, namely, by that way whereon walked Jesus Christ our Head. By that way must go hand and arm and foot and all the other members; and thus through worldly poverty will the soul at last attain unto eternal riches; through scorn and shame will it attain unto supreme honour and glory, and through a little penance (performed with grief and pain) will it come to possess the greatest blessing with the greatest joy and consolation.

Nevertheless, the soul is bound to adore God for Himself. For He is worthy of being infinitely loved and served by all creatures with the utmost reverence, because of His great and surpassing goodness, to whom be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Glory, therefore, unto the omnipotent God, whom it hath pleased to call us into being and create us in His own likeness, we ourselves being nothing. To Him, the all-merciful, be honour, power, and glory, for it hath pleased Him to redeem and exalt us, we who were miserable, wicked, lost, and damned because of the sufferings, pain, contempt, and poverty which His Son did endure.

Glory also unto the most merciful and pitiful God, whose mercy and goodness was so unfailing that He did give His kingdom unto miserable, unworthy sinners, in order that man might without fail attain unto it.

Praise and glory, likewise, unto our most sweet God, who of His pity did give us His kingdom, and make us to

gain the fellowship and enjoyment of Himself through tribulation, pain, contempt, and poverty. If we were able to purchase His kingdom with wealth, with gold, silver, and precious stones, with luxury, knowledge, and power, the kingdom of heaven could not be gained by all, inasmuch as we are not all alike and do not all possess these things. But it hath pleased Him to grant that His kingdom may be gained with things all persons may possess at all times and of which we may easily have an abundance. For there is no person whatsoever who cannot be poor for love of Christ, and who cannot work and do penance at least in his heart, and endure contempt. Certain is it that no man can pass through this life without encountering some of these things, which, if he beareth them patiently and cheerfully for Christ's sake, will make him worthy of the kingdom of God.

Blessed be God, moreover, in that He hath not set the long and heavy endurance of these things as the price wherewith His kingdom may be gained, but only the span of this life ; so that the eternal kingdom may verily be bought with a moment of time. And surely, even though we had to wait thousands of years and long centuries for the love of God and such a kingdom, even though they were years most grievous and bitter, yet should we nevertheless accept them with boundless joy and longing, with hands clasped in deepest gratitude ! How much more, therefore, should we rejoice for that the merciful God hath ordained and permitted that the

aforesaid things need be endured only for the brief space of this our mortal life !

Blessed be God, who by His own word hath promised unto us these gifts and blessings, appearing visibly unto us in His own person to give us assurance thereof, and confirming them by His example. Wherefore there remaineth no manner of doubt that with the brief labours, afflictions, and penances of this short life we may gain His kingdom ; for He hath directly promised it unto us, and what is more, hath confirmed the promise by His own example. He desired tribulation, and not otherwise than through the endurance of supreme suffering and contempt did He wish to obtain possession of that kingdom which was truly His by inheritance.

Come ye, oh my children, hasten unto the Cross of Christ, take upon yourselves this pain, contempt, and poverty, and enter with all your might into the Passion of Christ, who so loved us that for our sakes, oh ye children of God, was He willing to suffer a most bitter and ignominious death ; and He did this only that He might thereby redeem us and furnish unto us an example of how we should bear hard things for love of Him. Doubtless the perfection and the true sign of sonship is to love God and one's neighbour. And inasmuch as this holy Man of Sorrows did so faithfully and purely love us that He had no pity upon Himself, but wholly gave Himself up to suffering for love of us, so doth He desire that His lawful sons should likewise do, according as they are able.

Ye must know then, oh ye children of God, that this Man of Sorrows doth continually bid me help and comfort you. Ye must be faithful unto Him who was faithful unto you, and in faithful love must ye be united with your neighbour, for he who is faithful unto God will also be faithful unto his neighbour. How greatly, purely, and faithfully this holy Man of Sorrows hath loved us hath been made clearly evident by His life, teaching, and death. But because of our unbelief we perceive not that for our sake He was born poor and despised, neither do we reflect earnestly and continuously as we should upon His grievous death, His hard life, and His sweet and most true teaching. And because we do not entirely comprehend these aforesaid divine and salutary things, we are not dead either unto the world or unto sin, albeit He Himself died in poverty, humility, and contempt. Who is there in these days who will repay the sweet faith shown unto us by the Son of God with even a little faith and constancy? Verily, we do thrust these things behind us as though they had never been.

CHAPTER XVIII

AN EXHORTATION TO TAKE COMFORT AND TO FOLLOW
THE EXAMPLE OF PERFECTION SET FORTH BY CHRIST
THE CRUCIFIED

Come ye, oh my blessed children, and gaze on this Cross and on Christ who died upon it for our sins, and weep

with me because our countless iniquities were the cause of so much suffering. And albeit ye have not offended God as deeply as have I (who am all sin), yet weep ye none the less, for it is not ye yourselves who have resisted sin, but the grace of God which hath preserved and defended you through the merits of the Cross of Christ. Therefore, ye saints and innocents, ye should not lament your state less than do I, the sinner. For the greater the grace which hath been vouchsafed unto you, the greater is your debt ; and since ye have not been as thankful as ye should be, ye have in some degree sullied your lives and have lost somewhat of your purity. Wherefore must ye all lament and weep and raise the eyes of your minds unto that Cross ; because in gazing upon the Cross (unto the which the soul cannot attain save by constant prayer, as hath already been said) are we granted full knowledge of our sins, we are overcome with grief and contrition because of them, and are given the light of profound humility. Of a certainty, when in gazing upon the Cross the soul beholdeth all its sins in general and each one in particular, and how for all together and each in particular, Christ was crucified and afflicted, it is overwhelmed with sadness and is thereby moved to punish and reform itself, with all its members and its senses.

Observe, then, ye sons of the blessed God, and behold in Christ crucified the principal example of life, and from Him learn true perfection. Behold the Book of

Life, namely, the life and death of Christ crucified, the Man of Sorrows ; through gazing upon His Passion and Cross the soul attaineth unto the knowledge of its sins, and through profound humility unto knowledge of the heart.

The soul doth likewise behold and know the multitude of its sins, and how grievously it offendeth God in all its members. Also doth it behold above it the manifestation of divine mercy, that is to say, it perceiveth how Christ crucified did endure cruel pain in all the members of His body, because of the sins of each of our members. Thus by means of the Cross it may reflect how greatly and in what manner it hath offended God. Firstly, by the head : man doth wash, comb, and anoint his head, doing also divers other things to render himself pleasing unto men, and then he perceiveth how because of this his sin, Christ hath done penance in His own head and hath borne grievous pains. To make reparation for man's washing, combing, anointing, and twisting of his hair, Christ's most holy head was shorn of its hair, it was pierced by the crown of thorns, beaten with rods and made all bloody with His blood. In like manner the soul beholdeth the other members (as Christ Himself, as though unwittingly, in certain visions and sayings doth almost murmur and lament against us, counting over all the members), and not only doth it behold the multitude of sins committed by each member, but likewise the grievousness thereof.

Verily, when the soul meditateth upon the Cross the infinite grievousness of sin is made plainly manifest ; then doth it comprehend that its guilt could never have been wiped away, its offences forgiven and its punishment remitted if Christ had not done such great penance for its misdeeds, which is a surpassing great matter to think upon. Moreover, the soul will read in this Book (more clearly than in any other book whatsoever) of divine justice and of how impossible it is for sin ever to remain unpunished.

CHAPTER XIX

WHEREIN THE SOUL MAY SEE HOW THAT THE DIVINE
WISDOM HATH USED INFINITE CARE AND DILIGENCE
IN SAVING US THROUGH MERCY, YET NOT OFFENDING
AGAINST JUSTICE

THE soul doth also perceive how God the Father willed that His Son should suffer the pains of death and the torments of the Cross rather than that the sins of the human race should remain unpunished. In this Book doth it see, moreover, how infinite was the goodness and pity of Christ ; He had such great compassion on us that, perceiving that neither we ourselves nor any other creature whatsoever could offer sufficient satisfaction for our sins, He did Himself offer satisfaction for us in order that we might not be left in damnation and torments eternal.

Herein is seen the infinite will of God, and the infinite care and diligence which He used in saving us and bringing us back unto the Father ; unto Him was it no great thing to cause the death of His Son, provided He could with justice give us eternal happiness and His most blessed joy and fellowship. Herein is seen, moreover, His infinite wisdom, how by ineffable and unthinkable means (namely, by that death suffered with infinite mercy), He was able to do good unto all creatures, to save and exalt them, without doing anything whatsoever contrary unto His own justice, or in any wise lessening His divinity. The seducer and murderer of our race had led us away from the straight path, but He, true God and true Man, overcame him upon the Cross and saved us. Even whilst He was held to be dying and helpless, He did quicken all things and destroy death for us all, and through His torments and sufferings He prepared delights, joy, and glory for the whole world, and thereby procured for it glory everlasting. Through the agony of the Cross (which unto men seemed but foolish), He did confound all the wisdom of this world and make manifest the divine wisdom. These, and an infinitude of other things, albeit indescribable, are made manifest by the Cross unto whosoever will intelligently consider them with the help of God's grace.

In this Book the soul further beholdeth the infinite meekness of Christ, who, when He was slain, cursed not nor sought vengeance, but in return for the sin and great

injury committed against Him, did promise eternal glory unto those same sinners who crucified Him.

Upon the Cross doth the soul likewise behold the infinite humility of Christ, than which none can be greater, seeing that He, the King of Glory, suffered so vile and ignominious a death. It beholdeth how the torments of the Cross procured for us liberation and redemption from hell, the gaining of Paradise and reconciliation with the Father. They did likewise furnish us with an example and instruction in virtue and in steadfastness against enemies, and obtained for us the reward of everlasting joy. And in this way alone can we wretched sinners be saved.

Wherefore is it plain that we may read an infinity of things in this blessed Book, because verily it is the Book of Jesus Christ, the infallible Truth, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER XX

OF PRAYER, OF THE WHICH THERE ARE THREE KINDS,
CORPORAL, MENTAL, AND SUPERNATURAL, OUTSIDE OF
WHICH IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO FIND GOD

FORASMUCH, therefore, as the knowledge of God uncreate and of Christ crucified is needful, and seeing that without it we cannot transform our minds in His love, it behoveth us to read diligently in that aforesaid Book of Life, that

is to say, the life and death of Jesus Christ. And whereas this reading, or rather knowledge, cannot possibly be acquired without devout, pure, humble, fervent, attentive, and constant prayer (not with the lips alone, but with the heart and mind and all the strength), something must be said of prayer, as well as of the Book of Life.

It is through prayer and in prayer that we find God. There are divers kinds of prayer, but in these three kinds alone is God to be found. The first is corporal, the second mental, and the third supernatural.

Corporal prayer is that which is always accompanied by the sound of words and by bodily exercises, such as kneeling down, asking pardon, and bowing oneself. This kind do I continually perform; and the reason thereof is, that, desiring to exercise myself in mental prayer, I was sometimes deceived and hindered therefrom by idleness and sleep, and did thus lose time. For this reason do I exercise myself in corporal prayer, and this corporal prayer leadeth me unto the mental. But this must be done very attentively. Therefore when thou sayest the Paternoster, thou must consider well that which thou sayest, and not repeat it in haste in order to say it a certain number of times, as do those vain women who perform good deeds for a reward.

Mental prayer is when the meditation of God filleth the mind so entirely that it thinketh on naught else save on God. But when some other reflection entereth into the mind it asketh not that it should be mental prayer

because that prayer doth hinder the tongue from performing its office and it cannot speak. So completely is the mind filled with God that it can concern itself with naught else, neither think of anything save of God. Hence from this mental prayer proceedeth the supernatural.

Supernatural prayer is that during which the soul is so exalted by this knowledge, or meditation, or fulness of God that it is uplifted above its own nature and understandeth more of God than it otherwise could naturally. And understanding, it knoweth; but that which it knoweth it cannot explain, because all that it perceiveth and feeleth is above its own nature.

In these three degrees of prayer, therefore, man learneth to know God and himself. And knowing Him, he loveth Him, and loving Him he desireth to possess Him; and this is the sign of love, for he who loveth not only a part of himself, but the whole, transformeth himself in the thing beloved.

But because this transformation endureth not for ever, the soul seeketh and examineth all other means whereby it may transform itself in its Beloved, in order that this union may be repeated. Wherefore must it be known that the divine wisdom hath ordered all things and given unto each its appointed place. For this reason hath the ineffable wisdom ordained that no man should attain unto mental prayer who hath not previously exercised himself in corporal prayer, neither doth it permit the super-

natural to be vouchsafed unto any person who hath not first performed both corporal and mental prayer.

This orderly wisdom doth further desire that the prayers set apart for certain hours should be offered at the hours appointed, as is seemly and due. Excepting only if we be so hindered by the great joy of mental or supernatural prayer that the tongue is absolved from performing its office, or if because of grievous infirmity we are not able. In such a case satisfaction may be offered, if possible, in mental quiet, with solitude and bodily solicitude, according as we are able. And God doth further desire that when we pray, we should do so with our whole attention.

CHAPTER XXI

HOW THE HEART MUST BE GIVEN WHOLLY UNTO PRAYER AND NOT UNTO OTHER EXERCISES

WHEN we pray we must keep our whole hearts fixed thereon, for if our hearts be divided we lose the fruit of true prayer. In all other exercises that we perform, such as eating and drinking and other actions, it is not needful that we should be so single-minded, nor that we should perform them with our whole hearts and bodies. But these things do we only perform outwardly, whereas we must give our hearts wholly unto God if we desire to

profit by the fruits of true prayer and not to lose them utterly. The reason wherefore we are tempted during prayer is because our hearts are not wholly given unto God.

Pray, therefore, and pray often, because the more often thou prayest the more wilt thou be enlightened and the more deeply and clearly and nobly wilt thou perceive the supreme Good, and that which is supremely good, and the more deeply and excellently thou perceivest it the more wilt thou love it, and the more thou lovest it the more wilt thou delight in it and be able to comprehend it. Then wilt thou attain unto the fulness of light, and wilt thou know that which heretofore thou couldst not know.

An example of this most glorious prayer and of the doctrine and form thereof, and of how we should earnestly persevere in this same prayer, is given unto us in Jesus Christ, who hath taught us both by words and deeds to pray in divers ways. By words did He teach us when He said unto His disciples, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." And in like manner in many other parts of the Holy Gospel thou wilt find how He instructed us in this venerable act of prayer, the which, as He hath signified unto all, He holdeth most dear. Thus hath He many times admonished us upon this matter, as one who truly loveth us and desireth our good. And no excuse remaineth unto us, for inasmuch as He said, "Ask and ye shall receive," the result of our prayer

doth depend upon ourselves. He desireth also that we should pray unto Him in order that, moved and drawn thereto by His example, we may love this above all other things.

The Gospel saith that when He did pray for a great while the sweat ran down upon the ground like unto drops of blood. Wherefore hold thou this example of prayer ever before thine eyes, and see that thou followest it closely, seeing that He prayed not for Himself, but for thee.

There was also that prayer of supplication when He said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done."

CHAPTER XXII

HOW THAT WE SHOULD SUBMIT OUR WILLS UNTO THE
WILL OF GOD, AND HOW THAT PRAYER IS NECESSARY
FOR THE OBTAINING OF ALL MERCIES

THOU seest, therefore, that when our Saviour Christ prayed, He did submit His will unto that of the Father. Do thou follow His example. Afterwards He prayed again when He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit." But wherefore should I repeat more things, seeing that His whole life was a prayer, inasmuch as He was continually engaged in making known

and manifesting both God and Himself. Shall we say that Christ prayed in vain? Then wherefore art thou neglectful, seeing that nothing is obtained without prayer? Forasmuch as Christ, true God and Man, prayed not for Himself, but that thou mightest have an example of true prayer, it is needful that thou shouldst pray if thou desirest aught. For without prayer canst thou obtain nothing. If He who was actually God would accept nothing without having prayed and asked for it, how darest thou, miserable creature, hope to receive without supplication and prayer?

Now thou knowest well that without the divine light and grace none are saved; through the divine light doth man start out and progress upon the right way. Therefore if thou desirest this divine light thou must pray; and if thou hast begun to make progress and desirest the light to be increased in thee, thou must pray; and if thou hast attained unto the highest perfection and desirest to be yet more enlightened in order that thou mayest remain in that state, thou must pray. Pray, if thou desirest faith; pray if thou desirest hope; pray if thou desirest charity, or poverty, or obedience, or chastity; pray if thou desirest any virtue whatsoever.

The way in which thou must pray is this: thou must read the Book of the Life of Christ Jesus, which life was poverty, suffering, contempt, and true obedience. When thou shalt be fully entered into this life and shalt have profited thereby, thou wilt be afflicted by many tribula-

tions of the world, the flesh, and the devil. In many divers ways will they molest thee and horribly persecute thee, and if thou wilt overcome thou must pray. When thy soul desireth to pray it behoveth thee to be both mentally and bodily clean, and thou must bethink thyself well of all the evil and the good which thou hast done, examining the intention of thy good deeds, thy fastings, prayers, tears, and other things, and reflecting how that thou hast done but little of God's work, and even that little without reverence and faultily, and hast done evil with great diligence. Confess thy sins and acknowledge them readily, repenting of them abundantly. And through this confession of the heart and contrition of the soul thou wilt find cleanliness, and thus wilt thou pray like unto the publican and not like unto the Pharisee, and by prayer thou shalt be enlightened.

All who desire to receive the Holy Spirit must pray; for on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended not upon the disciples save when they were at prayer.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE GREATER THE TEMPTATION, THE GREATER MUST
BE LIKEWISE THE PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER

WATCH and pray, therefore, that thou givest no advantage unto the adversaries who continually surround

thee ; for when thou ceasest to pray, thou givest place unto the enemy. Therefore, the more thou art tempted the more must thou persevere in prayer. Sometimes, however, prayer is the cause of thy being tempted, as when demons do endeavour to hinder it. But take no heed of aught save of prayer, so that thou mayest always be worthy of being freed from temptation. For through prayer art thou enlightened, through prayer art thou set free from temptation, through prayer art thou cleansed, and through prayer art thou united with God. Prayer is nothing else save the manifestation of God and of oneself, and this manifestation is perfect and true humiliation, for humility consisteth in the soul, beholding God and itself as it should. Then is the soul in a state of deep humility, and the deeper the humility the greater is the divine grace which springeth therefrom and increaseth there.

The more the divine grace humbleth the soul, the more quickly doth this same grace increase and spring afresh out of the depths of that humility. And the more the grace increaseth the more deeply doth the soul abase itself in true humility through the continuance of true prayer. Thus do grace and light divine grow ever within the soul, and the soul is ever prostrate in true humility, duly reading and meditating upon this Life of Christ.

Man's perfection consisteth in knowing the greatness of God and his own nothingness. But how he attaineth

unto this through gazing upon that Book of Life hath already been said. Therefore, oh my son, cast away from thee all slothfulness and negligence. I certainly desire thee, oh my son, and do exhort thee, that thou watchest and prayest no less and dost no fewer good works when thou art deprived of the grace and fervour of devotion than in times when thou obtainest that grace of devotion. Verily it is pleasing unto God if, in the fervour of grace, thou dost pray and watch, labour and perform other good works.

In all ways pleasing and acceptable unto God, oh my son, is thy sacrifice when, grace and fervour being withheld from thee, thou dost watch and pray, and do good works no less than when thou didst enjoy grace. Wherefore, my son, if the divine fervour and ardour doth sometimes constrain thee to watch, pray, and offer praise, do it with all thy might whilst the fire burneth within thee.

When it so happeneth that God depriveth thee of warmth and fervour (whether because of thine own fault, as is most often the case, or whether for the augmenting and strengthening of grace in thee), thou must nevertheless watch, pray, and do good works as heretofore. And if temptation or tribulation (whereby the children of God are purged and punished) should fall upon thee and grace and fervour be withheld, do thou endeavour none the less to perform the aforesaid good works and strive that thou mayest overcome. Keep thyself in subjection

by constant prayers, vigils, tears, and importunities, so that God in His mercy will at last give thee back thy warmth and fervour. Do thy part, for God will assuredly do His.

Constant, ready, and insistent prayer is very acceptable unto God. Therefore do thou persevere in prayer, and concern not thyself with other occupations immediately when thou beginnest to feel more than commonly filled with God. And see that thou givest not thyself unto any occupation or thought before thou hast learnt to separate thyself from all others. Take heed likewise unto thy fervours and thy spirit, which rusheth forward eagerly before thou canst follow it. Inquire and see the beginning, middle, and end of the road it would take, and thou shalt follow it only so far as it keepeth unto the way of the Book of Life. And take heed of those who say they have the spirit of liberty, for they do openly oppose the Book of the Life of Christ, the which is written according to the law, He being the founder of the law, who liveth for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER XXIV

OF THE HUMILITY AND EXAMPLE OF CHRIST THE CRUCIFIED

VAIN is all prayer without humility ; for, after prayer, humility is the thing most needful unto man. Behold

then, ye blessed sons of God, the example of humility furnished unto us in Christ crucified, and herein may ye see the form of all perfection. Behold His life and hearken unto His teaching, which was set forth not in words only but in actual works and fortified with marvellous virtues, and therefore endeavour with your whole minds and energy to follow in His steps. He who was in the form of God did abandon His own nature and take the form of a servant, humbling Himself and rendering obedience even unto death upon the Cross. Truly, He doth offer Himself unto us as an example of humility, oftentimes advising us to take heed unto ourselves, saying, "Learn of Me" (*Quia mitis sum et humilis corde*, which is to say, "I am meek and lowly of heart").

Oh my sons, take heed now and see, and with wisdom reflect upon, the depth and profitableness of His teaching, the sublimity and worth of His instruction, whence it springeth and whereon it is founded. "Learn of Me," He saith, "and not of the angels or disciples, but of Me whose humility is all the greater because My majesty is more sublime." He asketh us not to learn fasting of Him, albeit He fasted forty days for an example unto us; neither doth He ask us to reject the world and live in poverty, albeit He lived in poverty and bade His followers do likewise; neither doth He ask us to learn of Him how He made the heavens, or performed miracles, or other similar things. This only saith He, "I am meek and lowly of heart," as though He would say, "If by

word and deed I have not shown you an example of humility, believe Me not."

Yet another time did He set us an example of humility and bid us do likewise and obey Him. For after that He had washed the disciples' feet with His own hands, He said: "Know ye what I have done unto you? If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

The Saviour of the world hath verily shown meekness and lowliness of heart to be the root and foundation of all virtue. Thus, neither abstinence nor the hardship of fasting, nor poverty, nor vileness of raiment, nor outward show of good works, nor the performing of miracles can avail aught without humility of heart. United with that, abstinence would be blessed and right, then would hardship and poorness of raiment be blessed, and living and stable would be the works builded upon this foundation.

This lowliness of heart is mother of all the virtues, whence springeth even the exercising of these virtues, as the trunk and branches spring from the root. So precious is this virtue of humility and so firm its foundation (upon which is built up the whole perfection of the spiritual life), that the Lord did especially desire that we should learn it direct of Him. And inasmuch as it

is the root and the safeguard of all virtues, the Virgin Mary, forgetful of all the other virtues of body and soul which she possessed, did trust only in this one, affirming that God was made man of her expressly because of her lowliness of heart, saying, "For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden, for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

In this humility must ye build your foundations, oh my sons, and in all ways establish yourselves, in order that ye may show yourselves as members joined unto the Head by a natural unity and in Him find true peace, unto the which no soul can attain excepting it be founded in this humility, without which all those virtues whereby we strive after God are as nothing.

CHAPTER XXV

OF HOW GREATLY TRUE HUMILITY QUICKENETH THE
UNDERSTANDING OF THE SOUL IN KNOWING ITS OWN
VILENESS AND THE DIVINE GOODNESS

THIS lowliness of heart which Christ desired that we should learn of Him, oh my beloved, is a certain marvellous and clear light which doth open and quicken the soul in knowing its own vileness and nothingness and the greatness of the divine goodness. The better a man perceiveth all this the more perfect will be his knowledge

of himself. Therefore, perceiving and knowing himself to be nothing and empty of all good, he will more earnestly offer praise and prayer unto the majesty of the divine goodness which he seeth and comprehendeth through this humility, and here is virtue born in him through the grace sent him of God.

The greatest and chief of all virtues is charity, which is love towards God and one's neighbour. And this love springeth from that light ; for when the soul perceiveth itself to be nothing, and God inclined towards such vile nothingness and abasing Himself and uniting Himself thereunto, it doth so violently burn with love for Him that through this burning love it is made one with God. And being thus transformed by love, what creature is there who would not love unto the utmost of his power ?

Verily the soul thus transformed through love of its Creator loveth all creatures created by Him according as is seemly ; for it perceiveth God in all His creatures, and beholdeth how greatly He loveth them. The soul rejoiceth thereat and at the good fortune of its neighbour, and grieveth and lamenteth at his evil fortune ; and being kindly disposed it presumeth not to judge him or despise him when misfortune falleth upon him. For, illumined by the aforesaid light, it beholdeth itself and knoweth itself to be in a plight as bad or even worse than that which hath befallen its neighbour. And if the soul is not fallen, yet it knoweth that it had no power of itself to resist, but that it had been helped by the grace

which upholdeth it and comforteth it against evil and temptation, or even removeth the temptation. Wherefore it judgeth no man, but rather doth it humiliate itself the more ; for, seeing the defects of its neighbour, it looketh unto itself and perceiveth clearly that if it had not been upheld by God it would have fallen into those same evils even more easily than did its neighbour. And beholding the bodily ills suffered by its neighbour, by the strength of its love it feeleth them to be likewise its own and hath compassion on him, as saith the apostle, " Who is there that hath an infirmity and I have it not ? "

What I have said of love which hath its origin in the root of humility, may likewise be said of faith, of hope, and of all the virtues, which, according unto their several natures, are founded upon humility, and of which we will now speak one by one.

Faith is born of humility, for knowing itself to be nothing, and lacking in all divine things, it believeth what is told unto it according unto our faith. Perceiving through its humility, moreover, that it hath no power of itself and is not able by its own power to achieve aught, it putteth its hope in God. It is thus likewise with the other virtues, of the which ye can better think for yourselves, taught by divine obedience, than by seeing them put down in any writing whatsoever.

I say unto you, therefore, that ye must lay firm hold of this virtue and see that it increase within you ; because unto him who is truly rooted in humility is given

angelic conversation, pure, holy, and peaceful. Because, also, this precious virtue of humility rendereth the soul kindly unto all, welcome and loving, and especially unto the elect of God who have to be converted. These are given us for an example and a light, for through their meekness they are the more easily converted. And that man may enjoy inward peace let him not be disturbed by any adversity whatsoever, so that he say truly with the apostle, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" *Quis separabit nos a charitate Christi?*

Oh my sons, cease not from searching until ye shall have found that foundation without which all works fall into ruin and none can make progress upon the way of God. This search is verily important and needful, inasmuch as without humility all other virtues are nothing worth. Hearken unto the desire of the eternal King, Jesus Christ, who hath so ardently prayed you that ye should learn this virtue of Him. Rest upon this foundation and reflect upon your own vileness and nothingness. Hearken unto the wish of the eternal Truth and Wisdom, who concealeth the value of humility from the wise of this world and revealeth it unto babes, preaching it and showing it forth in examples.

My desire after which I do hunger and thirst is that ye should plunge yourselves into the depths of the divine goodness, for if ye trust in the immensity thereof and have a knowledge of yourselves, ye will possess a solid foundation in humility. Then will ye not be so inclined

to strife and contention, but ye will be rather as the deaf who hear not, and as the dumb who open not their mouths, and in consequence thereof ye will be true members of Christ, of whom the apostle saith that they enter not into strife or any contest of the flesh.

Of how many good things is this humility the cause ! Those who are filled with it are calm, quiet, pleasing unto God and abounding in grace, and this are they because of their inward and outward peacefulness. When they hear any hard thing spoken against themselves or against some truth, they seek not to excuse themselves but only answer briefly and with a low voice, even unto those who do falsely accuse them, and they will confess their ignorance and be ready to give way rather than contend.

CHAPTER XXVI

HOW HUMILITY DOTH CAUSE US TO SEE THE MULTI-
TUDE OF OUR SINS AND THAT AN HUMBLE LIFE DOTH
WORK CONTRARY TO THEM

THIS silence proceedeth from naught else save from that twofold overwhelming, namely, by the divine immensity and its own vileness ; and the soul is thus overwhelmed in the aforesaid light of humility.

But, I pray ye, where is this humility ? Where is this vileness ? Where is this light ? Where is this silence,

and by what may we attain unto these aforesaid things ? Of a certainty we may attain unto them by fervent, pure, constant, and earnest prayer and by reading the Book of the Life of Jesus Christ, that is, reflecting upon His life and death. And when the soul reflecteth upon His sufferings, it is given unto it to know the multitude of its sins and how it hath offended God with all its members, and it humbleth itself in consequence, as hath already been said.

Wherefore do I pray you that ye be always of one mind, that there be no divisions or sects amongst you, but that in your souls there be that which maketh all discord to agree under one will ; and this is lowliness. Lowliness regardeth not any sufficiency of knowledge or of common sense, but only inclineth the soul to perceive its faults and wretchedness, to make accusation and judgment against itself in order to convince itself of its own sins that it may endeavour to remedy them. Lowliness doth not hold itself to be superior to any, neither persuadeth any to think themselves superior to others ; it doth not make men important or contentious of speech, albeit its life offendeth all who are opposed unto this simplicity.

Therefore, oh my children, I do desire that your lives, your tongues silent in this lowliness of babes, and the zeal of your discreet compassion should be as a clear mirror unto the adversaries of this life. Oh my beloved, if I should hear it said of you that lowliness had made you to be of one heart and one mind, my soul would be at peace

concerning you ! And of a certainty I perceive not how ye can be pleasing unto God if ye are not thus united.

Forgive my presumption, oh my children, which hath impelled me to urge you unto the virtue of humility, for it is through zeal and because of your love that I have thus spoken.

CHAPTER XXVII

OF CHARITY, AND HOW THAT WE SHOULD FEAR OUR
LOVE IS NOT OF THE TRUE KIND AND DOETH NOT
FULFIL THE CONDITIONS NEEDFUL

CHARITY and the love of God is the greatest of all virtues ; without it prayer is of no account, neither pleasing unto God, and all the other virtues are without profit whatsoever. That ye may believe this is true, hearken unto the Book of the Life of Jesus Christ, which saith, " If thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way and first be reconciled to thy brother." For the gift of prayer is nothing worth if it be not offered in the bonds of charity. Moreover, when in the Lord's prayer we are taught to ask for the remission of our sins, " Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us," it meaneth that our debts will be forgiven us in prayer according as we have forgiven our brothers the injuries and offences they com-

mitted against us, and if we forgive them we shall attain unto the state of charity in unity.

Know ye, my children, that like as love containeth all worth and goodness, so hate containeth all unworthiness, sin, and evil. Wherefore, my dear children, there is nothing in this world, neither man nor devil nor any other thing, which I do fear as greatly as I fear love. For love penetrateth the soul more than any other thing, neither is there anything which doth so fill the mind and the whole heart as doth love ; so that if the soul hath not the arms wherewith to protect itself, it may easily fall into evil and suffer great ruin. I am not speaking here of wrongful love, the which must be eschewed by all and shunned as a thing perilous and diabolical, but I am speaking of good and spiritual love, such as existeth betwixt God and the soul, or betwixt one neighbour and another.

That this is true is plainly proved. For if the love which the soul beareth unto God be not armed with great wisdom and discretion, but moveth with undue fervour, then doth it either presently cease, or it is deceived, or it tendeth unto some unseemly end. For things wherein is no order are neither good nor healthful ; and for this reason are there many persons who believe they are filled with the love of God, whereas they are filled with hatred of Him and do love instead the world, the flesh, and the devil.

When, therefore, any man loveth God because He can

save him from bodily infirmities and tribulations and from temporal perils, he loveth himself and God in a manner unbefitting, placing himself before God, who should be loved before all other things. One man loveth everything for himself and thus maketh a god of himself and his own heart, not loving God save for his own sake. Another loveth all worldly things for himself and for the profit of himself and his body ; he loveth his kindred for his own profit and for the honour which they do him. He loveth men, and saintly and spiritual persons in order that he may cover himself with the mantle of their holiness, albeit He loveth them not for their goodness. Verily, such love is not pure, because the fruit thereof is the delighting of the flesh and the body, with all manner of vice and concupiscence. Others are there who love bodily attainments and talents, and would know how to read and sing for the pleasure of others. They delight, moreover, in great and profound learning, in order that in argument they may overcome learnedly and with much reasoning ; yet not out of charity, but that they may with pride correct others and be exalted in their eyes.

There are also some who believe they love God, and who do love Him, but with a feeble and imperfect love. These love God in order that He may forgive them their trespasses and liberate them from hell and give them the glory of Paradise, and not because of His goodness. Others love God for the sake of having divine consolation and sweetness, spiritual thoughts, and delights. Others

love Him in order that He may love them. Some love their kindred and friends from a desire that they should be spiritual and good, that they may not be ashamed because of them, but may derive profit and honour. Some love God in order that He may give them understanding, knowledge, and intelligence of books, and that they may be able to speak spiritually, yet not for the honour and profit of others, but that they themselves may be more loved and honoured. They love to be spiritual that they may be esteemed spiritual and be beloved of the spiritually minded, but it is for their own spiritual honour and profit that they do this. They love to be poor, patient, obedient, and outwardly humble and virtuous, in order that they may appear more virtuous than other persons, desiring that none may seem better than themselves, or even approach unto their perfection. And inasmuch as they desire to have none equal unto them, they are in this matter like unto Lucifer, who desired that no creature should be equal unto him.

Others there are who desire that their fame should be noised abroad in order that they may be commended as saints alike by good and evil persons. They do praise both those who are spiritual and those who are not, in order that they may not be accused of judging boldly.

Some do love the devout persons who come unto them with a spiritual and perfect love, wholly loving them in God. Nevertheless, this love doth sometimes increase too greatly, and if it be not armed with the weapons of

discretion it turneth unto evil. Sometimes it becometh carnal love and unprofitable ; then is it very hurtful for them to converse together and they do uselessly lose their time, inasmuch as their hearts are united in an unseemly bond. This love increaseth and ever desireth the presence of the beloved, and falleth sick if it hath it not. And if the beloved is there, the love groweth too great and the lover becometh one with the beloved, so that what pleaseth one pleaseth likewise the other, and what displeaseth one displeaseth the other. Therefore, if the soul be not so fortified that it can control the ardour of this love, which ever increaseth and hath not perfect order or discretion, it must needs fall at last into disorder.

And if when this disorder cometh about, the beloved hath not the aforesaid weapons for protection, and is likewise wounded by the sword of love, then is it very much more dangerous, because they do then begin to disclose their secrets one unto the other. Amongst other things, they disclose how greatly they love each other, saying one unto the other, " There is no person in all the world whom I so greatly love, nor whom I do bear so entirely in mine heart." These and many other things do they say, because they must needs speak of that which they feel.

Thus they still desire to love each other for devotion's sake and for the spiritual profit which they believe they do obtain from such love, but they are in peril of being tempted unto unlawful things which might be

occasioned by their love. At first, reason doth dissuade them therefrom, for as yet it hath not been entirely overcome by love ; but love groweth and reason beginneth to be obscured and the spirit is weakened and commenceth to believe that it is no sin and in no wise hurtful unto the soul to touch the thing beloved. Wherefore doth it permit this, and so doth it begin to do wrong and to fall from the state of perfection little by little, as reason is obscured by love. And according as it sinketh it beginneth to esteem as naught those things which are dangerous, and to say, " This may we do, for we mean no evil and it is not a great sin." So gradually these things come to be considered lawful, and, the love increasing more and more, one submitteth entirely unto the will of the other, each doing what the other desireth and not opposing any reason to the contrary. Hence it followeth that the lover obtaineth all his desire, and because of the aforesaid disorder he cannot refuse if he be invited unto evil-doing ; and if he be not invited then doth he invite, knowing that it is pleasing unto the beloved.

Then do they refrain from prayer, from abstinence, from solitude, and from all the other virtues which they did formerly practice, imitating divine love in this most miserable worldly love. And sometimes this love increaseth to such a degree that neither the words nor the presence of the beloved do give the satisfaction they did at first. But loving more ardently, each desireth to know if the beloved be wounded by the sword of love as deeply

as is the lover, and then it is that they fall into peril. Then are they confident and sure one of the other, and because they are satisfied neither with words nor with presence, both lover and beloved are inclined unto all evil.

For this reason do I say that I fear love more than all things, for herein are all evils committed. Wherefore take ye heed thereof, as of a serpent.

Because of evil love, therefore, do I fear good love betwixt one person and another, for good love oft turneth into evil in the aforesaid manner.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SOUL IS UNITED WITH GOD IN THREE SEVERAL
WAYS, WHEREBY IT IS FURNISHED WITH A WEAPON
TO CONTROL THE LOVE OF GOD AND OF ITS
NEIGHBOUR

If the love of God be not directed with discretion and protected by its weapons, it turneth unto evil. The weapons wherewith the good love of God and one's neighbour may be controlled are given unto man in the transformation of the soul.

Now this transformation is a threefold one: sometimes the soul is transformed in the will of God, sometimes with God, and sometimes within God and God within it.

The first transformation is when the soul useth all its endeavour to imitate the life of Christ crucified, for herein is made manifest the will of God Himself.

The second is when the soul is united unto God and loveth God ; not only because it so willeth, but because it hath great knowledge and joy of God, the which, however, it is able to explain and set forth in words.

The third is when the soul is so entirely made one with God and God with it, that it knoweth and enjoyeth with God the most high things, the which cannot possibly be set forth in words, nor imagined save by him who feeleth them.

Therefore, the first doth not control the love of lovers as perfectly as it should (albeit it hath much control), because it can still be deceived. The second, if it be very alert, is sufficient to control love. But the third is supreme in the ruling of love, because this third, together with the second, is perfectly instilled into the soul and is given unto it by grace. And this third and the second (albeit not perfect), do nevertheless produce certain wisdom by means of which the soul is enabled to control both the love of God and of the soul. For the knowledge and the sweetness and the fervour which came of the grace of God do so rule the soul and fill it with this wisdom that love endureth and doth continue as it began, and doth not show itself forth as an example with laughter and dancing or other like gestures.

In like manner doth it behave wisely and soberly in the

love of neighbour or penitent, showing when and how we must condescend unto our neighbour and when not.

It is assuredly in its union with God that the soul doth acquire the aforesaid knowledge with a certain maturity and gravity of wisdom, with fair discretion and enlightenment, so that with these things the soul is enabled so to control the love of God and its neighbour, that it can neither be deceived nor can it fall.

Whosoever doth not feel himself to be filled with this wisdom should never unite himself in cordial and singular love with any person whatsoever, however much he might do it for God's sake, and with good intentions of avoiding those perils which do proceed from such love. Neither should any man ally himself with any one for love's sake, unless he hath first learnt those things whereby he is enabled to separate himself easily from any person whenever he shall choose.

CHAPTER XXIX

OF THE VARIOUS PROPERTIES OF LOVE

IN order to understand how the aforesaid wisdom ruleth the love of God, ye must know that love hath various properties. Firstly, it maketh tender; secondly, it maketh sick; and thirdly, it maketh strong.

When the soul feeleth divine love it crieth aloud and maketh a noise like unto a stone which is placed in a

furnace to be turned into lime. If the stone be touched by the fire it cracketh noisily, but if it be baked it maketh no noise. Thus the soul doth in the beginning seek divine consolation, but when it hath been overwhelmed thereby, it groweth weak and crieth out against God, lamenting and saying, "Lord, why hast Thou sent this weakness upon me?"

Great audacity, however, is born of that assurance which the soul hath of God. It knoweth of a certainty that God loveth it deeply and doth sometimes favour it by giving it marvellous and ineffable consolations; but these must not be demanded with importunity. Nevertheless, if God giveth them they are not to be refused, for they draw the soul nigh unto the beloved, they are its food, they do cure its weariness, and through them is it uplifted and drawn unto seeking, loving, and being united with its beloved.

In this state is the soul contented with consolations, but through the deprivation thereof doth love increase and begin to seek for the beloved. And when it findeth him not it falleth sick and is no more contented with consolations, because it seeketh its beloved alone. And the more consolation, knowledge, and other such things that it hath, the more doth love increase, and the more sick and weary doth it become if it be not in the presence of its beloved.

But when the soul is united and placed in the seat of truth, which truth is the seat of the soul, it crieth no

more, neither doth it murmur against God ; it groweth no more weak, nor falleth sick, but is filled with marvellous wisdom and ripeness and becometh stable and orderly, and is so strengthened that for love of its beloved would it go even unto death, inasmuch as it possesseth in abundance the qualities needful for that union.

And God Himself maketh the soul to grow, in order that it may hold all that which He desireth to put into it. And the soul beholdeth this thing, and perceiveth that all other things are as nothing if they come not from this.

Then the soul esteemeth as nothing all that it had been heretofore in comparison with what it is now ; it regardeth not anything created, it careth neither for death nor infirmity, neither for honour nor disgrace, and so peaceful and full of comfort is it that nothing can rouse it ; it hath lost all desire and it cannot work, for when it seeth the aforesaid visions it can do nothing whatever.

Thus it appeareth that God doeth all things according to His wisdom and in an orderly and seemly manner ; for we fall not sick even when He is absent, and thus do we conform unto His will. Although He be absent we seek Him not, but are satisfied with what He hath ordained and trust wholly in Him.

But when these visions are withdrawn from the soul (because none are allowed in this present life to continue therein), there is given and doth remain unto it a new and ardent desire to perform without trouble the works

of penitence more vigorously than heretofore, and assuredly this state is more sublime than was the other.

And the love now kindled is perfect and causeth the loving soul to imitate its Beloved, Christ crucified, whose sufferings did endure all the time that He lived this mortal life. Thus He began, continued, and ended ; He was ever upon the Cross of poverty, grief, contempt, and obedience, and all the other hard deeds of penitence. Whosoever loveth another perfectly useth all his endeavour to make himself one with that person, following his example and doing those things which please him. Likewise whosoever loveth Jesus, God and Man, will endeavour to transform himself in Him, following His example and doing that which he believeth will please Him, and in his manner of life seeking to be as like unto Him as possible.

CHAPTER XXX

THE MORE PERFECT MAN IS, THE MORE EARNESTLY
DOETH HE ENDEAVOUR TO DO THAT WHICH IS
DESIRED, ORDERED, AND COUNSELLED OF GOD

THE more perfect a man is and the more he loveth God, the more doth he strive to do these things which God did, which He desireth, commandeth, and counselleth should be done, and to avoid those things which displease Him. And he must do this all the days of his life, for

when the Man of Sorrows lived this mortal life He was ever upon a bitter cross of penitence. The length of time, therefore, ordained for penance, is as long as a man shall live. The amount and severity thereof must be according as a man can with discretion perform. And this is unity with the will of God, a unity which He hath ordained should not be only in words, but in doing the works of the Cross and of penitence, such as Christ Himself performed.

When the soul is transformed in God and is in God, and hath that perfect union and fulness of vision, it is quiet and worketh nothing whatsoever. But when it cometh again to itself it striveth to transform itself in the will of God in order that it may behold again that vision wherewith it directeth the love of God and of its neighbour as though with arms. For herein doth the soul behold the Being of God, and how all creatures have their being from that Supreme Being, and it perceiveth that there existeth nothing which doth not derive its being from that same Supreme Being.

From this vision doth the soul, thus instructed, draw marvellous learning, ineffable wisdom, and ripe gravity, and from this vision it draweth likewise the true knowledge of the perfection of all things appertaining unto that Supreme Being; and it cannot doubt it, for it perceiveth how that all things made by Him are well made. Bad are they only when we ourselves destroy what the Supreme Being hath made well.

This vision of the Supreme Being awakeneth a love corresponding unto itself. The Supreme Being inciteth us to love everything which hath its being from Him, all good things and well made things, and teacheth us to love all creatures, rational and irrational, for love of Him ; and everything, whatsoever it may be, which hath its being from Him and which He loveth, doth He incite us also to love. Especially doth He teach us to love those creatures in which we perceive He taketh an especial delight ; for when the soul findeth that Supreme Being yearneth in love towards His creatures, then will it also yearn towards them.

The sign manifest of those who stand in the friendship of the Supreme Being is, that they are true followers of His only Son, that they keep the eyes of their mind ever fixed upon Him, ready to love and follow Him, and in all things to transform themselves in the will of the Beloved, namely, the only begotten Son of the Supreme Being.

CHAPTER XXXI

HOW THAT LOVE CREATED AND EXCITED BY THE
VISION OF THE SUPREME BEING DOTH MAKE US TO
LOVE GOD AND HIS CREATURES ACCORDING UNTO
THEIR CONDITIONS

Thus the love created and excited by the vision of the Supreme Being maketh us to know and love Him, to know

and love His creatures according unto their conditions, and more or less according unto the inclination of the Supreme Being, for in no wise may it overstep the bounds of His will. Yet everything that is love is to be feared unless this love is given unto the soul by the Supreme God ; but when God sendeth the vision of the Supreme Being, together with love due and sufficient unto Him, then is it safe, and even though it have other visions and revelations it doth not change.

Moreover, those who have had this ineffable vision of God are not only able to resist the sword of every unlawful love, but this close thinking upon God sufficeth to cast out the wickedness of every other kind of love.

The aforesaid vision of the Being uncreate doth not only bestow love uncreate, but it leaveth within the soul a love uncreate which preventeth the soul from working, inasmuch as it is wholly absorbed by the vision ; but that which worketh is the love uncreate. It should be supposed that when this vision is given unto the soul, the soul worketh and desireth to be united as closely as possible with the Supreme Being ; but then the love uncreate worketh within the soul and persuadeth it to forsake all creatures that it may be more closely united with itself. Wherefore doth this love uncreate do the works of the other love. The principle of such a love is to illuminate, and to awaken fresh desire. And, verily, the new love is the stronger, and for this the soul worketh nothing. But the love uncreate is the one which worketh

all the good which we perform, whilst the evil which we do cometh of ourselves. All goodness cometh from love uncreate, not from ourselves.

And this is true humility and undoing of ourselves, that we should verily realise that we ourselves can work no good thing; and whosoever feeleth this hath the spirit of truth.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE LOVE OF GOD IS NEVER IDLE, AND PERSUADETH US TO DO PENANCE AS LONG AS LIFE AND AS HARSH; IT TELLETH US TO DO IT AS OFTEN AS IS CONVENIENT, AND DOTHTH PERFORM MANY OTHER PROFITABLE THINGS

THE love of God is never idle, for it constraineth us to follow in the way of the Cross. And the sign of the working of true love is that it suggesteth unto the soul the way of the Cross, and maketh it to do penance long and hard as life itself, the which it must bear as it conveniently can.

This true love hath no smile upon its lips; it behaveth not unseemly in eating and drinking, nor doth it exhibit any vain joyfulness or say, "I am under no law," but it is always subject unto the law; and where there is none, then doth it make one for itself.

When love shall have followed the way of the Cross and shall have done penance unto the utmost of its

power, it will perceive itself to be unprofitable and not working according to the truth ; and it will know God to be all love and itself all hatefulness. Having attained unto such knowledge, it is needful that it do bodily penance ; and whether it be easy or difficult for man to do this, it is all ordained by the love uncreate for the good of the soul. Be ye not troubled, therefore, by the workings of penitence, for it is God who worketh within you. And in order to induce your will to consent to God working within you, your Master is come to do penance for you and to give you an example thereof, for all the days of His life did He live in most bitter penance.

And those who have been exalted unto the vision of the Uncreate and of the Being of God do rest in the Cross and in virtuous works, and with a new and burning love are they inspired, the which doth incite them unto good works. But those in whom is not this spirit of truth do make idols of good works, attributing unto themselves the glory.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE WAY TO FIND THE LOVE OF GOD IS BY CONSTANT, UNTIRING, DEVOUT AND ARDENT PRAYER,
AND THE READING OF THE BOOK OF LIFE

THE way unto this love is by constant, assiduous, devout and ardent prayer, and the reading of the Book of Life, of

which much hath already been said, and whence we obtain that knowledge of God which it is needful for us to have if we would also have His love, as hath already been set forth.

Oh my beloved, take comfort, and see that we love God and wholly transform ourselves in Him ; for this Christ, God uncreate, God incarnate, is all love, and therefore loveth all and desireth to be wholly loved. Wherefore doth He desire that His children should be wholly transformed in Him through love.

I pray you, oh ye spiritual children, chosen through love, ye who live in the grace and charity of the good and perfect God, I pray you transform yourselves with the perfection of love. True is it that we are all sons of God by creation, but His elect spiritual children are they in whom the God of love hath planted His love and in whom He delighteth, because He findeth His own likeness in them, which likeness in the soul of each one of the sons of God is formed there solely through the grace of God and the perfect love divine. And perfect is he who hath already transformed his manners and life in the likeness of the life of Christ, who lived in this world poor and despised and full of suffering.

God, therefore, whose nature is noble, desireth to possess the whole heart of His son and not only a part thereof, and He desireth it immediately, and without companionship or hindrance or anything contrary whatsoever. But He is so merciful unto the soul that if it

giveth Him its whole heart He accepteth it willingly, and if it giveth Him only a part He accepteth also the part, albeit His perfect love longeth naturally for the whole and not only a part.

We know that the bridegroom who loveth his bride cannot endure that she should have any other companion either openly or in secret. In like manner cannot God endure it. But well do I know that if any person were to understand and taste of that divine love of God who was made man and crucified for us and who is the Supreme Good, he would give himself wholly unto Him, he would take himself away not only from other creatures, but also from his own self, and would love this loving God with his whole heart, and transform himself entirely in God, the Supreme Love.

Wherefore, if the soul desireth to attain unto this perfection of perfect love, which giveth itself wholly and doth not serve God for sake of the reward which it hopeth to receive from Him, or because of the future life, but giveth itself unto God and serveth Him for His own sake, who is essentially good in Himself and worthy of being loved for Himself, then the soul must enter by the straight way and must walk thereon with the feet of pure love, upright, fervent, and orderly.

But the first step to be taken by the soul who entereth upon this straight way and desireth to draw nigh unto God is to learn to know God in very truth, and not only outwardly, as though by the colour of the writing (as

hath been already said). For as we know so do we love ; therefore if we know but little and darkly, if we do reflect and meditate upon Him only superficially and fleetingly, we shall in consequence love Him but little, as hath been said afore.

CHAPTER XXXIV

OF THE PROPERTIES OF LOVERS

THERE are three properties peculiar unto lovers of which it is needful to know. Likewise certain signs of love, whereby each may know whether he be a true lover or not.

The first property is to be truly transformed in the will of the Beloved. To me it seemeth that His will is His life, which He showeth forth in His own self ; herein doth He show us poverty, suffering, and contempt, which we must all experience indeed, and when the soul is strengthened and practised in these things neither vice nor temptation can enter into it.

The second property is to be transformed in the properties of the Beloved, of which I will at present mention three only. The first is love ; that is, to love all creatures according as is seemly. The second is to be humble and gentle. The third (which is given by God unto His lawful children) is steadfastness ; for the nearer the soul is unto God, the less doth it change in

its own self. We are ashamed when we are moved by anything vile, and herein know we our great wretchedness.

The third property is to be wholly transformed in God, and then we are beyond all temptation. Then do we no longer live in ourselves, but in Him ; but when we fall back again into our misery we do beware of all creatures and of our own selves.

I pray you, keep control over yourselves and give not yourselves unto any creature, neither lend yourselves unto aught whatsoever ; but give yourselves wholly unto Him who saith, "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thine heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all the strength that thou hast."

Of the Signs of Love.

These are the signs of love.

The first sign of true love is that the lover submitteth his own will unto the will of the beloved.

The second is that he forsaketh all other friendship which might be contrary unto his love. He likewise forsaketh father and mother, brother and sister, and all other affection which is contrary unto the will of the beloved.

The third is, that there is nothing hidden in one which is not revealed unto the other ; and this (according unto my thinking) is the sum and complement of all the other signs and workings of love.

The fourth and last is, that the lover doth strive to make himself like unto the beloved. If the beloved be poor, he striveth to be poor; if the beloved be reputed vile, then he seeketh to be vile also; if the beloved be in grief, he seeketh to be a sharer of that woe, in order that the condition of one may be like unto that of the other.

Of a truth I do hold that true and perfect love cannot exist betwixt rich and poor, honourable and vile, sorrowful and joyous, because these conditions are widely different one from another, and there can be no perfect love betwixt them because one doth not share the condition of the other. Love is a true virtue, which not only maketh things like unto each other but also uniteth them, and it always leadeth the soul unto its like and not unto its opposite.

Of a certainty did Jesus Christ, the Eternal Love, possess all these signs. He submitted His will unto man's will, and even unto death was He obedient unto those who slew Him, albeit He could have overthrown them by only raising His hand. Moreover He forsook all friendship, His kindred and His mother and His own flesh and blood for man's sake, leaving them and going to His death upon the Cross. He did also reveal unto us His secrets, saying, "I have not called you servants," &c. Moreover, He desired to make Himself like unto man, taking upon Himself true humanity and mortality, becoming like unto man in all things, saving only sin.

Therefore ought we also to do all these things for His

sake ; otherwise love goeth halting upon our side, and doth great wrong unto that passionate Lover. Wherefore let us make ourselves like unto Him in all things (in which He made Himself like unto our wretchedness), doing penance in that poverty, contempt, pain, and contrition of heart in which He always lived. Of a truth, if one person alone were to perform all the acts of penance which are performed by all the men in the world, they would not suffice to repay the smallest drop of sweat which Christ shed for us, nor would they be enough to merit the least of the joys of Paradise promised unto us, nor to give satisfaction for the least of the mortal sins by us committed, nor yet to repay God for our creation.

CHAPTER XXXV

HOW THAT EACH PERSON SHOULD DESIRE TO PERFORM
HIS PENANCE AS SECRETLY AS POSSIBLE AND IN A
SEEMLY MANNER

EACH person should endeavour to do his penance as secretly as possible ; and if he cannot do this, then should he desire to do it, and he must do his penance in public and endeavour not to be observed. If we neglected good works for this reason we should seem lukewarm and fearful, and we ought to neglect them in no wise whatsoever. In these matters have we our Master's example,

for He did many things which were never written down nor noised abroad. Moreover, for our sake He did many things in public, nor did He cease from doing good even though He was seen of men.

And although we may find it hard to do penance (which, however, seemeth unto me to be necessary), let us at least make a virtue of necessity and bear patiently and willingly those tribulations which are sent us of God.

There is no doubt that when men are troubled outwardly and inwardly, it is a sign that they are loved of the Beloved. Those things which God the Father loved and chose and gave unto His only dearly beloved Son, doth this only Son choose and give unto His dear children. God the Father chose for His Son poverty, contempt, and suffering, persecutions and afflictions, these things outwardly and inwardly did the Son of God endure—weariness, fear, anxiety, and agony, and other things so innumerable that tongue cannot tell nor heart imagine them.

Let us study, then, how to bear worldly tribulations with patience, yea, even with cheerfulness, because herein lieth the sign that the Beloved delighteth in us and hath chosen us and will give us the pledge of His inheritance.

When ye suffer, think only upon the sufferings of the Man of Sorrows, and all your own griefs will be healed.

CHAPTER XXXVI

OF THREE BENEFITS DERIVED FROM THE MOST
HOLY TRIBULATION

FROM this most holy tribulation proceed three things unknown unto us.

Firstly, it converteth us unto God ; and, being converted, it draweth us more nigh unto Him.

Secondly, it maketh us to grow ; just as good earth, well prepared, putteth forth shoots and beareth fruit when the rain falleth upon it, so doth the soul grow in virtue when tribulation cometh upon it.

Thirdly, it giveth peace, comfort, rest, and calm.

This most holy tribulation is exceeding profitable for us ; wherefore let us not avoid it nor hold it in horror. For of a certainty and with all mine heart say I unto you, that our noblest advocates and truest witnesses, those who will be most readily believed in the presence of God, are precisely these holy and precious tribulations, whose worth we know not ; for with them do we purchase the kingdom of heaven, and the joys of eternity are obtained through poverty, tears, suffering, and persecution.

And I do firmly believe that nothing doth so help towards the leading of a good life as do these tribulations ; wherefore do I feel an holy envy of all who are troubled. It is certain, oh my sons, that if the worth and profit of

tribulation were known, there would be great strife and thieving of trouble, and each would forcibly take away from the other the causes of tribulation, which proceeding would greatly grieve Him who is the light of tribulation. May His true consolation comfort us neath the burden of tribulation, to whom be glory for ever and ever.

CHAPTER XXXVII

HOW THE TRIBULATIONS WHICH LIE IN POVERTY,
CONTEMPT, AND SUFFERING ARE IN MANY WAYS
MOST PROFITABLE

I HOLD that the tribulations which lie in poverty, contempt, and suffering are very profitable for us and meet for our endurance.

The reason thereof is this: it is needful that man should know himself and God. Now the knowledge of God pre-supposeth a knowledge of self, and therefore man must consider and diligently observe Him who is offended and who it is who giveth offence. Through this consideration is granted grace upon grace, light upon light, and vision upon vision, and hereby cometh he unto a more ample knowledge of God. The better he knoweth the more doth he love, the more he loveth the more powerfully doth he work, and this work is the sign and measure of love. For herein is it shown if the love be pure, true, and upright, that is to say, if he loveth and

worketh with due effect and endureth those three things which Christ who loved him did endure and practise all the days of His life.

Therefore, he who loveth Christ must love and practise those things ; for inasmuch as He who was all wisdom did choose them for Himself, He did thereby show them to be meet for us.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

OF THE MOST SWEET GIFTS OF GOD, POVERTY, CONTEMPT,
AND SUFFERING ; AND OF OTHER PERFECTIONS

THESE are the sweet gifts of God, and whosoever doth fully obtain them may know himself to be perfected and consummated in the most sweet God, Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ to be perfected in him through transformation. And the more perfect man is in these things, the more wholly will he be transformed in Jesus Christ.

The first is the love of poverty, whereby the soul putteth away from itself the love of every creature ; for it desireth not the possession of any save of the Lord Jesus Christ, it trusteth not in the help of any creature whatsoever in this life ; and thus doth love of Him not only reign alone in the heart, but is also shown forth in the works.

The second is the desire to be despised, scorned, and hated of every creature, and the wish that every creature

should esteem the soul worthy of disgrace, so that none should have compassion on it. It should desire likewise to be cherished in the heart of none save of God alone, and by Him alone to be held in good repute.

The third is the desire to feel all the sufferings, burdens, and griefs borne by the heart and body of the most sweet Jesus Christ and His tender mother, and that all creatures should inflict upon the soul those same unending woes. And if it feeleth not able to desire these three things, it may know itself to be very far removed from the likeness of Christ. For these three things were with Him in all places, at all times, and in all His deeds, and likewise with His mother, that is to say, they did bear the utmost poverty, suffering, and contempt.

The fourth is that each person should deem himself unworthy of so much good ; that he should know that he could never have these things of his own self ; and the more abundantly he hath them, the more must he deem himself to lack them, for whoso thinketh to possess the thing beloved doth thereby lose the Beloved Himself. Wherefore must we never deem ourselves to have attained unto it, but must ever consider that we are beginning anew, that we have as yet achieved nothing and have obtained none of these things.

The fifth is, that the soul should strive constantly to reflect how these things were always in the Lord Jesus Christ, ever imploring God with fervent prayers that He would clothe its heart anew and give it these companions,

and asking naught else ; that it should find all its joy in this life in the perfect transformation of all these things and strive ever to rise unto the thought of how the heart of the most sweet Jesus was full thereof, yea, running over and infinitely more full than He did show forth in His body.

The sixth is, that it must flee as though from a pestilence from all who hinder it from attaining unto these things, whether it be a carnal or spiritual person, and all the things of this world which it holdeth to be unlike or contrary unto that good thing must it hold in horror and flee from them as from a serpent.

The seventh is, that it pronounce no judgment upon any other creature whatsoever, nor seek to judge others, as saith the Gospel, it must esteem itself more vile than all others (howsoever evil they may be), and unworthy of the grace of God. It must know, moreover, that whosoever striveth to possess these three things in this present life and mortal struggle will possess God in fulness hereafter.

Thus is the soul wholly united with God by transformation. God doth give us of His transformation in this life in order that we may share His humility, poverty, and pain. For the soul should desire no other consolations in this life, not even spiritual ones, save perchance for the healing of its infirmity. But it should desire only the perfect crucifixion of Christ, the Poor, the Suffering, and Despised.

CHAPTER XXXIX

OF THE MANY SIGNS AND EFFECTS OF LOVE WHICH
ARE CAUSED BY THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

I COME now unto the Sacrament of love and grace which is called the Eucharist, and hereof will I say something more than what hath already been said.

This Sacrament hath to arouse devout prayer in us and make that the power thereof worketh for good in us. It doth likewise grant us deep humility of heart and moveth us with the desire for true love and charity. And I doubt not, but am very certain, that no soul who beholdeth and contemplateth this holy Sacrament could not be so insensible unto love that it would not be instantly filled with it, reflecting how greatly it had been loved in this Sacrament.

Verily, it seemeth unto me that this Sacrament, this holy Mystery, must be considered with great diligence by those who desire to celebrate and receive this sacrifice; the soul must not pass hastily over this meditation, but must dwell upon it carefully and earnestly. And albeit the things which may be said of this Sacrament cannot be expounded or set forth, methinketh they can be reduced unto seven points, or meditations, the which should be considered one by one.

Firstly, this holy Mystery is new and above all things

marvellous, and far beyond our understanding. Albeit this Mystery was shown of old, as is set down in the Holy Scriptures, and is ancient as regardeth its form, it is nevertheless new as regardeth the exhibition of the Sacrament whereby the creature receiveth grace and new strength. For well do we know, and by faith do we hold without any doubt, that at the holy words ordained and first spoken by Christ Himself, and which He commanded should be likewise spoken by the priest, His minister, the bread and wine do through infinite divine power substantially become Christ. Therefore doth this substance of bread and wine by transubstantiation become the body of Christ, and Christ, God and Man, entereth by consecration into that Mystery. The colour, taste, virtue, shape, and all the qualities of that same bread and wine do still remain ; yet not in Christ, but through the divine power over their own natures. For the colour is in itself, and the taste and shape and other qualities are all in themselves.

Wherefore, in very truth, this new thing is very great which the divine wisdom worketh of its supreme charity, infinite power, and great goodness, which the Creator doth work in His creatures, and there are, moreover, many other special new things, which the body and blood of Christ work in His friends and His elect. But let no man marvel thereat, nor at other things which are done in the Sacrament, for he must remember the power of Him who doeth them. Neither let him marvel how the

Sacrament can be upon many altars at the same time, upon this side of the sea and upon that, and here and also in other places. For He saith: "Ye understand Me not, and this have I done without you and have worked without you, and unto Me is nothing impossible. I am He who made you what ye are, but now for your own good can ye not understand. If I had desired, I could have made you strong to understand, but this have I done in order that by your faith ye may be deserving; for there would have been no merit therein if ye had seen clearly wherefore it was done. Believe, therefore, and doubt not."

Secondly, this Sacrament is above all things gracious and kindleth love. For that which moveth Him who ordained this most holy Sacrament was the greatest of all things, and not less was the profit which should proceed therefrom. I know not what name I should give it, save that of immeasurable love, because of His boundless love did He institute this Sacrament.

Because of His great love towards us did He enter into the Sacrament and will abide therein until the end of the world. This He did not only in memory of His death, which is our salvation, but that He might ever and always remain nigh unto us. And whosoever will enter into this deep Mystery must needs have good eyes. Christ knew at His last supper that He must presently depart bodily; wherefore, overcome by the love which always uniteth the lover and the beloved, He did institute this Sacra-

ment in order that He might always be bodily united with us.

Oh, burning and unquenchable love ! Such was and is the love which He bare unto us ! For albeit He had death before His eyes and foresaw most horrible suffering, yet nevertheless He gave Himself for those same sinners who persecuted Him, in order that He might be with us at least in this Sacrament, the joy whereof lieth in being united with the Son of Man.

What soul is there so cruel, who, profoundly and earnestly reflecting on that love, would not feel moved to return the love of such a Lover, who never forgot us either in life or in death, but did wholly give Himself that He might be ever united with us in love. Verily there is no soul, who, thinking well upon this, would not be wholly transformed in love.

Thirdly, this Sacrament is above all things compassionate and induceth unto compassion and suffering, because He endured mortal and unspeakable suffering.

When Christ ordained this most holy Sacrament He was on the point of separation from His beloved disciples and from the Virgin, His most dear mother. He knew and saw before Him all those whom He must forsake ; He saw the traitor and that other who denied Him, unto whom He gave His body and His whole self ; He knew that most bitter sufferings were about to fall upon Him, during the which He Himself would be forsaken ; He foresaw the dreadful death, the scourgings, the ill-

treatment, the Cross, the hard nails and the other things then being prepared for Him. For this reason, when praying after supper, He did sweat drops of blood, and not only a little, but so that it ran down upon the ground. Nevertheless, He refrained not from instituting this Sacrament and giving Himself unto us.

This Sacrament is, therefore, most proper as a memorial of His grievous and bitter Passion and the shedding of His blood for us miserable sinners. Wherefore did Christ say, "As often as ye shall do this, ye do it in remembrance of Me." And what soul is there who could behold these sufferings and not itself be transformed in suffering? Of a certainty not one, saving only he who remembereth not the cruel sufferings of Christ's heart.

Fourthly, this Sacrament is above all things worthy and venerable, to be regarded with the utmost reverence and humility, because He who ordained this sacrifice was Jesus Christ, God supreme and uncreate.

The soul who considereth this sacrifice hath not only to consider Him who ordained it, but likewise that which is contained in that Sacrament. For herein is contained God uncreate, invisible, and omnipotent, He who doeth all things, who is most merciful and just, Creator of the heavens and the earth, of all things visible and invisible; and this is the chief thing upon which we need here reflect.

There is also a lesser thing joined together with this

great thing : for herein is found God made Man, which is to say, divinity and humanity united in one person. So that sometimes in this present life the soul receiveth greater delight from this lesser thing than from the greater, inasmuch as it is better able to receive and understand the lesser thing which it beholdeth in God incarnate. For the soul is a creature, which liveth by its flesh and all the members of its body, wherefore doth it in this life delight in God uncreate, whom it beholdeth in human form, and Christ the Creator and the creature, Deity and soul, with the flesh and blood and all the members of His most holy body.

Of a certainty the soul here beholdeth the union of many things herein contained, and from the lesser—that is to say, from the humanity—is it led unto the divinity, and in like manner from the divinity unto the humanity. For which reason doth the soul who well considereth it behold here the ineffable divinity, in which are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and incorruptible riches. In that divinity it beholdeth likewise the only joys which do satisfy our minds, and many other things unspeakable doth it find.

Moreover, it beholdeth here the most Precious Soul and the holy, immaculate oblation, with all the virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit. It beholdeth here the most precious body of our Redeemer, the blood with which we were saved and given new life, together with other unspeakable things, which should all excite in us

the utmost reverence. For here verily is He whom all the dominions of heaven adore, whom all the celestial spirits do fear, and before whom the strongest powers of the heavens do tremble. If we did but behold Him as they do, with what reverence and humility should we look upon and receive that Sacrament! What soul is there so proud, who, when it considereth the aforesaid things, doth not humble itself in heart and body in the presence of that Sacrament!

Fifthly, this Sacrament is above all things profitable, and above all things high and spiritual, and it upraiseth us unto heavenly things.

This Sacrament was ordained by the most holy Trinity in order that It might bind unto Itself that which It most greatly loved, that It might draw the soul unto Itself, unto God, and away from all created things joining it together with God uncreate; and thus did It bestow upon the soul spiritual and divine love and mortify and purify it from its sins. It was ordained by the most holy Trinity in order that It might unite and incorporate Itself with us and us with It, and It desireth that we should receive the Sacrament in order that He may receive us; It desireth that we should bear it in order that He may bear us, fortify us, and comfort us.

What soul is there so wretched, therefore, who, if it well considereth the matter, will refuse to let itself be drawn nigh unto such a Lord, seeing how that such clear-

ness of vision hath been sent from heaven to draw it away from earthly things ?

Sixthly, this Sacrament is above all things profitable, and giveth us all good things and all grace.

Verily, God uncreate doth not come unto us spontaneously in this Sacrament, with so great a perfection of Deity and humanity ; but of a certainty He is there to be received by the soul if only it hath been tried and hath no desire to sin. Hereby He granteth remission of sins, strength against temptation, it restraineth our opposers, augmenteth grace, and heapeth up merit ; wherefore should it be received often and with great reverence. Concerning the words of Saint Augustine wherein he saith, " I do neither praise nor blame the custom of receiving it every day," I say that Saint Augustine was a most wise and holy man who saw how good and evil were mingled together in the Church of God ; and in order that he might not hinder the good, he blamed not this practice, and in order that he might not thereby give security unto the evil, he praised it not.

Many other gifts and benefits innumerable are conferred upon us if we receive this Sacrament worthily ; it cannot be declared how much grace the soul obtaineth in one single worthy reception, provided only that its misdeeds cause no hindrance.

Seventhly, this Sacrament is above all things to be extolled, and is supremely worthy of all grace and praise.

All that is good, all that is holy, all that is beautiful is

found in this Sacrament. For this reason is it the Supreme Good uncreate, which is the Divinity, and it is the supreme good created, which is the humanity of Christ Jesus. Therefore should we oftentimes praise it, because the holy angels cease not to extol it, saying, "Holy, holy, holy." And not only the holy angels, but all the saints and the blessed do see and hear and stand ever before it, and within it. Of a certainty they do stand within this sacrifice, in God the infinite Good ; for these blessed ones are here ever in the presence of God uncreate, the Supreme Good, and of God made Man, who is found in this most admirable Sacrament.

And in this Mystery do they receive new sweetness and joy, and offer new praise and thanksgiving. And I do think this is because of the union and understanding which they have ; for inasmuch as they do communicate with the Head and the members, that is, with Jesus Christ, with God the Head, and His faithful, they do see and hear and understand that Christ rejoiceth greatly in this most high Mystery, herein manifesting and showing forth His goodness, and herein taketh He singular pleasure, for and in the good of His followers and friends, with whom He is joined together by means of this sacrifice. For this reason also do the saints and angels rejoice with Christ in this Mystery, with new joy and praise and thanksgiving. For that which pleaseth Christ pleaseth these likewise. Christ rejoiceth also to be in this Sacrament with men, yea, He delighteth to be with the sons

of men. And all the blessed of the church triumphant do rejoyce because of the good and the profit which the holy souls in the church militant do receive through this Sacrament. Wherefore should the whole church rejoyce and praise God for such great blessings and benefits, giving Him great thanks and honour.

Therefore, whosoever meaneth to come unto this most holy Sacrament must consider to whom he cometh, how he cometh, and for what reason. For he cometh unto a certain good thing, which is itself all good and the cause of all good, the giver, maker, and possessor of all good ; yet it is itself the only good, without which there can be none other. This good thing sufficeth and filleth everything, satisfying all the saints and holy spirits, all those who are justified by grace, and all the souls and bodies of the blessed who reign in everlasting glory. Man cometh to receive this good thing, which is God made Man, in whom are all, and who is above all beings. Oh, Good Supreme, unconsidered, unknown, unloved, but found by those who with their whole hearts entirely do desire thee !

If man, therefore, doth only consider and regard the morsel which he eateth with his body, if he beholdeth it not with his soul, and doth not meditate and reflect before he receiveth this great good, which is eternal and infinite, if he receiveth it unworthily, then it bringeth eternal death unto both soul and body. But if he receiveth it worthily, it overcometh death and gaineth life blessed

and eternal, and without he receiveth this he hath no life. Christ saith, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you."

We should, therefore, approach that table and that great and good thing with the utmost reverence, fear, and trembling, but above all, with exceeding great love. And the soul should approach unto this Sacrament humbly, exalted, and adorned, for it goeth unto that which is the height of all beauty and perfect glory, supreme holiness, happiness, blessedness, exaltedness, and nobility, all sweetness and all love, and which hath the sweetness of love without end.

Thus should the soul go to receive the Sacrament, in order that it may itself be received. It should be pure, that it may be purified ; alive, that it may be quickened ; just, that it may be justified ; ready, that it may be incorporated with God uncreate who was made man, and that it may be one with Him unto all eternity. Amen.

TREATISE III

OF THE MANY VISIONS AND CONSOLATIONS RECEIVED BY THE BLESSED ANGELA OF FOLIGNO

FIRST VISION AND CONSOLATION, WHEREIN SHE BEHELD
GOD INASMUCH AS HE IS ALL GOODNESS ; WHENCE
COMETH HATRED OF THIS LIFE AND THE DESIRE TO
ENJOY GOD

BLESSED God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, who comforteth us in all our tribulations, Thou hast verily deigned to console me, a sinner, in every tribulation. For during the time of my conversion, already related in the eighteenth step, and after the enlightenment miraculously granted unto me as I was repeating the Paternoster, I did feel great consolation and sweetness in this manner.

I was inspired and drawn unto the contemplation of the blessed union of the divinity and humanity of Christ, and in this contemplation did I feel an exceeding great delight, the which was greater than any I had ever felt heretofore. For this reason did I remain for a great part of that day standing in the cell where I was praying,

astonished, locked in and alone. My heart was all wrapped up in that joy and I became as one dumb and did lose my speech. Wherefore did it happen that when my companion came she believed that I was about to die ; but she did only weary me and was an hindrance unto me.

Once, before that I had finished giving all I possessed unto the poor (albeit but little then remained for me to give), when I was persevering in these matters, it chanced that one evening when I was at prayer methought I did feel nothing whatsoever of God. Wherefore I lamented and prayed unto God, saying :

“ Lord, that which I do, I do only that I may find Thee ; wherefore, having done it, do Thou grant me the grace that I may find Thee.”

And many other similar things did I say in my prayer, and this answer was vouchsafed unto me, “ What desirest thou ? ”

Then I said : “ I desire neither gold nor silver ; yea, if Thou wouldst give me the whole world I would not accept it, seeing that I desire Thee only.”

Then did He say unto me, “ Strive diligently and make thyself ready, for when thou hast accomplished that which thou art now doing, the whole Trinity will descend unto thee.”

Many other things were also promised unto me, which did ease me of my tribulation and fill me with divine sweetness. And from that hour I did await that the thing which had been told me should be immediately fulfilled.

And I related this unto my companion with some doubtfulness, seeing that great things had been told and promised unto me; nevertheless they had left me with that divine sweetness and gentleness.

After this I went unto the church of Saint Francis, near unto Assisi, and the promise was fulfilled by the way as I went thither. Nevertheless, I had not yet finished giving all things unto the poor, but there was little yet remaining. This had happened because of the death of a noble and holy man, to whom this matter had been entrusted and who had not been able to accomplish it. He had been converted by God's grace through our admonitions, and was about to deprive himself of all he had and give his possessions unto the poor. But he died upon the way. Nevertheless, God did perform many miracles by means of him, and his tomb is held in reverence.

As I went unto Saint Francis, therefore, I prayed by the way. And amongst other prayers, I did ask the Blessed Francis that he would implore God for me, that I might serve well his Order, unto which I had but lately renewed my promises, and that he would obtain for me the grace that I might feel somewhat of Christ, but above all, that He would make me become poor and end my days in poverty. For this cause (namely, to have the liberty of poverty) had I journeyed unto Rome, to pray the Blessed Peter that he would obtain for me the grace of true poverty. And thus, through the

merits of the Blessed Peter and the Blessed Francis the gift of true poverty was vouchsafed unto me by divine mercy, even as I was asking for them in prayer as I walked by the way.

Now when I was come to that place which lieth between Spello and the narrow road which leadeth upward unto Assisi, and is beyond Spello, it was said unto me :

“Thou hast prayed unto My servant Francis, and I have not willed to send thee another messenger. I am the Holy Spirit, who am come unto thee to bring thee such consolation as thou hast never before tasted. And I will go with thee even unto Saint Francis ; I shall be within thee and but few of those who are with thee will perceive it. I will bear thee company and will speak with thee all the way ; I will make no end to my speaking and thou wilt not be able to attend unto any save unto Me, for I have bound thee and will not depart from thee until thou comest for the second time unto Saint Francis. Then will I depart from thee in so far as this present consolation is concerned, but in no other manner will I ever leave thee, and thou shalt love Me.”

Then began He to speak the following words unto me, which did persuade me to love after this manner :

“My daughter who art sweet unto Me, my daughter who art My temple ; My beloved daughter, do thou love Me, for I do greatly love thee and much more than thou lovest Me.” And very often did He say unto me : “Bride and daughter, sweet art thou unto Me, I love thee better

than any other who is in the valley of Spoleto. Forasmuch as I have rested and reposed in thee, do thou also rest thyself and repose in Me. I have been with the apostles, who did behold Me with their bodily eyes, but they did not feel Me as thou feelest Me. When thou shalt be come unto thine house thou shalt feel another sweetness, such as thou hast never yet experienced. I shall not speak unto thee as I now speak, but thou wilt only feel Me. Thou hast prayed unto My servant Francis, hoping with him and through him to obtain the things thou desirest, seeing that as my servant Francis hath greatly loved Me, I have done many things for him. If there were to-day any person who loved Me more, much more would I do for him."

Then said He unto me that there are few good persons in these days and but little faith, for which cause He did lament, saying, "So great is the love of the soul who loveth Me without sin, that, if there were any one who loved Me perfectly, I would show him greater mercy than I have ever shown hitherto, and Thou knowest that many great things are recorded which I have done unto divers persons in times past."

None can excuse themselves for not having this love, because it is possible for all persons to love God, and He asketh nothing save that the soul shall love and seek Him. He is the love of the soul. But these are deep sayings.

That God is the love of the soul did He set forth unto me with lively proof, by His advent and His Cross borne

for us, albeit He was so great and glorious. And He did expound unto me His Passion and the other things which He did for our sake ; then He did add, " Behold now, if there be aught in Me save love." He did grieve for that in these times He could find no person upon whom He could pour out His grace, and He did repeat that He would show far greater mercy unto whosoever should love Him at this present time than He had shown unto the saints and the blessed ones hitherto.

Then did He begin again to say unto me, " My beloved daughter who is sweet unto Me, love thou Me, for I do love thee more than thou lovest Me. Love Me, My beloved, for boundless is the love which I bear unto the soul who loveth Me without any sin." Methought He did desire to be loved with that same love which He bore unto the soul, according unto the power and virtue of the soul, and that if only the soul itself would desire this, He would bring it to pass.

Again He said unto me, " My beloved and My bride, love thou Me ! All thy life, thy eating and drinking and sleeping and all that thou dost is pleasing unto Me, if only thou lovest Me." And He said, " I will do great things through thee in the sight of all people ; thou shalt be known and glorified, so that many shall praise My name in thee."

These and other similar things did He say unto me. Then, when I heard these words I did count over my sins and consider my faults, and how that I was not

worthy of such great love. And I did begin to cast doubt upon these words, wherefore my soul said unto Him who had spoken unto it: "If Thou wert truly the Holy Spirit Thou wouldst not speak thus unto me, for it is neither right nor seemly, seeing how that I am weak and frail and might grow vainglorious thereat."

He answered me, "Reflect and see if thou couldst be vainglorious because of all these things for the which thou art now grown proud; and see if thou couldst not perceive the folly of thy words by thinking of other things."

So then did I endeavour to grow vainglorious, that I might prove if what He had said were true; and I began to gaze at the vineyards, that I might learn the folly of my words. And wheresoever I looked He said unto me, "Behold and see, this is My creation," and thereat did I feel the most ineffable sweetness.

In the meantime I had remembered all my sins, and on my side I beheld nothing save sins and wrong-doing, so that I did feel greater humility than I had ever felt before. Then did He tell me that I was beloved, that the Son of God and of the Virgin Mary had inclined Himself unto me and was come to speak with me. Wherefore Christ said unto me:—

"If all the world came now unto thee, thou couldst not speak with others; for when I come unto thee, there cometh more than all the world." But in order to calm my doubts He said: "I am He who was crucified for

thee, and for thy sake did I endure hunger and thirst, and so greatly have I loved thee that I did shed My blood for thee," and He expounded unto me all His Passion and said: "Ask mercy for thyself and for thy companions and for all whom thou wilt, for I am much more ready to give than thou art to receive."

Then did my soul cry aloud, saying, "I will not ask, for I am not worthy and I remember all my sins!" And it said further, "If Thou who hast spoken with me from the beginning wert truly the Holy Spirit, Thou wouldst not have told me such great things; and if Thou wert verily within me, then my joy would be so great that I could not bear it and live."

Then did He make answer: "Nothing can exist, nothing can be done save according unto My will. At present I will only give thee joy in the measure in which thou hast it. Unto another have I given less joy than this, and he fell upon the ground, neither hearing nor seeing. Yet will I give thee this sign, that thou mayest know who I am: go now and endeavour to speak with thy companions and think of any thing that thou wilt, either good or evil, and thou wilt see that thou canst not think of aught else save of God. For I am He who alone can bind the thoughts. And all these things do I unto thee, not because of thy merits, but of My goodness."

Whilst He was speaking, all the evils I had committed returned into my memory more clearly than before, wherefore did I more than ever deem myself worthy of

hell. Afterwards He said unto me that if I had come in the company of other persons, not such as those with whom I was come, the aforesaid things would not have been done or said unto me. These persons did perceive somewhat of my languor, for at each word did I receive great sweetness ; I had no desire to reach the city or that the road should ever come to an end. I can never describe the joy and sweetness which I felt, especially when He said, " I am the Holy Spirit who am entering into thee ; " but briefly, great was the sweetness which I received at each one of His sayings.

In this manner, therefore, I did arrive at Saint Francis', as He had foretold. And He departed not from me, but remained with me, even when I sat down to meat, until I went unto Saint Francis' for the second time.

When I did bend my knees upon entering in at the door of the church, I immediately beheld a picture of Saint Francis lying in Christ's bosom. Then said Christ unto me :—

" Thus closely will I hold thee, and so much closer that bodily eyes can neither perceive nor comprehend it. But now, My beloved daughter and temple of My delight, the hour is come when I must fill thee with My spirit and must leave thee. I have told thee that because of this consolation I must leave thee ; nevertheless, if thou lovest Me, I will not leave thee."

Albeit the words were bitter, yet were they full of joy. Then looked I, that I might behold with the eyes of

both body and mind. And I beheld; and if thou seekest to know what I beheld, truly I can only say that it was a thing full of great majesty; and more than this can I not say, save that it seemed unto me to be full of all goodness. Then He departed with great gentleness; not suddenly, but slowly and gradually. Of the words which He spake unto me, the greatest are these:—

“Oh my daughter, who art sweeter unto Me than I am unto thee, temple of My delight, thou dost possess the ring of My love and art promised unto Me, so that henceforth thou shalt never leave Me. The blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be upon thee and thine understanding.”

Then cried my soul, “If only Thou wilt not leave me, I will commit no mortal sin!”

And He answered me, “That say I not unto thee.” Then as He was departing, I did ask a blessing for my companion, and He replied, “Unto her will I give another blessing,” and so He departed. And at His departure He would not that I should prostrate myself before Him, but that I should stand upon my feet. But after that He was gone I fell down upon a seat and began to cry with a loud voice, clamouring and calling without any shame and uttering these words, “Oh Love, heretofore have I never known Thee, why leavest Thou me in this manner?” And more than this I could not say, for my voice was so suffocated with crying that scarce could

I pronounce even this, wherefore was it not heard by the persons around me.

This clamouring and crying did come upon me as I entered into the door of the church of Saint Francis. Here was I overwhelmed again and began to make a noise and call aloud in the presence of all the people, that those who were come with me and did know me did stand afar off and were ashamed, believing that I did it for another reason. So was I left with the certainty that it was God who had spoken with me ; and because of His sweetness and the grief of His departure did I cry aloud, desiring to die. And seeing that I did not die, the grief of being separated from Him was so great that all the joints of my limbs did fall asunder.

After these things I departed from Assisi, and with great comfort did I go upon my way, speaking of God. And with much difficulty did I hold my peace ; nevertheless I strove to abstain from talking, because of the company.

Then said Christ unto me, " I will give thee a sign by the which thou mayest know that I am Christ who have talked with thee. This sign is the Cross and love of God which I do place within thee and which shall be with thee for ever." And immediately I felt the Cross and the love of God within my soul and spreading throughout my body, so that I did actually feel it corporally ; and feeling it, my soul was dissolved in God's love.

When I was returned I stayed within the house, and I

felt a sweetness so peaceful, quiet, and great that I know not how to describe it. Wherefore did I long for death, and because of the aforesaid peace and sweet joyfulness was life a greater grief unto me than I can say. I longed for death that I might attain unto that delight of the which I now felt something, and because of this did I wish to depart from this world. Life was a greater grief unto me than had been the deaths of my mother and my children, more heavy than any other grief of which I can bethink me.

Thus did I remain eight days within the house, all feeble. And I cried, "Lord, have mercy upon me and grant that I may remain no longer in this world." From this time forth I was often aware of indescribable odours ; but these and other things can I not explain, so great was the sweetness and joy which I did feel in them. The voice spake unto me many other times, but never at any great length, nor with so much sweetness or deep meaning.

Being returned, therefore, from Assisi, as I have said, and lying in mine house, my companion (who was of marvellous simplicity, purity, and virginity) heard a voice saying, "The Holy Spirit is in the cell." Then she came unto me and began to seek round, asking of me, "Tell me what aileth thee, for three times have I been bidden to come unto thee." And I answered, "I am glad of that which hath been bidden thee." And from that time forth I related unto my companion many of these secret things.

SECOND VISION, WHEREIN SHE BEHELD GOD INASMUCH
AS HE IS BEAUTY, WHEREFORE ALL CREATED BEAUTY
SEEMED DEFORMED AND HIDEOUS UNTO HER

UPON a certain time when I was at prayer and my spirit was exalted, God spake unto me many gracious words full of love.

And when I looked, I beheld God who spake with me. But if thou seekest to know that which I beheld, I can tell thee nothing, save that I beheld a fulness and a clearness, and felt them within me so abundantly that I can in no wise describe it, nor give any likeness thereof. For what I beheld was not corporal, but as though it were in heaven. Thus I beheld a beauty so great that I can say naught concerning it, save that I saw the Supreme Beauty which containeth within Itself all goodness. And all the saints were standing before this beauteous Majesty, praising it.

Methought, however, that I stayed in this trance but a very brief while; then said God unto me, "My beloved daughter, dear unto Me, all the saints of Paradise do bear an especial love toward thee, and likewise doth My mother, and they will bring thee unto Me." And albeit these words were spoken unto me, all concerning His mother and the saints seemed unto me but a small thing. For so great was my joy in Him that I took no heed of looking at the angels and the saints, because all

their goodness and all their beauty was from Him and in Him ; He was the whole and Supreme Good, with all beauty, and so great a joy had I in His words that I paid no heed to any creature.

Again He said unto me, " Infinite is the love which I bear thee, but I do not reveal it unto thee—yea, I do even conceal it."

Then answered my soul, " Wherefore hast Thou such love and joy in me, who am hateful, inasmuch as I have offended Thee all the days of my life ? "

To this did He make answer, " So great is the love I bear thee that I no more remember thy sins, albeit Mine eyes do see them ; for in thee have I much treasure."

Then did my soul feel an assurance so true that it doubted no more. It felt and saw that the eyes of God were searching within it, and it had such joy in those eyes that neither man nor saint come down from heaven could declare it. When He told me that He concealed much love, because I was not able to bear it, my soul answered : " If Thou art God omnipotent, make Thou me able to bear it."

Then He made answer finally and said : " If I were to do as thou askest, thou wouldst have here all that thou desirest, and wouldst no longer hunger after Me. For this reason will I not grant thy request, for I desire that in this world thou shouldst hunger and long after Me and shouldst ever be eager to find Me."

THIRD VISION, WHEREIN SHE BEHELD GOD INASMUCH AS HE IS INVINCIBLE OMNIPOTENCE IN ALL THINGS, WHICH GAVE UNTO HER THE GRACE TO BE OF BENEFIT BOTH TO THE PRESENT AND TO THE FUTURE GENERATIONS. MOREOVER, SHE BEHELD LIKEWISE THE DEEP HUMILITY OF GOD

UPON a certain occasion it was told me, saying, "I who speak with thee am the divine Power, who bring unto thee divine grace. The grace is this: I desire that thou shouldst be of benefit unto all men who shall behold thee; and not only unto these, but likewise unto all who shall think of thee and remember thee and hear thee spoken of. Nevertheless, thou wilt be of the greatest benefit unto those into whom I have most fully entered."

Then, albeit the soul rejoiced greatly, it said, "I desire not this grace, for I fear that it would be hurtful unto me and make me to be vainglorious."

But the Lord answered, "With this hast thou naught to do, for it concerneth thee not and thou hast only the care thereof. See that thou servest it well and renderest it again unto Him to whom it belongeth."

Then my soul saw and understood that in this way it could be neither perturbed nor hurt. And the Lord said also unto me, "Much am I pleased by thy great fear."

After this I went into the church, and there did the Lord speak most sweetly and graciously unto me, whereat all my mind did greatly rejoice and take comfort. He

said, "My beloved daughter," and many other things better still, and added, "No creature can console thee, only I alone, who desire to reveal My power unto thee."

And immediately the eyes of my soul were opened and I beheld the plenitude of God, whereby I did comprehend the whole world, both here and beyond the sea, and the abyss and all things else ; and therein did I behold naught save the divine power in a manner assuredly indescribable, so that through excess of marvelling the soul cried with a loud voice, saying, "This whole world is full of God !" Wherefore did I now comprehend that the world is but a small thing ; I saw, moreover, that the power of God was above all things, and that the whole world was filled with it.

Then said He unto me, "I have shown thee something of My power," the which I did so well understand that it enabled me better to understand all other things. He said also, "I have made thee to see something of My power ; behold now and see Mine humility." Then was I given so deep an insight into the humility of God towards man and all other things that when my soul remembered His unspeakable power and comprehended His deep humility, it marvelled greatly and did esteem itself to be nothing at all, for in itself it beheld nothing save pride.

Thus did I begin to think within myself and to esteem myself in every way unworthy of the Holy Communion, wherefore did I refuse to communicate.

After that He had shown me this, the Lord said : “ My daughter, there is no creature who can attain unto this point of beholding My power and humility (unto which thou hast attained) unless he be inspired thereto by special divine grace.” When I was in the church after the elevation of the Body of Christ He said unto me : “ Behold My power which is now upon the altar, and yet am I within thee ; if thou receivest Me, thou receivest Me as thou hast ever done. Communicate, therefore, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for I who am worthy do make thee worthy.”

Then was I filled with unspeakable sweetness and great joy, which I do think I shall never lose all the days of my life.

FOURTH VISION AND CONSOLATION, WHEREIN SHE
BEHELD GOD INASMUCH AS HE IS SUPREME WISDOM,
WHEREBY SHE DID LEARN TO JUDGE OF ALL THINGS
WITHOUT ERROR

A MAN did once ask of me that I would pray God for certain things which he was desirous of knowing. But I doubted whether I should do this, for I held it to be an act of pride and great folly to pray unto God for such things. And as I meditated upon this matter, my mind was suddenly rapt unto the first elevation, and placed at a table which had neither beginning nor end. I was not placed there to behold the table, but that which was

upon it. There I beheld the ineffable fulness of God ; but I can relate nothing of it, save that I have seen the plenitude of divine wisdom, wherein is all goodness.

In this plenitude I saw that it is not lawful to seek or desire to know that which the divine wisdom is going to do, for this is a forestalling and dishonouring of it. When I see persons, therefore, who seek to know such things, I am persuaded that they do err.

From the time when I beheld this vision it hath been given me to understand and judge all spiritual persons and things when I hear them spoken of. But I judge not with that judgment to make use of which is always to err ; but with another and true judgment, whereby I understand whence I have the consciousness of sin in judging.

I can say nothing more concerning this vision, save that the one word “ table ” remained in my memory. I have said that in the first elevation I was placed at a table. But of the things which I beheld on that table, I can say nothing save what I have already said.

FIFTH VISION, WHEREIN SHE BEHELD GOD INASMUCH AS HE IS SUPREME JUSTICE, AND SOMETHING YET HIGHER STILL ; WHEREBY SHE OBTAINED THE APPROBATION OF THE HEAVENLY JUDGES

BEING one day at prayer, I asked of God (not because I doubted or desired in this manner to know more of God),

“ Wherefore, oh Lord, didst Thou create man, and wherefore, having created him, didst Thou permit so much suffering to be laid upon Thee as was borne by Thy Son because of our sins ? For surely Thou mightest have created us with double the amount of virtue we do possess now, and thus couldst Thou have ordained it exceeding well that we should have been grateful and pleasing unto Thee without those sufferings.”

Hereupon was I given to understand that the reason wherefore God had done and permitted this was that because in this way His goodness could be more clearly made manifest unto us, and also because it was thus made more suitable unto our needs. Yet did this not suffice me for the full understanding thereof, inasmuch as I knew of a certainty that God could have acted otherwise if He had so pleased.

Another time, when I was exalted in spirit, I perceived that this quest had neither beginning nor end, so that when the soul found itself thus in darkness it instantly desired to turn back ; but it was not able, neither was it permitted to advance. And being in this uncertainty and anxiety, I was exalted yet higher still and enlightened that I might behold the ineffable power of God.

Here was seen the will, justice, and goodness of God, and in these virtues I clearly beheld that which I had sought to know. Thus was my soul brought forth out of the darkness wherein it lay upon the earth ; for in

this illumination it was raised up straight and I stood upon my feet, even upon the tips of my toes, in such bodily agility and renewed life as I had never hitherto experienced. Moreover there came upon me such a fulness of charity, and with so great a joy did I understand that power, will, and justice of God, that not only was I satisfied concerning the questions I had asked, but likewise concerning all creatures, even the demons and the damned, for I felt I was called to save them one and all.

But inasmuch as this was a supernatural thing I cannot show it forth in words, albeit I perfectly understood that God could have saved us in another manner if He had desired. Nevertheless, I could not see how His power and goodness could possibly have been better manifested or more plainly set forth than in this manner. From that time onwards I did feel myself so contented and safe that if I had known of a certainty that I was to be damned, I should on no account have bewailed myself, nor should I for this reason have striven and studied less to worship and honour God than I had done before, so clearly had I understood His justice and the righteousness of His judgments. Wherefore was my soul filled with so great a peace, quietness, and firmness that never do I remember any other so complete ; and herein have I continued.

After I had seen the power of God, His will, and His justice, I was uplifted yet higher still, and then I no longer beheld the power and will of God as before. But

I beheld a thing as fixed and stable as it was indescribable ; and more than this I cannot say, save what I have often said already, namely, that it was all good.

And although my soul beheld not love, yet nevertheless when it saw that indescribable thing it was itself filled with indescribable joy, and it was taken out of the state it was in before and placed in this most great and ineffable state. I know not whether I was at that time in the body or outside it, but it sufficeth to say that all the other visions seemed unto me to be less great than this. In this vision was I granted the mortification of sins and assurance of virtue, whereby I now love things both good and evil, both well and evilly made, for these things do I no longer despise.

I was, therefore, left in great peace and veneration by the heavenly judgments ; so that now when I cry, " By Thy judgments, or by Thy judgment deliver me, oh Lord," I say it with as much joy and trust as though I said, " By Thy Passion deliver me, oh Lord." The cause of this is, that I cannot recognise the goodness of God more clearly in a saint or a holy man, or in many, than in one condemned or a multitude of damned. Albeit this profound truth was not shown unto me save once only, it hath never left my memory, nor have I lost the joy thereof. If it were possible that all the things which appertain unto faith should fail me, there would nevertheless remain unto me the true certainty of the supreme God, of His perfect justice and His judgments.

How deep is the meaning of this saying ! But all this turneth unto the profit of the blessed, for the soul who hath attained unto a knowledge of the divine judgments and understandeth them, will through this knowledge of God derive profit from all things.

SIXTH VISION AND CONSOLATION, WHEREIN SHE BEHELD
GOD INASMUCH AS HE IS LOVE, WHEREBY SHE WAS
TRANSFORMED IN THE DIVINE LOVE

METHOUGHT one time in Lent that I was exceeding parched and lacking in devotion, wherefore I prayed God that He would give me something of Himself, because all goodness was dried up within me. Then were the eyes of my soul opened and I beheld love advancing gently toward me, and I beheld the beginning but not the end. Unto me there seemed only a continuation and eternity thereof, so that I can describe neither likeness nor colour, but immediately that this love reached me, I did behold all these things more clearly with the eyes of the soul than I could do with the eyes of the body.

This love came towards me after the manner of a sickle. Not that there was any actual and measurable likeness, but when first it appeared unto me it did not give itself unto me in such abundance as I expected, but part of it was withdrawn. Therefore do I say, after the manner of a sickle. Then was I filled with love and in-

estimable satiety ; but although it did well satisfy me, it did generate within me so great an hunger that all my members were loosened and my soul fainted with longing to attain unto the remainder.

Then did I refuse either to see or to hearken unto any creature ; I spake not, but my soul spake within me, crying out and beseeching that love would not make it thus to faint for love's sake, because it held life to be but death.

Then did I first invoke the Blessed Virgin, and afterwards the holy apostles, that they would go with my soul and beseech and implore the Most High that He would no longer cause it to suffer this death, but that He would permit it to attain unto that which it desired, namely, unto the remainder of righteous love. Likewise in this faintness I did pray unto the blessed Francis and the holy Evangelists and did make earnest supplication and cry unto them, inasmuch as I was drawn nigh unto them through the love which I felt. And believing myself to be all love, I said, " Many are there who think they do dwell in love and they dwell in hatred, and many on the contrary think they dwell in hatred and they do verily dwell in love." But my soul sought to know this of a certainty, and God permitted me to feel it so clearly that I was wholly content. For I was so filled with this love that after this happened I do not believe I could ever have been without it, nor could I believe any creature who said otherwise ; even had it been an angel I would

not have believed it, but would have answered, "Thou art he who is fallen from heaven."

And methought that I beheld in myself two sides, as though a road had been made through me; upon the one side I saw this love and all goodness (the which was of God and not of me), and upon the other side I saw myself all dried up, where there was nothing good. Wherefore I considered that the thing I loved proceeded not from me, albeit I was in love, but that it came from God alone, in whom all love was joined together.

Then gave He unto me greater and more ardent love than before, and I desired to go unto this love. Thus were there two loves, that of which I have already spoken and which was so great that I knew not that any could be greater, until there came upon me a mortal love, and betwixt this love and that other mortal love a great heat. There is a certain middle-place of the which I can say nothing, so deep was it, so full of joy and unspeakable delight.

Then do I wish to hear nothing of the Passion, neither would I that God should be named before me, because when I hear Him named it exciteth in me so much devotion that I faint and am distressed for love of Him, and all lesser things do trouble me. In comparison with this I do esteem as nothing all that is related in the Gospel of the Life of Christ, or in other places, for in God do I behold greater and yet more incomparable things.

Since He hath left me I am remained as contented as

an angel; for I love toads and serpents, and even fools and demons, and nothing that I see them do, even sins committed against others, can displease me, inasmuch as I believe that God doth justly permit it and desire that it should be done. And when I am in this state I should take no heed if dogs were to bite me, neither should I seem to suffer any pain.

In this state, therefore, there can be no thought or grievous remembrance of the Passion of Christ, or any tears, albeit there was at one time added unto this love the remembrance of the inestimable worth of the precious Blood through which the world was redeemed. Wherefore do I marvel how they can exist together. Nevertheless, there was none of the suffering of the Passion, for the Passion sheweth us the way we have to go and teacheth us what we have to do. And this state is greater than that of standing ever at the foot of Christ's Cross, in continual remembrance, as did the Blessed Francis, albeit the soul frequenteth both the one and the other state.

SEVENTH VISION, WHEREIN SHE BEHELD GOD IN THREE
PERSONS, BUT SHE BEHELD HIM DARKLY; AND THIS
VISION DID INSPIRE HER WITH PERFECT AND HOLY
HOPE AND FULL ASSURANCE

THERE was a time when my soul was exalted to behold God with so much clearness that never before had I

beheld Him so distinctly. But love did I not see here so fully ; rather did I lose that which I had before and was left without love. Afterwards I did see Him darkly, and this darkness was the greatest blessing that could be imagined, and no thought could conceive aught that would equal this.

Then was there given unto the soul an assured faith, a firm and certain hope, wherein I felt so sure of God that all fear left me. For by that blessing which came with the darkness I did collect my thoughts and was made so sure of God that I can never again doubt but that I do of a certainty possess Him. Thus is my hope now made certain, for now do I see so clearly that what I see can neither be told by the mouth nor imagined in the heart. And by that blessing (most certain, and including also that darkness) have I attained unto all my hope, and inasmuch as now I see clearly, I have all that I desired to have or to know.

Here, likewise, do I see all Good ; and seeing it, the soul cannot think that it will depart from it or it from the Good, or that in future it must ever leave the Good. The soul delighteth unspeakably therein, yet it beholdeth naught which can be related by the tongue or imagined in the heart. It seeth nothing, yet seeth all things, because it beholdeth this Good darkly—and the more darkly and secretly the Good is seen, the more certain is it, and excellent above all things. Wherefore is all other good which can be seen or imagined doubtless less than

this, because all the rest is darkness. And even when the soul seeth the divine power, wisdom, and will of God (which I have seen most marvellously at other times), it is all less than this most certain Good. Because this is the whole, and those other things are but part of the whole. Another difference is, that albeit those other things are unspeakable, yet they do bring great joy which is felt even in the body.

But seen thus darkly, the Good bringeth no smile upon the lips, no fervour or devotion or love into the heart, for the body doth not tremble or become moved or distressed as it doth at other times. And the cause thereof is, that the soul seeth, and not the body, which reposeth and sleepeth, and the tongue is made dumb and cannot speak. All the many and unspeakable kindnesses which God hath shown unto me, all the sweet words and all other divine sayings and doings are so much less than this which I have seen clearly through the darkness, that I do put no hope in them. Yea, even if it were possible that all these were not true, it would in no wise lessen the hope which I have in this and all other good.

Unto this most high power of beholding God ineffably through such great darkness was my spirit uplifted but three times only and no more; and although I beheld Him countless times, and always darkly, yet never in such an high manner and through such great darkness.

And when upon the one hand my body is wasted by

infirmity, when the world with its thorns and bitterness chaseth me forth, and demons do likewise afflict me with much vexation, and do continually persecute me and molest me (because they have power over me and because God hath given me soul and body into their hands, so that I do almost seem to behold them falling bodily upon me), upon the other hand God doth draw me unto Himself with that Good which I beheld through the darkness, in which darkness I did doubtless behold the Holy Trinity. And to me it seemeth that I am fixed in the midst of It and that It draweth me unto Itself more than anything else the which I ever beheld, or any blessing I ever yet received, so there is nothing which can be compared unto It.

All that I say of this seemeth unto me to be nothing, I do even feel as though I offended in speaking of it, for so greatly doth that Good exceed all my words that my speech doth appear to blaspheme against it.

When I behold and am in that Good, I remember nothing of the humanity of Christ, of God inasmuch as He was man, nor of aught else that had shape or form; and albeit I seem to see nothing, yet do I see all things.

When, however, I am separated from that aforesaid Good then is it given unto me to see Christ, who draweth me with such gentleness that sometimes He saith, "Thou art I, and I am thou." I see those eyes, and that face so gracious and so pleasing, which embraceth and draweth my soul unto itself with infinite assurance. And that

which proceedeth from those eyes and that face is nothing else save that Good of which I spake before and which I beheld darkly, which proceedeth and issueth forth from within. And it is that Good wherein I delight so greatly that I can in no wise speak of it.

Being thus one with Christ the soul liveth. And in this God do I live more than in the darkness, and although He who dwelleth in darkness draweth me beyond all comparison more strongly, yet do I live so constantly in Christ that, inasmuch as I have been once and for all granted assurance of God, nothing can ever come betwixt me and Him.

From that time forth there hath never been day or night wherein I have not constantly rejoiced in the humanity of Christ, wherefore do I long to sing and to praise God, saying :

“Thee do I praise, oh God my delight, for upon Thy Cross have I made my bed, and instead of a pillow have I found poverty, instead of repose have I found suffering and contempt, for upon this bed was He born, He lived, and laid Him down to die.”

These companions, poverty, suffering, and contempt, were so beloved of God the Father that He gave them unto His Son, and the Son desired ever to lie upon this bed. And on this do I always love Him and do agree with the Father. And upon this bed have I laid me down to rest, for it is my bed whereon I hope to die, by which I hope to be saved. But the joy which I have of

those hands and feet cannot be described, and when I see Him I do desire never to depart from Him, but draw nearer unto Him, wherefore is my life but as death, and the more I do remember Him, the less can I speak, for then my tongue is tied. When I leave Him the wickedness which I find compelleth me to desire Him yet more, and because of this my desire and the weariness of waiting am I plunged into mortal pain, but in this vision is my soul uplifted and consoled by the most sweet God, to whom be honour and glory for ever and ever.

EIGHTH VISION AND CONSOLATION, WHEREIN SHE BEHELD GOD AS CLEARLY AS IS POSSIBLE IN THIS LIFE, IN THE WHICH VISION SHE ACQUIRED STRENGTH IN GOOD INTENTIONS AND IN THE PERFECT DELIGHT
IN GOD

BEING thus exalted in spirit during the time of Lent, therefore, I was joined with God in a manner other than was customary for me. Methought I was in the midst of the Trinity, in a manner higher and greater than was usual, for greater than usual were the blessings I received, and continually were there given unto me gifts full of delight, and rejoicing most great and unspeakable. All this was so far beyond anything which had heretofore happened unto me that verily a divine change took place in my soul, which neither saint nor angel could describe

or explain. This divine change, or operation, was so profound that no angel or other creature, howsoever wise, could comprehend it, wherefore do I say again that it seemeth unto me to be evil-speaking and blasphemy if I do try to tell of it.

Here am I drawn forth out of all things wherein I did formerly take delight, such as the life and humanity of Christ and the consideration of those most deep companions whom God had greatly loved from all eternity and had given unto His Son. Likewise did He draw me forth from the aforesaid delight, that is to say, the poverty, suffering, and contempt borne by His Son (wherein I was accustomed to find my repose and my bed); also was I withdrawn from that darkness, in the vision of which I had so greatly rejoiced. And finally I was drawn out of all former states with so much unction and in sleep, that I could in no wise comprehend it, and do only know that now I have not those things.

In these divine benefits and operations which were accomplished in my soul, God did first present Himself unto it thus ineffably in His works; then did He manifest and reveal Himself fully unto the soul, bestowing upon it great gifts, with indescribable clearness and certainty.

There are two ways wherein God showeth Himself unto the soul. One way is when He showeth Himself intimately, and it doth then know Him to be present, as He is present in every creature and in everything that hath being; as much in demons as in good angels, in

hell as in Paradise, in adultery and murder, in all good works, and in all things which exist, both beauteous and ill-favoured. When I have this unity, therefore, I do rejoice in God no less when I see a bad angel, and an evil deed than when I see a good angel or deed ; and in this manner doth He most often present Himself unto my soul. And this presentation doth bring enlightenment, with great truth and divine grace, so that when the soul beholdeth this it cannot offend in any way.

Moreover, this enlightenment bringeth many divine benefits unto the soul ; for example, when it becometh aware that God is already present it doth deeply humble itself and is confused by reason of its sins. Also it receiveth much wisdom and divine consolation with great joy.

God showeth Himself in another and more special manner, very different from the foregoing, which likewise giveth joy, but different from the former joy. For here He draweth all the soul unto Himself and worketh many divine things in it, with much greater grace and an unspeakable depth of joy and enlightenment ; so that, without any other gifts, this presentation of God is the blessing possessed by saints in the life eternal.

Of the gifts received by saints in the life eternal, however, some have more and some less. But of these it is impossible to speak, as I have already said, because my words are so feeble that they do deface and blaspheme rather than justly describe. I will only say that amongst

these gifts is the enlargement of the mind, whereby it becometh more capable of understanding and knowing God ; for when He presenteth Himself unto the soul He doth reveal and make Himself manifest, and doth thus enlarge it to receive gifts and sweetness never known before and greater and deeper than hath been described.

Unto the soul (now drawn forth out of all darkness) is then vouchsafed the utmost knowledge of God which I do think could be granted. And it is given with so much clearness, sweetness, and certainty, and hath such depth, that the human heart cannot attain unto it, nor can my heart ever return again to the understanding and knowledge thereof, or to the imagining of aught regarding it, saving only when the supreme God doth vouchsafe unto the soul to be exalted even unto that which the heart can no more reach. Therefore is it not possible to say anything whatsoever concerning it, or to find words wherewith to express it ; neither can the imagination or the understanding in any way reach unto it, so immeasurably doth it exceed all things.

Thus do we perceive that by nothing that we can think or say can God be exalted. The Holy Scriptures are so far above us that no man—be he the wisest in all the world and possessing all the knowledge it is possible to have in this life—can fully and perfectly know and understand them ; there is none whose intelligence would not be always overcome by them.

Of these most excellent and divine workings in the

soul whereby God doth manifest Himself, can man in no wise speak or even stammer. But inasmuch as my soul is oftentimes uplifted to know the divine secrets, I do understand wherefore the Holy Scriptures were written, what they do appear to affirm and deny, that which is easy and that which is difficult, and why some derive no profit from them, and why those who do not observe them are condemned and those who do observe them are saved by them. Thus have I an advantage in knowing these things, and after learning the secrets of God I can speak some few words with certainty; yet are my words outside of those divine and ineffable workings, and in no way do they approach nigh unto them, but rather do they spoil and blaspheme, as I have always said.

Therefore do I say that if all divine consolations, all spiritual joys, all heavenly delights which ever were in this world—if all the saints who have lived from the beginning of the world until now were to expound and show forth God, if all the worldly delights, both good and evil, which ever existed were all to be converted into one good and spiritual joy which should endure until I were made perfect, I would not, even that I might obtain all this, give or exchange even for the space of the twinkling of an eye that joy which I have in the unspeakable manifestation of God.

These things have I spoken that I might in some way instil into the hearts of men the conviction that this unspeakable blessing is infinitely above all those aforesaid

things. And I possess it not only for the space of the opening and shutting of an eye, but oftentimes for a good while. In that way do I have it with much effect, but in another way—that is to say, with less effect—do I have it almost continually. And albeit I do feel a little of both grief and joy from without, yet within my soul there is a chamber into which there entereth no sort of grief or joy of any virtue whatsoever, nor anything that can be named or expressed. But into it there entereth that greatest Good, and in that manifestation of God (which I do blaspheme in thus naming it, seeing that I have no word wherewith to speak of it perfectly) lieth the whole truth.

In Him, therefore, do I understand and possess all truth that is in heaven and earth and hell, and in all creatures; and so great is the truth and the certainty that were the whole world to declare the contrary I would not believe it, yea, I should mock at it. For I behold Him who is everything; I perceive how surely in Him are all created things; I likewise perceive how that He hath made me capable of perfectly understanding the aforesaid matters in a way better than there had been until I saw in that great darkness wherein I did so rejoice. For I do behold myself thus alone with God, wholly clean, wholly pure, wholly sanctified, wholly upright, wholly assured, and wholly celestial in Him, and when I am in this state I do remember naught else.

Once when I was in that state, the most high God

spake thus unto me: "Daughter of divine wisdom, perfect temple of delight, joy of joys; daughter of true peace, in thee repositeth the Holy Trinity and the whole truth, and thus thou holdest Me and I hold thee."

One of the operations of the soul vouchsafed unto it by our Lord God is that with great rejoicing I do most fully understand how God entereth into the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, together with that most high and noble company. But when I remain outside of that state I do perceive myself to be full of sin, obedient unto sinfulness, unjust, unclean, wholly false and earthly. Nevertheless, I do stay quiet, having in me a divine and constant unction, above all which I have ever felt in all my days.

//I came not unto that aforesaid state of mine own self, but I was led and drawn thereunto by God; so that, albeit of mine own self I should not have known how to desire or ask for it, I am now in that state continually. Ofttimes is my soul uplifted of God without my will or consent, and when I am not hoping or thinking to receive aught from Him, my soul is suddenly exalted and dominated by Him. And when thus exalted I understand the whole world and do believe myself in heaven with God instead of upon the earth. This state is far more excellent than any other I have experienced; it is so full of satisfaction, so clear, ennobling, and enlarging that I never felt any other state approaching unto it. /

This manifestation of God have I experienced more than a thousand times, and each one was different from the others. Thus once at the Feast of Saint Mary at Candlemas I did have that unspeakable manifestation of God, and whiles that it was being revealed unto the soul, the soul did behold a representation of itself; and it beheld itself more noble and high than it could possibly imagine or understand, and I could not otherwise have believed that either mine own soul or the souls of those in Paradise could be of such nobility. For my soul did then behold itself in such wise that it could not understand itself. If, therefore, the soul which is finite and circumscribed could not comprehend its own self, how much less could it comprehend its Creator who is immense, infinite, and boundless?

Then did my soul present itself before God with the utmost assurance; it had no fear whatsoever, but it went into God's presence with the greatest joy it had ever felt, with a new and most excellent pleasure, in a manner so miraculous, so new and clear that my own soul could never have understood such a thing. At this meeting of my soul with God (when I saw and understood the aforesaid unspeakable manifestation of God), the most high God spake unto me certain words which I do not desire should be written down; and when the soul returned unto itself, it found and retained within itself the consciousness that it could endure all suffering and torment for God's sake, and that by nothing whatso-

ever that could be done or said could it henceforth be separated from God.

Then did my soul exclaim and say, "Oh, most sweet Lord, who can separate me from Thee?" and I heard a voice make answer that nothing could separate me from Him because of His grace.

All these things did I hear spoken by God in a manner more wondrous than I can describe. It was likewise told me that the aforesaid unspeakable manifestation of God is that Good enjoyed by the saints in the life eternal, and that this Good is naught else save this, but otherwise experienced and so different from the other that the lowest of the saints who hath the least in the life eternal hath yet more than can be given unto any soul before the death of the body.

This is what my soul hath understood in that marvellous manifestation of God.

NINTH VISION, WHEREIN IT WAS CERTIFIED UNTO HER
THAT IN HER VISIONS AND HEAVENLY CONVERSATIONS
SHE HAD NOT BEEN DECEIVED

UPON a certain occasion, at the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, some little while after my conversion, I did pray the Blessed Virgin that she would implore her Son to grant me grace whereby I might know that I had not

been deceived in the conversations which had been held with me. Then came unto me a heavenly voice promising me that my request should be granted, and saying further: "God hath shown Himself unto thee, hath spoken with thee, and hath endowed thee with understanding of Himself; take heed, therefore, that thou neither speakest, beholdest, nor hearkenest unto anything whatsoever save according unto His will." I perceived that these things were said unto me with much discretion and ripe wisdom. The aforesaid conversations had left me with great joy and the hope of obtaining that for which I had asked, and the foregoing words did, moreover, tell me that God would grant the grace that everything I did should be done with His permission.

I began, therefore, to do the three things which had been told unto me. Accordingly my heart was uplifted from all things earthly and fixed on God. And nothing that I did, or ate, or spake prevented my heart from being always fixed on God; neither could I see, or think, or feel, save according unto God's will. When I had been engaged in prayer and desired to go and eat and drink, I did humbly ask permission, and He answered, "Go and eat with the blessing of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." And thus did He give me permission, sometimes immediately and sometimes later.

This lasted three days and three nights. Finally I beheld God in spirit during Mass, at about the time of the elevation of the Body of Christ. After this vision there

remained unto me an indescribable sweetness and great joy, which I do think will never fail me all the days of my life. And in this vision was I assured of all that I had asked ; there remained unto me no doubt whatsoever, but I was fully satisfied and persuaded that I had not been deceived in the foregoing conversations.

TENTH VISION AND CONSOLATION, WHEREIN IT WAS
FURTHER CERTIFIED UNTO HER THAT SHE HAD NOT
BEEN DECEIVED IN HER CONVERSATIONS

UPON another occasion whilst I was at prayer, exceeding pleasant words were spoken unto me after this manner :

“ Oh my daughter, who art far sweeter unto Me than I am unto thee ; thou art the temple of My delight, and the heart of the Omnipotent God resteth upon thy heart.”

Together with these words there came upon me a feeling of the utmost joy, such as I had never before experienced, inasmuch as all the members of my body felt it. And as I did prostrate myself at these words, it was further told me :

“ The Omnipotent God loveth thee more dearly than any other woman of this city. He rejoiceth in thee and in thy companion. Do ye both strive, therefore, that your lives be as a light unto all who desire to follow your

example ; but unto those who follow you not, shall your lives be as a judgment strict and hard."

My soul did here understand that this cruel judgment was pronounced against the learned rather than against the laity, because they do despise these heavenly things by reason of knowing them in the Scriptures. Yet was I told that so great was the love which Almighty God bare unto us that He was continually with us, albeit not with these feelings. And I was told that His eyes were now upon us ; whereupon methought that I beheld His divine eyes with the eyes of my mind, and I rejoiced more than I can say. Nevertheless, I do grieve because the words we are now saying are so unworthy.

Albeit I had great joy of this matter, yet did I remember my sins and I did esteem that neither now or at any time had there been in me any good which might be pleasing unto God. Wherefore began I to doubt, seeing that great things had been spoken unto me ; and I said :

" If Thou who speakest unto me wert truly the Son of Almighty God, my soul would feel a joy higher and greater than this, and I should not be able to bear it, feeling that Thou wert in me, who am so unworthy."

Unto this He made answer, " I desire not that thou shouldst have a greater or more perfect joy than this at the present time, but I have prepared a greater one for thee. Thou must know that the whole world is full of Me."

And verily I did then perceive that every creature was full of Him. Again He spake unto me, saying, "I can do all things, I can make thee to see Me as when I talked with My disciples and yet to feel Me not."

This was not said unto me in actual words, but my soul comprehended that which He said, and many things greater still, and thus it felt them to be true. Yet in order to be clear whether that which was said was verily true, my soul cried :

"Forasmuch as Thou art Almighty God and the things Thou tellest me are true, give Thou me a sign whereby I may be sure thereof, and release me from this great doubt."

Then I besought Him that He would give me some tangible sign, something which I could see ; such as putting a candle into my hand, or a precious stone, or some other thing, or that He would give me any sign He pleased, promising Him that I would show it unto no person save unto whom He should desire. Then He replied :

"This sign that thou seekest is one that would only give thee great joy when thou didst behold or touch it, but it would not free thee from doubt, and thou mightest be deceived by that sign. Therefore will I give thee another sign, better than the one thou seekest, and which will be for ever with thee, and in thy soul thou shalt always feel it. The sign shall be this : thou shalt be ever fervent in love, and the love and the enlightened know-

ledge of God shall be ever with thee and in thee. This shall be a certain sign unto thee that I am He, because none save I can do this. And this is a sign which I will leave in thy soul, the which is better for thee than that which thou didst ask of Me. My love do I leave in thee, so that for love of Me thou wilt endure tribulations, and if any person speak or do evil unto thee thou wilt be grateful, declaring thyself unworthy of so much mercy. Such is the love which I bare unto you all, for whose sake I patiently and humbly endured all things. Thus thou shalt know whether or not I am in thee if, when any person shall speak or do evil unto thee, thou art not only patient, but even desirous that they should hurt thee and be grateful unto them. And this is a certain sign of the grace of God. And behold, I do now anoint thee with an ointment wherewith a saint called Siricus and many other saints were anointed."

Then did I immediately feel that ointment, and so sweet was it that I longed for death, and that I might die with all manner of bodily torments. The torments suffered by the martyrs who had died for Christ did I esteem as naught, and I desired that for love of Him my torments should be more terrible than theirs, and that the world should cry out upon me with insults and revilings.

Moreover, I rejoiced greatly in praying for those who might work me these evils, and I marvelled not at the saints who prayed for their murderers and persecutors ;

for not only ought we to pray unto God for them, but we should beseech Him to grant them especial grace. Therefore was I very ready to pray for those who did me evil, to love them with a great love, and to take compassion upon them. In that anointing I did feel such sweetness both within and without that I never felt the like before, and I have no words wherewith I can show forth the least part of it.

This consolation was different, and of a nature unlike the others. For in the others I had desired immediately to quit this world, but in this my desire was that my death should be grievous and prolonged, with all manner of torments, and that my members should suffer all the tortures of the world. Yet all this seemed but a small thing unto me, for my soul knew well that every torment was but a small thing in comparison with the blessings promised in the life eternal. My soul knew of a certainty that it was thus, and if all the wise men of the world had told me the contrary, I should not have believed them. And if I should swear that all who walked upon the afore-said way would be saved, I should believe that I spake the truth.

This sign did God leave so firmly implanted in my soul, with so bright and clear a light, that methinketh I could endure any martyrdom. This sign, moreover, leadeth continually upon the straight way of salvation, that is to say, it leadeth unto love and the desire to suffer for love of God.

Moreover, I heard the words which God spake unto me, saying, "At the end of these things shalt thou cause to be written, 'Unto God be the thanks,' and whoso desireth to keep the grace which he hath shall not turn his eyes away from the Cross, whether it be joy or sorrow that I do send upon him."

All these aforesaid things concerning this sign did my soul comprehend much more fully than I can explain, and with a completeness whereby I was enabled to understand many more things than I have told here. My love and joy was so great that I can in no wise express it, and may God not impute it unto me for a sin that I have related all this with so many faults and shortcomings.

HERE BEGIN THE CONSOLATIONS WHICH SHE
DID HAVE WHEN THINKING UPON
THE PASSION OF CHRIST

FIRST CONSOLATION OF THE PASSION OF CHRIST

As I was once meditating upon the Passion and poverty of the incarnate Son of God, Christ appeared unto me and showed unto me His great poverty, the which He was minded to put into my heart in order that I might clearly see it and diligently reflect upon it. I likewise beheld those for whose sakes He had become poor, and for them I felt such great grief and aversion that my heart did almost fail me.

After this, He did show His Passion unto me more fully. Then I beheld Him poor of kindred and of friends, and moreover so poor of Himself that, having regard unto His humanity, He was not able to help Himself.

Again after this it pleased Him to make me understand more things concerning His Passion than I had ever hitherto heard related. Then did I understand how in His Passion Christ saw that the hearts of those wicked and obstinate men were all turned against Him; He saw how all the members carefully destroyed His name, and how they used great attention and diligence to destroy it speedily; He saw the subtlety, the cunning machinations with which they conspired against Him, and He saw their evil designs, their slanders, rage, and fury, and the plans and preparations which they had made in order that they might most cruelly afflict Him. Of a certainty, the cruelty of the Passion was very great, inasmuch as He foresaw all the pain, the injury and shame.

→ My soul beheld far more of the Passion than I have will to say, yea, rather will I keep silence. Therefore did my soul then cry aloud, saying:

“Holy Mary, mother of Him who is thus afflicted, give me something of this Passion of the Son of God, for thou hast seen more of it than hath any other saint. Thou hast seen Him with the eyes both of thy body and thy mind, and most intently hast thou observed Him, because thou hast loved Him more than all.” And my soul cried again, saying, “Is there here any saint who can tell

me aught concerning this Passion, of which I do hear nothing spoken, nor any mention made, in the manner in which my soul hath seen it? For so great is it that I myself cannot describe it. My soul hath seen the Passion of Christ to be so great that, even if Saint Mary saw it in many respects more plainly than did any other saint, not even she—and far less any other—could describe it. And if there be any who can describe it, methinketh it is Thou who hast borne it.”

When I had thus seen the Passion of the Son of God, I fell into a much greater grief than ever before, and if my heart had failed me then it would have been no marvel, for when I do even now remember me of these things I begin to grieve, seeing that I have lost that strength of mind which did formerly keep me joyful, wherefore for a long time have I felt no joy.

SECOND CONSOLATION OF THE PASSION OF CHRIST

ANOTHER time there were shown unto me the bitter suffering in the soul of Christ, the which was so awful that heart cannot imagine nor tongue describe it. And forasmuch as I beheld such suffering in the Virgin's Son, my soul was most grievously afflicted and my own suffering was greater than I had ever felt before.

Seeing how that I could find no ease or joy in this meditation, my soul did perceive many causes and

reasons for that bitter suffering. Firstly, because that soul was most holy and entirely without sin, for which reason it deserved no punishment whatsoever. Then, because He endured it for love of us, and we, ungrateful, hostile, and unworthy, did despise and mock at Him even whilst He was redeeming us through His Passion. Then, because the sin of those who crucified Him was exceeding great, and that Soul which did hate and utterly abhor all sin grieved more over this than over any other sin. There were, moreover, many persons who committed this sin, because both Jews and Gentiles who were gathered together for the Feast did conspire against Him, causing Him the utmost grief. Also because of the deep malice and wickedness of His adversaries, whose whole endeavour was to destroy Him, His memory, and His name, and also His elect disciples. He suffered likewise because He had compassion upon those disciples who fell from faith, and He endured persecution for their sakes. He suffered likewise because He had compassion upon His most unhappy mother, and because He found Himself in great trouble without any help or consolation. And finally, He suffered above all things because that most noble soul was dolefully assailed upon every side ; every person was unto Him a cause of grief ; His Soul felt pain and anguish from all the pain and anguish inflicted upon that most holy, virginal, and delicate Body. And all these things together were laid upon that one most holy Soul.

Many other things were clearly set forth unto me, but I neither can nor will relate them.

Drawn forth out of myself, therefore, I was transformed in the suffering of the Crucified, and the divine mercy did vouchsafe these things unto me : Firstly, that my will was so straitened that I could desire nothing save what He permitted. Secondly, that He hath placed within my soul a state which changeth but little and I possess God in such fulness that I am no longer in that state wherein I was wont to be, but I do walk in such perfect peace of heart and mind that I am contented with all things.

THIRD CONSOLATION OF THE PASSION OF CHRIST

I WAS meditating one time upon the great sufferings borne by our Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross, and more especially upon the nails, which I did hear were of such a sort that they had driven the flesh of the hands and feet into the wood ; and I desired to behold those little pieces of flesh which the nails had so violently driven into the wood.

Then did I feel such great pain because of Christ's pain that I could not stand upon my feet, but I bent mine head and sat me down on the ground ; and I beheld Christ, who inclined His head upon mine arms which I had stretched out upon the ground. Then He

showed unto me His throat and His arms, whereupon my grief was instantly changed into joy so great and so different from all other joys that I neither saw nor felt aught else; for the beauty of that throat was a thing most great and ineffable. Then I understood that His beauty proceeded from His divinity.

Naught else did He show me saving that most comely and gracious throat, the beauty whereof cannot be likened unto any thing or any colour in the world, save only unto the clearness of Christ's body, which I do sometimes behold when it is raised on high at the elevation.

FOURTH CONSOLATION OF THE PASSION OF CHRIST

UPON the fourth day of the great week I was meditating with grief upon the death of the Son of God, striving to empty my mind of all other things in order that my soul might be the more absorbed in this Passion and Death.

Being, therefore, wholly occupied with the endeavour and desire to cast out every other matter from my mind in order that I might the more speedily and completely think only upon this, I heard the divine voice saying within my soul, "My love for thee was no deceit." This word was as a shock of mortal pain unto my soul, for the eyes of my mind were instantly opened, and I saw that what He said was very true. I saw the working and

effect of that delight ; I saw all that the Son of God had done for the sake of this love, and I saw what Christ Crucified had borne in life and in death for the sake of this deep and unspeakable love. Wherefore did I understand that it was indeed true that His love for me had been no deceit or jest, but love most perfect and profound. Then did I perceive just the opposite in myself, that is to say, I knew that I loved Him deceitfully and not truly. For this reason did I suffer such mortal pain and intolerable grief that methought I was about to die.

Then were other words spoken unto me, which did make mine anguish greater still ; and the words were these :

“ Again I say unto thee, My love for thee was no deceit, My service of thee was not feigned, nor was My feeling for thee one of enlargement.”

Then cried my soul, saying, “ Oh Master, that which Thou sayest is not in Thee, is wholly in me ; for never have I loved Thee saving deceitfully. I have served Thee with lies and I have never desired to draw nigh unto Thee in very truth for fear lest I might feel those burdens which Thou didst feel and bear for my sake. Wherefore have I never served Thee sincerely and for Thine own sake, but with negligence and duplicity.”

Now when I perceived how that He had loved me sincerely, how that He bore in Him all the signs of true love, and how that He had drawn nigh unto me to such a degree that He was become Man in order that He

might more completely bear and feel in Himself all our sufferings, I did feel such exceeding great anguish that my ribs seemed disjointed and methought mine heart would burst asunder. Reflecting, moreover, upon these words, "My feeling for thee was not one of enlargement," I did hear Him say further unto me, "I know thy soul more intimately than it knoweth itself," and these words did increase mine anguish, inasmuch as the more I perceived how intimately God did know me, the more did I realise that I myself had become enlarged.

After this He spake certain words unto me which did manifest and show forth His boundless love, saying :

"If there were any person who desired to feel Me in his mind, I would not withdraw Myself from him ; and unto whomsoever did desire to behold Me would I willingly show Myself, and with whomsoever did desire to speak unto Me would I joyfully converse."

These words did arouse in me the desire never to feel or say or do aught which should offend God. And this is what God desireth and especially seeketh in His sons and His elect ; for He hath called and chosen them in order that they may think, see, and speak according unto His will, and that they may take heed to do nothing contrary thereunto. Thus was it set forth and told unto me :

"Those who love My poverty, suffering, and contempt are My lawful sons and Mine elect, whose thoughts are

fixed on My Passion and Death, for here and nowhere else is found salvation and true life for all; wherefore are these and none others My lawful sons."

FIFTH CONSOLATION OF THE PASSION OF OUR LORD

UPON a certain occasion when I was in the church of the Blessed Francis, and it was nigh unto the time of the elevation of the Body of our Lord, whilst the organ was playing the angelic hymn, "Holy, holy, holy," my soul was caught up in that Light uncreate, and therein was it so rapt and absorbed in a manner wholly indescribable.

After this (I being still in the first rapture and attraction), there appeared unto me the figure of the Blessed Christ Crucified, as though He had been only just then taken down from the Cross; His blood was as fresh and red and flowed from His wounds as easily as though it had only that instant been shed. Moreover, there appeared such a dissolution of all the members of that blessed body that the sinews and joints of the bones seemed unto me as though loosened from their due harmony—that is to say, from their proper position in the body; and this was caused by the hard and cruel stretching and the horrible ill-treatment of those virgin limbs at the hands of wicked men upon the torturing Cross; nevertheless, the skin was nowhere broken.

At this sight my bowels were so pierced with compassion that verily I seemed all transformed in the pain of the Crucified, both bodily and mentally. And with a sharper knife still was I pierced at the sight of the cruel and violent dissolution of all His limbs, where methought His sinews were loosened and undone and His bones displaced ; and so likewise at the sight of the open wounds, for in these did I behold a great secret of the Passion and of the hardness and cruelty of the tortures He had borne.

The sight of the crucified body of the good and beloved Jesus did awaken such great compassion that in all my inward parts and my bones and joints did I feel new pain, and I lamented afresh with terrible anguish.

As I stood thus absorbed in suffering and as though transformed in the pains of the Crucified, I heard Him speak again concerning the devout persons and the followers of His Passion, and those who had taken compassion upon Him. I heard Him give thanks unto them and say :

“ Blessed are all ye of my Father, who, having had compassion upon Me and passed through tribulation with Me and followed after My life, have merited to wash your robes in the most precious blood of the Lamb. Blessed are ye who suffer with Me, who am crucified and afflicted with boundless suffering in order that I may offer satisfaction for you and redeem you from immense, bitter, and endless torments, and who have

rendered yourselves worthy of it by thus bearing with Me poverty, suffering, and contempt. Blessed are ye who shall remember and be pitiful of My Passion, which is the Miracle of all ages, the salvation and life of the lost and the sole refuge of sinners—for thereby shall ye share in the kingdom, the glory and the resurrection which I have purchased by that same Passion, and ye shall verily be co-heirs with Me for ever and ever. Blessed are ye of My Father and of the Holy Spirit, yea, verily blessed, and ye shall therefore have the blessing which I shall give at the last judgment, inasmuch as ye did not repulse Me when I came unto Mine own place, as did My persecutors, but of your compassion did receive Me into the lodging of your hearts as a desolate pilgrim; when I hanged naked upon the Cross, hungry, thirsty, and sick, and pierced by nails, ye did suffer with Me in My death and desired to be in all things My companions. Herein have ye verily accomplished the works of mercy, wherefore in the last dread hour ye shall hear it said, ‘Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ Upon the Cross I did hunger, and at least through your compassion did ye give Me to eat,” and then He added most marvellously the remainder of His saying, and I cannot possibly describe the burning love which shone upon these blessed ones from the eyes of that blessed Face of God made Man, Jesus Christ.

After this He spake again, saying, “Oh verily and in

all ways blessed are ye ; for if upon the Cross I did pray unto My Father with tears and cries for those who crucified and tormented Me, excusing them and saying, ‘ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,’ what shall I say for you, who have had compassion upon Me and have been My faithful companions, when I shall be no longer upon the Cross, but judging the world in glory and happiness ? ”

Thus did I remain unspeakably consoled, and mine affection for the Passion of the Son of God was greater than I can express.

And many other words spake He, more than I can know or declare, all of which did kindle my love and inflame it unto the utmost.

SIXTH CONSOLATION OF THE PASSION OF OUR LORD
JESUS CHRIST

ANOTHER time when I was praying and meditating with great grief and compassion in mine heart upon the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, I did bethink me over and over again of how great was the iniquity of all my sins, seeing that before God could be appeased or I could be reconciled unto Him, or obtain remission of those sins, it was needful that the Son of God should not only pray with tears and supplication, but that He should die for this upon the Cross.

I reflected, moreover, upon how complete must be the damnation, how great the infinite miseries and countless torments which awaited me for each mortal sin which I had committed, if, in order to give satisfaction for them, it was needful that not angel or archangel, but the very God, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, should Himself suffer for me and endure the misery of death and the tortures of the Cross.

I did likewise reflect upon mine ingratitude, and how that not only do I nothing in return for such a great benefit, but do even offend Him every day, refusing to remember the benefit of His redemption or, by doing penance, to work together with Him for my salvation. And I was amazed at these things, at the infinite goodness and mercy of God and mine own great iniquity and foolishness. And as I thought upon this, it was shown unto me how that by the Passion of Christ we are liberated from all the sins, torments, and punishments which we have deserved ; and this was shown unto me so clearly that scarce could I restrain myself from crying aloud in the presence of all people.

Thus was it told me by the Lord Jesus Christ when He appeared unto me that forasmuch as He had been hanged for us upon the Cross, no man or person whatsoever could excuse himself if he were not saved. For in order to procure salvation it is only needful to act as a sick man acteth with his physician, who, desiring to regain his health, showeth his infirmity and disposeth

himself to obey in all that the physician commandeth him. So here likewise is it needful to do naught else, nor to spend money for medicine, but only to show himself unto the Physician by the acknowledgment of his sins, to do that which the Physician ordereth and to take heed that he oppose Him not in any way.

My soul did comprehend that the medicine was Christ's blood, which He giveth freely without price, and it costeth nothing unto the sick sinner save this disposing of himself, and the Physician Christ giveth him health and healeth him of his infirmity.

Then were all my sins shown unto my soul, and I perceived that each member had its special spiritual infirmity. Wherefore, hearing what had been said, the soul did instantly endeavour to show forth all the sins which it had committed with the different members of the body and with all its own strength and powers, saying :

“ Oh Lord, Master and Physician of eternal health ! Oh my God, forasmuch as by only showing forth unto Thee my infirmities and diseases Thou hast consented to heal me, and because, oh Lord, I am very sick and have no part in me that is not corrupt and defiled, I, wretched that I am, will show Thee, oh Lord, all mine infirmities and all the sins of all my members and of all the parts of my soul and body ! ”

Then did I begin and point them all out, saying, “ Oh Lord, most merciful Physician, look upon mine head and

see how oftentimes I have adorned it with the emblems of pride, how I have many times deformed it by curling and braiding my hair, and have committed numerous other sins. Look, oh Lord, upon my wretched eyes, full of uncleanness and envy ! ”

In like manner I strove to number and show forth all the sins of mine other members. And when He had hearkened thereunto with great patience, the Lord Jesus Christ did gladly and joyfully make answer that He had healed these things one after another—and then, taking pity upon my soul, He said :

“ Fear not, My daughter, neither do thou despair ; for even wert thou tainted with a thousand deadly diseases, wert thou dead a thousand times, yet could I give thee a medicine whereby thou mightest be healed of everything if thou wouldst only apply it unto thy heart and soul. For the infirmities of thine head which thou hast told and shown unto Me, and for which thou art displeasing unto God and grievous unto thyself, which infirmities thou hast incurred by washing, combing, anointing, colouring, adorning, and braiding thy hair, by setting thyself up in pride and seeking vainglory, for which things thou dost deserve to be cast into the uttermost parts of hell, to be humbled in all eternity and reputed as one most vile, for these infirmities have I given satisfaction and done penance. I suffered the most grievous pain inasmuch as My hair was plucked out and my head pierced by sharp thorns ; with a rod was it smitten and

covered with blood, it endured all manner of mockery and scorn, and with the vilest of crowns was it crowned.

“For the infirmity of thy face, which thou hast contracted likewise by washing and anointing it, by showing it unto miserable men and seeking their favour, I have made and ordained a medicine. For these sins have I also given satisfaction, for wicked men did spit in My Face, making it all filthy and stained ; it was swollen and deformed by rude and heavy blows and a vile cloth was hung before it.

“Moreover, for thine eyes, with which thou hast looked at vain and hurtful things and hast delighted in gazing at many things which were opposed unto God, have I given satisfaction, shedding copious and bitter tears from My eyes which were veiled and filled with blood.

“For the ears wherewith thou hast offended God by hearkening unto vain and hurtful things and taking delight therein, I have done great penance, hearkening unto many grievous things, such as false accusations, slanders, insults, curses, mockings, lies and blasphemies, and finally the wicked judgment spoken against Myself—but above all I did penance in hearkening unto the weeping of My most loving and lowly mother, who grieved for Me with exceeding great grief.

“Because of the sins of thy mouth and throat, wherewith thou didst take delight in feasting and drunkenness and in the sweetness of delicate meats, My mouth hath been dry and empty, hungry and thirsty, it hath

fasted and been made bitter with vinegar mingled with gall.

“For the sins of thy tongue, which thou hast let loose in slanders, calumnies, derisions, blasphemies, lies, perjuries, and other sins, I did shut My mouth in the presence of judges and false witnesses, no excuses issued from My mouth, and with all Mine heart did I pray unto God for those who did Me evil, and I always preached the truth.

“Because of the sins of thy power of smell, whereby thou didst delight in flowers, I did smell the abominable spittle which I endured upon My face and eyes and nostrils.

“For the sins committed with thy neck, by shaking it in anger, pride, and lasciviousness, and against the Supreme God, I suffered many and divers blows upon My neck.

“For the sins of thy shoulders and back, whereby thou hast offended in bearing many things which were opposed unto God, I did penance by bearing upon My shoulders the Cross whereon I was to hang.

“For the sins of thy hands and arms, with which thou hast done much wickedness, in embraces, touches, and other evil deeds, My hands were driven into the wood of the Cross by large nails and torn through bearing the weight of My body in Mine agony.

“For the sins of thy heart, with which thou hast sinned through anger, envy, sadness, evil love, and base covetousness, My side and heart were pierced with a sharp spear, and from the wound issued there forth a most potent

medicine, sufficient to heal all the passions and sins of the heart—that is to say, water to cool evil desires and loves, and blood for the remission of anger, sadness, and enmity.

“For the sins of thy feet, wherewith thou hast sinned through vain running and dancing and loose walking about for thy pleasure, My feet were not only twisted and bound, but were nailed upon the wood of the Cross ; in place of shoes laced and adorned with cut leather, I had feet all bleeding and covered with the blood which flowed from My whole body.

“For the sins of thy whole body, wherewith thou hast sinned by giving it up to delights, repose, and dreams, taking pleasure therein in divers ways, My body was fastened upon the Cross, terribly scourged, and stretched out thereon after the manner of a skin ; I was closely fastened upon the hard wood until I was bathed in a bloody sweat which ran down even upon the ground ; and finally I suffered here the most dreadful torments, crying aloud, sighing, weeping and lamenting until I died, slain by cruel men for the sins of thine ornaments and thy needless, vain, and curious raiment. I was hung naked upon the Cross, and vile men stripped off My tunic and My vest and cast dice for them before Mine eyes. And, naked as when I was born of the Virgin, in the cold, the wind, and the air, I was exposed and stretched out on high in the sight of all men and women, in order that I might be the more easily seen and mocked at and might suffer the greater shame.

“Because of the sin of thy wealth, wherewith thou hast done evil by acquiring, wrongfully spending, and saving it, I have been poor, possessing neither palace, nor house, nor hut, wherein I might be born or where I might dwell during My lifetime; in death I should have had no sepulchre wherein I might rest (but should have been left a prey unto dogs and birds) if one had not been moved through compassion of My misery to receive Me into his own sepulchre. My blood and My life have I given unto perverse and sinful men; nothing whatsoever have I kept for Myself, but in life and death have I desired to be and to remain poor for ever.

“But wherefore should I say more? Howsoever thou mayest discourse, thou canst not find any sin, any disease of the soul, for the which I have not brought the true medicine and given sufficient satisfaction for all sinners and for all the infinite torments and grievous pains which the wretched soul ought to suffer in hell. But if thou remainest not in thy neglectfulness thou needest lament no longer, if only thou dost here suffer with Me and have compassion upon Me always, and be My companion in poverty, ignominy, and contempt as long as thou livest. Mary Magdalene, who was sick, had all these things and desired to be wholly liberated from them. Wherefore was she healed of all her infirmities—and in like manner can all persons who have these things find health as she did.”

The Crucified One spake further unto me and said: “When these My sons, who through sin have departed

from My kingdom and made themselves sons of the devil, do return unto the Father, He hath great joy of them and showeth them His exceeding great delight in their return. So great is the Father's joy at their conversion that He bestoweth upon them supernatural grace, the which He giveth not unto virgins who through sin have not departed from Him. And this He doth because of the boundless love which He beareth them, and because of the pity which He hath of their wretchedness ; also because they do grieve for that they have offended so great a Majesty and do know themselves to be worthy of hell.

“ Because of these two reasons, even he who hath been the greatest sinner may find the greatest grace and mercy.”

After this the Lord spake unto me again and said : “ Whosoever desireth to find grace must not lift his eyes from the Cross, whether I do grant and permit him to live in joy, or whether he live in sorrow.”

SEVENTH CONSOLATION OF THE PASSION OF OUR LORD
JESUS CHRIST

UPON another occasion, as I was gazing at the Cross with the Crucified, and was looking at the Crucified with my bodily eyes, such a fervent love was suddenly kindled in my soul that even the members of my body felt it with great joy and delight. I saw and felt that Christ embraced my soul with the arm wherewith He was crucified,

wherefore I rejoiced with a joy greater than I had ever had before.

From this time forth there hath remained unto me a certain joy and clear enlightenment, whereby the soul knoweth and understandeth how it is that we see our flesh made one company with God. And this true delight of the soul was more unspeakable, this joy was more constant and this enlightenment was clearer than I had ever had before. There remained unto me, therefore, so complete an assurance and certainty of my state that I had no more doubt whatsoever but that this state is most certainly from God, and likewise that the admonitions or words which I heard within me are also from God. And I marvelled how hitherto I could possibly have doubted this. And so entirely certain was I of this state that I could not have believed otherwise even if all the men in the world had told me the contrary.

Even now, when I am rapt in this vision and embrace, my soul is so filled with joy that I can feel no sadness whatsoever of the Passion, albeit I see that that Hand is wounded. All my joy lieth now in Christ Crucified, and sometimes it seemeth unto my soul that in the aforesaid close embrace it entereth into the side of Christ—and the joy which my soul hath of this illumination cannot be described, for it is so great that sometimes I cannot stand upon my feet, but do fall down and lose my speech.

Here end the Consolations of the Passion of Christ.

HERE BEGIN THE CONSOLATIONS AND VISIONS
WHICH SHE DID HAVE OF THE SACRAMENT
OF THE ALTAR

THE first vision was, that upon one occasion whilst Mass was being said, and as I was striving to think with devotion of the humility of God and of His supreme goodness (in that it pleased Him to come unto us in the Sacrament of the Altar), I was exalted in spirit and obtained a new and clear understanding of how God cometh in the aforesaid Sacrament.

Firstly, it was told me that, by virtue of His divine power, the body of Christ could be upon every altar, a thing not to be comprehended in this present life. And although much is said in the Scriptures of that power, those who read do nevertheless understand but little of it. "But those who feel something of Me," said God, "do understand more of it; nevertheless, neither the former nor the latter do fully understand, but the time cometh when ye shall understand."

After this I was enlightened and did comprehend in a manner clearer than had been shown me either before or afterwards, how God cometh in this Sacrament. I beheld how Christ cometh together with a most beauteous company, at whose beauty I marvelled greatly. And desiring to know who they were, it was told me that they were the thrones. That company was most bright, and

was an exceeding numerous multitude ; so that if I had not known that God doeth all things with measure, I should have deemed it to be without number or measure, but innumerable ; for it could not be measured either in length or breadth, but was ineffable.

SECOND VISION OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

BEING in the church of Foligno at the Feast of the Angels in September, I desired to communicate, and I prayed unto the holy angels, especially unto Saint Michael and the seraphim, saying :

“ Oh ye ministering angels, who have received power and office from God that ye may administer Him unto others by showing forth His knowledge and love, I do beseech you that ye present Him unto me such as the Father of Mercies did give Him unto men, such as He desireth that I should receive and worship Him—that is to say, as one poor, suffering, despised, wounded, bleeding, crucified, and dead upon the Cross.”

Then did the angels reply unto me with infinite graciousness and sweetness :

“ Oh thou who art pleasing unto God, behold, He hath been administered unto thee and is present with thee, and moreover, it is given unto thee to administer and present Him unto the others.”

And verily, I did then have Him present with me, and I did of a certainty behold Him with mine eyes in that

Sacrament in the manner as I had prayed—that is to say, poor, suffering, bleeding, crucified, and dead upon the Cross. At the sight of such a grievous vision I did then feel a pain so exceeding sharp that methought mine heart would burst. On the other hand, however, I was filled with joy and gladness because of the presence of the angels, and if I had not myself beheld them, I should never have believed that angels were so pleasing, or that they could have filled the soul with so much joy.

Now whilst the Mass was being said, there was a priest who was celebrating near unto the time of the Communion. And as he was taking the Body of Christ and breaking the Host, I heard a voice weeping and saying, “Alas, many are there who break Me in pieces and who do even draw blood from My back!” I did therefore think that the priest was not in a state meet for receiving the Body of Christ, and I prayed, saying, “Grant that he may not be such a one,” and instantly it was answered me, “He shall not be thus eternally.”

THIRD VISION OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

ANOTHER time I was in church hearing Mass, and about the time of the elevation of the Body of Christ (when the congregation kneeleth down to adore it), I was uplifted in spirit, and the Blessed Virgin appeared unto me in a vision and said :

“ Oh my daughter, sweet unto my Son and unto me, my Son is now come unto thee and thou hast received His blessing.”

Then did she make me to understand that after the consecration of the Host, her Son was upon the altar, as though she were telling me some new thing with great joy. And these words gave me such pleasure and delight that I neither think nor believe that there be any person who could possibly relate it. For the Blessed Virgin told this unto me with great humility, and with a new feeling and the utmost sweetness. Wherefore I marvelled how that I had been able to remain standing, so great was my joy.

Then she spake again and said—“ Forasmuch as thou hast received the blessing of my Son, it is meet that I should come unto thee and give thee mine likewise.” Then did she bless me, saying, “ Be thou blessed of my Son and of me, and strive thou with all diligence and earnestness to love Him to the utmost of thy power ; for thou art greatly beloved and shalt attain unto that which is infinite.”

Then was my joy greater than before, and it was yet more increased at the elevation of the Body of Christ. Yet I beheld nothing in the Body of Christ as I had hitherto beheld it, but I felt Christ verily within my soul.

Thus came I to know by this that there is nothing which so filleth the soul with the burning fire and delight of love as having Christ within. For this is the fire of

sweetest love, and when it burneth in the soul, then know I that God is verily there likewise, because none other can produce this effect. Then do all my members feel as though they were loosened and disjointed, and when they are thus loosened they do make a noise. This do I feel chiefly during the elevation of the Body of Christ, and especially in my hands, which become disjointed and fall apart.

FOURTH VISION OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

ANOTHER time, when I came to communicate, a heavenly voice spake unto me and said—"Oh beloved, in thee is all good, and thou goest to receive all good."

Whereupon I began to think, "If all good is in thee, wherefore goest thou to receive it?" Unto this came an answer immediately, "Although all good is in thee, it will not be effaced by that which thou art now going to receive." And as I drew nigh unto the Communion, the voice spake again and said, "Now is the Son of God upon the altar, according both unto His divinity and His humanity, and with Him is a multitude of angels."

And forasmuch as I desired greatly to behold Him with the angels, God was then shown unto me. I saw Him not in any form whatsoever, but I beheld plenitude and beauty—that is to say, I beheld all goodness. And it

was told unto me, "Beloved, thus shalt thou stand before Him in the life eternal," and the comfort my soul derived therefrom cannot be described.

When I communicate, the Host swelleth in my mouth for a little time after I have received it, and it hath a taste neither of bread nor of meat such as we do eat, but it hath quite another taste which resembleth nothing in the world. Moreover, the Host is not hard as heretofore, and doth not go down my throat in little pieces, but it goeth down whole, and it is so sweet that I would willingly hold it in my mouth for a great while if I had not heard it said that man should swallow it instantly. Thus it goeth whole down my throat, with that taste of an unknown meat, and—saving that it is the custom—there is no need to drink anything after it in order to swallow it more easily. And as it goeth down my throat it produceth in me a great feeling of pleasure, which is apparent outwardly in the body, for it maketh me so to tremble that scarcely can I hold the cup.

Now, when I do make the sign of the Cross and place my hand upon mine head, saying, "In the name of the Father," I feel nothing new. But when I place my hand upon my heart, saying, "and of the Son," I do instantly feel such love and consolation that methinketh I have found Him there.

This would I not have related or caused to be written down like the other things had I not been advised thereunto.

FIFTH VISION OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

DURING a certain time of sickness I greatly desired to communicate at the Feast of the Angels, and forasmuch as there was no person to bring me the most holy Body of Christ, I began to grieve exceedingly.

Then, in the midst of my grief and desire for Communion, behold, I began to reflect upon that same Feast of the Angels, upon their praise-giving, and how they do praise the Lord continually ; and I reflected upon the office of the angels, which is to praise God, to serve Him and minister unto Him. And behold, I was then suddenly exalted, and I saw before me a great multitude of angels ; and they led me unto an altar and said unto me, " This is the altar of the blessed angels." And upon the altar did they show unto my soul Him whom the angels praise, that is to say, they showed Him who is all praise ; and they said—

" In Him who is now upon the altar is the true perfection and complement of the most worthy sacrifice which thou seekest. Wherefore prepare thyself worthily to receive Him, for He hath espoused thee with the ring of His love and the marriage hath already been celebrated, but now wilt thou see a new way of accomplishing the marriage."

I cannot describe the great joy which I had of this, for my soul felt it all in very truth, seeing that it was more

full of meaning than can be related in words. Hereby was it also signified unto me that I should presently depart out of this world, because this thing happened at the beginning of my last illness.

SIXTH VISION OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

ANOTHER time I beheld Christ in the consecrated Host as a Child. He appeared certainly to be a child of twelve years of age, very lordly, as though He held the sceptre and the dominion. He appeared to hold something in His hand as an emblem of lordship, but I know not what, and although I saw it with my bodily eyes I cannot say what it was that He held in His hand. When I beheld Him I did not kneel down like the others, so great was my delight at beholding Him, but I was much displeased and grieved because the priest replaced the Host too soon upon the altar.

Verily, His beauty and adornment cannot be described, and so great was my joy at the sight of Him that I do think it will never fade, and there was such certainty with it that I do in no way doubt of the truth thereof. And finally, my delight in that vision was so great that I asked no help of Him and spake neither good nor evil, for I was so absorbed in the delight of that beauty that I knew not what to say.

SEVENTH VISION OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

ANOTHER time whilst Mass was being celebrated I was uplifted in spirit, and I did question the Lord, saying—

“Behold, Lord, Thou art in this Sacrament of the Altar, but tell me where are Thy faithful ones?”

Then opened He mine understanding and made answer, “Where I am, there are My faithful ones with Me.”

Then I perceived that it was so, and I comprehended clearly that in every place where He was, there should I be also. But this being is not the being within God, but the being which is outside of Him. And it is He alone who is in every place and comprehendeth all things.

I have many times seen the Body of Christ in divers forms in this Blessed Sacrament. For sometimes I have seen the throat of Christ more splendid and beauteous than the sun, and by that beauty was it certified unto me that God Himself was here, seeing that it was incomparably greater than the sun both in beauty and quantity, wherefore doth it greatly grieve me that I cannot make it manifest. Sometimes I have seen two eyes of great splendour, and so large that I beheld nothing of the Host save the edge thereof.

At the sight of both these things was I refreshed with so much joy that I cannot compare the one with the

other, because both are so great that I do think I shall never lose them.

HERE BEGIN THE VISIONS WHEREIN SHE WAS
COMFORTED BY THE BLESSED VIRGIN

FIRST VISION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

UPON one occasion I was exalted in spirit although I was not then at prayer, but as it was after dinner I had sat me down to meditate, and therefore I was not thinking about it in any way. And suddenly my soul was uplifted to behold and contemplate the Blessed Virgin Mary in glory; and beholding a woman placed in such nobility, glory and dignity as was she, I was filled with marvellous delight, and the sight did produce in me most immense joyfulness. The glorious Virgin was praying for the human race, and so great was her exaltedness, humanity, and virtue that she was wholly ineffable, wherefore was my joy unspeakable.

And as I gazed at these things, Jesus Christ did suddenly appear in that place, seated beside her in glorified humanity. And as I gazed at Him (albeit I knew how His flesh had been tormented, lacerated, reviled, and ignominiously crucified, and miraculously knowing all the heavy sufferings, injuries, scoffings, and vilenesses borne for our sake), I did in no wise grieve, indeed, it is impossible to describe the delight I had thereof, and my

speech failed me, so that methought I was about to die. I say, moreover, that it was unto me an exceeding great grief that I did not die, so that I might speedily attain unto that unspeakable thing which I beheld.

This vision endured for three days in succession, and I was not hindered from eating, albeit I ate but little. My body did lie down in constant weakness and I spake not at all. Nothing else did hinder me, but when I heard God spoken of I could not contain myself for my immense joy.

SECOND VISION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

WHEN I was in the church of the Brothers Minor at Foligno upon the morning of the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, a voice spake unto me, saying, "This is the hour wherein the Virgin Mary came into the Temple with her Son." This thing did my soul hear with exceeding great love ; thereupon it was exalted and I beheld our Lady entering that place. My soul advanced to meet her with great reverence and love ; but because it feared somewhat to approach near unto her, our Lady did greatly reassure it, and holding out her Son towards me, she said, "Oh lover of my Son, take Him !" And with these words she placed her beloved Son in mine arms. And as I gazed upon Him, His eyes appeared to be fast closed as though He were asleep, and He was wrapped in clothes, or rather swaddled.

Our Lady, who was wearied by walking, then sat her down and made such beautiful, fair, and pleasing gesture (showing how honest and gracious were her manners), that for the sweetness and delight which it had of beholding her my soul was not only unable to look at the Lord (whom I held clasped in mine arms), but it was constrained only to contemplate our Lady herself.

And as I stood thus, the Child remained all naked in mine arms ; and opening His eyes He lifted them and looked to me. And at the look of those eyes I did suddenly feel myself filled with so much love that I was altogether overwhelmed. Because from those eyes there issued forth such splendour and fire of love and joy that it is a thing indescribable. After that there appeared suddenly a great and ineffable Majesty, saying—

“ He who beholdeth Me not small will not behold Me great.” After this He added, “ I am come unto thee and have offered Myself unto thee in order that thou mayest offer thyself unto Me.”

Then did my soul in a manner most marvellous and indescribable offer itself unto the Lord ; finally I offered myself wholly, and likewise my children who followed after me perfectly. I offered myself in all things, keeping back nothing whatsoever either of mine own possessions or of theirs, and my soul understood that God had very willingly accepted this offering, receiving it with great readiness. Wherefore I cannot tell how great was the joy, jubilation, and delight which my soul felt when

it saw that God accepted my offering with so much joyfulness and graciousness.

Yet another time did I behold the glorious Virgin Mary and she exhorted me to go unto Communion, giving me her blessing and relating unto me the sufferings of compassion which she had for her Son.

Here end the Visions of the Sacrament of the Altar.

HERE BEGIN THE VISIONS WITH WHICH SHE
WAS COMFORTED CONCERNING HER CHILDREN
WHO SHOULD FOLLOW AFTER CHRIST

FIRST VISION CONCERNING HER CHILDREN

BEING exalted upon one occasion, and drawn and absorbed into the Light uncreate, I beheld that which cannot be related. And as I remained in that state, there appeared unto me the image of the blessed God made Man, Christ Crucified, as though He had been but then lifted down from the Cross, and His blood issued forth from His wounds as fresh and red as though it were at that very moment first bursting from the new-made wounds. In all His joints, moreover, there appeared such a dissolution of the sinews (caused by the cruel stretching upon the Cross) that the bones seemed all to be loosened from their proper places.

At this sight my bowels were pierced with anguish and I grieved more than I had ever grieved before. And as I stood thus plunged in grief, there suddenly appeared around the Crucified a multitude of my children who were devout and given unto preaching and to following the example of poverty, contempt, and suffering of Christ Crucified. The Blessed Jesus called them unto Himself, and drawing each one unto Him, He embraced him and made him to kiss the wound in His side, and clasping him close with His own hands, He laid his head there in that place. And because of the joy born in my soul at this sight, I did forget the aforesaid sorrow.

The degree of my children, however, was different one from another, for some did He press less and some more into His side ; some did He place there often and some were wholly absorbed into His side, whence there appeared on their lips the redness of red blood, and the mouths of some were adorned with this blood and their faces all coloured with it, according unto their aforesaid degrees. And bestowing upon each one His liberal blessing, He said—

“ Oh ye blessed sons, discover ye the way of the Cross—that is to say, the way of My poverty, contempt and suffering. For in these times especially do fellow-workers abound, and ye have I most especially elected in order that through you and your preaching and example may be discovered and made manifest My truth which hath hitherto been trodden upon and hidden by the world.”

Then did my soul understand that in like manner as my children had been pressed upon His side according to their different degrees, so also unto each one were these words diversely addressed. In no wise is it possible to describe the exceeding great love which shone in that blessed Face and especially in those Eyes of God made Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, upon these children as He pressed them upon His sacred wounds, and which was moreover revealed in all the signs, words, and benedictions made and pronounced over them.

SECOND VISION CONCERNING HER CHILDREN

UPON another occasion, when I was walking in a certain procession, I felt that same unfathomable attraction of the Word Uncreate in the aforesaid ineffable manner. And I beheld the blessed God, Three in One, dwelling in the minds of my sons and transforming them diversely in Himself according unto their degrees, to behold which thing was verily like unto being in Paradise! For so tenderly and lovingly did He descend upon them that I wearied not of gazing at them, and so full and sweet, so cordially spoken was the blessing which God Uncreate poured out upon these children that it is altogether indescribable. Then called I unto my children, saying—

“Oh my sons, be ye as a burnt sacrifice, wholly consumed both in mind and body.”

In like manner was the supreme God made Man, Christ Crucified, shown unto me, with all His joints loosened as hath already been said, and during the whole time of the procession was He carried through the air before mine eyes without the help of any hand whatsoever. And He gathered the children unto Him and pressed them upon the wound in His side, saying unto them—

“I am He who taketh away the sins of the world. Your sins have I taken away and they shall never more be imputed unto you. For this is the fountain of the true and perfect cleansing, this is the price of the true redemption and this is the house of the true habitation. Wherefore, oh My children, fear not to discover and to defend both by word and deed this most excellent truth of life and of My way, which is assailed by the perverse and the wicked, for I am ever with you, your Helper and Defender.”

Moreover, both now and also at other times was there shown unto me the cleansing of all my sons in three degrees. One was a special gift of great grace made unto some of them for the joyful perfecting of themselves in works of virtue. Another degree was the special gift of great grace and strength for the easy resisting of sin. The third and last degree was the perfection of the soul and its transformation in the Crucified. And although much beauty is bestowed upon the soul in all these changes and graces, yet is nevertheless the first degree of great, pleasing and most excellent beauty. Likewise is the last degree

greater than I can say. These children did appear unto me to be so entirely transformed in God that now I do behold scarce aught else save Christ Crucified and not yet glorified, so wholly do my children seem to have been absorbed and transubstantiated into Him.

THIRD CONSOLATION CONCERNING HER CHILDREN

DURING that same procession, as we were approaching unto a church of the Blessed Virgin, behold, the Queen of Mercy and Mother of all Grace herself arose, and inclining herself unto these children in a new and gracious manner, she bestowed on them blessings sweeter than all other blessings, kissing them all upon the breast, some more and some less ; and some did she embrace with her arms as she kissed them. Of so great a charity was she, that—being apparently all luminous—she did seem to absorb those children into that infinite light within her own breast. Yet it seemed unto me that I beheld no arms of flesh, but a certain miraculous light into which, as hath been said, she absorbed them with a most great and tender love.

FOURTH CONSOLATION CONCERNING HER CHILDREN

UPON that same day, amongst many other things which I saw, whilst Mass was being celebrated, there appeared unto

me the Blessed Francis, all glorious, offering me his customary salutation, the which is—"The peace of the Most High be with thee." His manner of saluting is always to speak in a voice pious, humble, gracious, and affectionate.

Then did he praise greatly unto me the ardent intentions of some of my sons and their zeal in observing the poverty of the Order. But he desired that it should increase with the work and he said—

"May the eternal, perfect and abundant blessing (which I have received from God Eternal) descend upon the heads of these beloved children of mine and thine. See that thou biddest them live according unto the way of Christ, showing it forth fearlessly both in word and deed; for I am with them and the Eternal God is their Helper."

With so much affection did he then praise these children for their good intentions, comforting them with the promise that they should assuredly make good progress and that he would help them in his own intention, and blessing them so lovingly that he appeared as though he would rend himself for love of them.

Many other things did I behold concerning myself and my children, all of which I cannot describe. But this will I say, that I have seen and clearly comprehended that the blessed God doth most tenderly overshadow us, and likewise His sweet Mother, and they are ready to bear the burden of our penitence, asking only that

ye, oh my sons, should be shining examples of splendid gentleness in suffering, poverty, and derision. They desire, moreover, to see you dead unto this life, so that your habitation be in heaven and your body alone in this world. And as a dead man is not moved either by honour or beauty, so must ye be in all ways unchangeable and outside of all worldly fear ; and ye must preach unto others rather for the mortification of your own lives than for the sake of making contentious discourse. They do likewise desire that in all your deeds your whole intention should be fixed in heaven in the blessed Christ Crucified.

Thus, whether outwardly ye work or speak or eat, ye are inwardly one with Him who desireth that ye should continually bear Him about with you in every place and land, and that He should ever direct all your actions. And I pray that He who hath deigned to ask this thing of you will likewise deign to fulfil His desire in you, through the merits of His most holy Mother, the Virgin Mary.

INSTRUCTION AND CONSOLATION RECEIVED FROM
GOD CONCERNING HER TRIBULATIONS

ONCE I besought God that He would give me something of Himself, and He made for me the sign of the Cross. Then I prayed Him that He would show me who were

His best beloved sons. Wherefore, amongst other things, was this example immediately told unto me :

“ Let us suppose that there was a man who had many dear friends whom he had bidden unto a feast prepared with great care and diligence. If it should happen, now, that many of those who were bidden refused to come, dost thou not think that he would grieve for those who came not, seeing that he had abundantly and with great cost prepared the feast, and that he would receive those who did come with great honour ? And is there any doubt but that, amongst those who were all joyfully received, there were not some more familiarly loved, whom he placed near unto himself at table, eating with them out of the same dish and drinking with them from the same cup ? ”

With great joy in my soul I then asked : “ Oh Lord, when Thou biddest all, do Thou tell me more fully of the difference.”

And He answered : “ I have bidden all unto the life eternal and preparations have been made for all, and none can excuse himself for that he hath not been asked. But of all who were bidden only few come and are given places at the table.” And He gave me to understand that He Himself was the table, and not only the table, but the food likewise.

I did also ask by what way were those come who were come, and it was immediately told me by the way of tribulation, such as the virgins, the chaste, the poor, the

sick, and the patient, with many others who had suffered tribulation and were destined unto salvation.

Understanding thus the reasoning and explanation, every word did greatly delight me. Yet all had He bidden and all did He equally call His children. In these words was it notified unto me that virginity, poverty, sickness, loss of children and possessions and other temporal goods, and finally that all tribulations were sent by God unto His children for their good, albeit at that time they did not know this and could not understand it. For this reason there were many greatly troubled in the beginning, but afterwards, like true sons, they endured everything with patience and thanksgiving.

Such are those who most commonly attain unto eternal life, nor is there any other way. But those who are bidden unto the special table, whom God maketh to eat out of the same dish and drink out of the same cup with Himself, are those who desire and strive to know who is this good Father and Lord who hath bidden them to the feast, and who seek to please Him by the imitation of His most holy Cross and by voluntarily taking upon themselves poverty, contempt, ignominy and affliction. For unto such sons as these doth God send many tribulations, the which are sent unto them as an especial grace in order that they may eat out of one dish with Him. "For at that table," said Christ, "I was called to drink the cup of the shameful Passion, which was made sweet unto Me through your love, although it was of itself exceeding hard and bitter."

Recognising this grace and mercy, therefore, albeit they do find the tribulations bitter, these sons do nevertheless esteem them supremely sweet because of the love, grace, honour and worthiness contained therein. Therefore are they now not afflicted by their troubles, and the greater their tribulations the more delighted are they and the closer do they feel themselves unto God. Wherefore do I say and affirm that the children of God do feel the divine sweetness mingled with persecutions, tribulations, and penances, all of which was set forth unto me in the afore-said preaching. Countless times have I experienced this, and I could not reveal or declare the sweetness I felt or the tears of exceeding great joy that I shed when I was troubled or reviled by my brethren, my friends, or my kindred.

During a time of great sickness, as I was lying very weak, there did again appear unto me God made Man, Jesus Christ the Consoler, and methought that He had great compassion on me and said unto me : " I am come to serve thee." The service which He rendered me was to stand before my bed, showing Himself to be so pleasing and so gracious that it is a thing wholly unspeakable. And I beheld Him more clearly with the eyes of my mind than it is possible to behold any person with the eyes of the body, and so great was my joyfulness and supreme delight that it can in no wise be expressed or declared, because it is wholly ineffable.

Again, upon a certain Holy Thursday I said unto my

companion : " Let us seek Jesus Christ the Crucified, and let us go unto the hospital, for perchance we shall find Him amongst those poor, suffering and afflicted ones." So we took the cloths we wore upon our heads (not having aught else), and giving them unto the servant of the hospital, we bade her sell them and with the money buy something for the poor of the hospital to eat. And albeit she feared to do it, telling us that we should cause ourselves to be reviled, yet because of our great importunity she went and sold those poor little cloths and purchased fish with the money, unto which we did add the bread which had been given unto us for the love of God for our own sustenance. After this we washed the feet of the poor women and the hands of the men, but especially those of a leper which were all putrefied and spoiled and full of corruption. Afterwards we did drink the water wherewith we had washed him, and that drink was so sweet unto us that we tasted of its sweetness all the way as we returned until we arrived at this place. And because a scale from those sores had got into my throat I endeavoured to swallow it as though I had received it in communion ; and at last I did swallow it, and I found it to be so sweet that I can in no wise describe it.

This have I told, because although man is troubled in the beginning by the penances, afflictions and tribulations he has accepted of God, yet doth he at last find exceeding great consolation therein.

A FURTHER CONSOLATION GIVEN UNTO HER OF GOD

ANOTHER time when I was stirred by spiritual tribulation it seemed unto me that for the space of a month I did feel nothing whatsoever of God ; yea, it seemed even as though He had wholly forsaken me and I was not able to confess my sins.

Although upon the one hand methought this had happened unto me because of my pride, upon the other hand I perceived my sins so plainly and with such deep conviction that I doubted if ever I should be able to confess them with due contrition, or even declare them with my mouth. For this reason I could neither praise God nor pray ; but I perceived that this alone remained unto me of God, that I was not as greatly troubled as I deserved to be for having desired to depart from God through sin, yet I could not have desired to offend God for all the good and evil in the world, or consent unto wickedness. Thus was I deeply and most terribly troubled and afflicted during the whole of the aforesaid time.

Then through the mercy and pity of God there spake unto me a voice and said : “ Daughter beloved of Almighty God and of all the blessed saints in Paradise, God hath placed His love in thee and beareth more love toward thee than toward any other woman in the Valley of Spoleto.”

Then did my soul cry aloud and answer : “ How may

I believe this, seeing that I am full of tribulation and do seem to be forsaken of God ? ”

The voice made answer : “ When thou thinkest thyself to be most forsaken, then art thou most dearly beloved and nearest unto the eternal God.” And again he added : “ A father who hath but one dearly beloved son doth administer unto him delicate meats in moderation, and permitteth him not to drink pure wine ; but he doth mingle the wine with water and permitteth him to eat nothing hurtful, in order that his food may do him no hurt but always good. And God doth likewise, mingling temptations and grievous tribulations with His consolations, and keeping the soul in these tribulations and temptations ; for if He did not do this, it would plunge into intemperate enjoyments as into a sea and would be drowned. Wherefore, as I have said, when the soul seemeth to be most forsaken, then is it most loved.”

Then were my tribulations somewhat tempered, but not wholly taken away, for I did not yet feel disposed to confess and communicate. But in a short time they were all taken away and thus was it told me—

“ It pleaseth Me that thou shouldst communicate—because if thou receivest Me, thou hast already received Me, and if thou receivest Me not, thou hast received Me nevertheless. Communicate, therefore, with the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And do it for reverence of Almighty God, of Saint Mary the Virgin, and of Saint Anthony whose Feast it is to-day ;

for unto thee shall be given a new and most excellent grace which thou hast never had before.”

There was vouchsafed unto me accordingly the grace to confess and the desire to communicate, and I did confess immediately.

Now whilst Mass was being said, I perceived myself to be so full of sins and shortcomings that I could not speak, and I thought that the Communion which I then desired would be a judgment upon me. Nevertheless there was presently granted me such an admirable disposition that I was able to place myself wholly in Christ. Then I entered into Him with a faith and security such as I had never before experienced; I placed myself in Him and in His merits as though I were dead, with an admirable certainty that He would raise me up to life again. Wherefore I communicated in His faith, and there was granted unto me a marvellous feeling which left in me a peace whereby I was given to understand and to feel that all tribulation which had happened unto me was for my good. And this Communion which I received did bring my soul in faith unto this perception and desire—that is to say, I desired to give myself wholly unto Christ because He hath given Himself unto us. Wherefore do I take new delight in the longing for martyrdom, and I desire so much that I rejoice when grief and tribulation more than usual do fall upon me. Hence do I conclude that in the end God consoleth every troubled soul.

Thus I do remember me that, being one time afflicted

and believing myself forsaken, I heard it said unto me :
“ Know, thou beloved, that thou art not forsaken—yea,
rather is God nearer unto thee and thou unto God in
tribulation than in times more prosperous.”

Then cried my soul—“ If it be true that I am nearer
unto God in tribulation, may it please Him to take away
all my sin and through the merits of His Passion to give
me free absolution, to give also His blessing unto me and
unto my companion, and likewise unto the brother who
hath written down these things.” And the answer was
given me, saying, “ Thy sins have been taken away, and I
bless you with the flesh of that Hand which was nailed
upon the Cross.”

Then I beheld that Hand stretched out in blessing
over our heads ; and I rejoiced greatly at the sight of that
Hand, because verily it was a joyous thing to see it. And
unto us three He gave His blessing, saying—“ The blessing
of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon
you, and may ye keep it through all eternity.” More-
over He said unto me, “ Say unto thy brother the writer
that he should seek to make himself little, and forasmuch
as he is greatly beloved of Almighty God, he must strive
to love Him yet more.”

Thus in many ways did He deign to console me, He
who consoleth all who are in tribulation, unto Whom be
honour and glory for ever and ever.

AN ILLUMINATION OF THE UNDERSTANDING GIVEN UNTO
HER OF GOD CONCERNING THE WAY AND THE
STATE OF SALVATION

UPON a certain time as I was praying in my closet these words were spoken unto me—"All who are instructed and enlightened of God to the end that they may understand the way of God, and who, in spite of this light and revelation especially given them of God, do shut their ears that they may not hear and their eyes that they may not see, who refuse to understand or hearken unto that which God sayeth unto the soul, but do more readily debase themselves and follow after other doctrine than that given them of God (desiring against their conscience to keep upon the broad highway), all these I declare to have merited the curse of Almighty God."

Not once only, but many times, was this judgment told unto me, and I was filled with horror when I heard it; it seemed unto me a thing most grave, for I feared there was no deception therein—that is to say, that God did curse those to whom He had first given His light and grace. Then was an example showed me, and it was commanded me that I should cause it to be written down; and the example was this:

"Suppose there was a father who sent his son unto the school, spending large sums upon him, clothing him

honourably in fair raiment and furnishing him with books, and who, after that the son hath been instructed by an inferior master, procureth that he shall be transferred unto a better one and advanced higher. If this scholar, then, behaveth negligently and careth nothing for the knowledge he hath learnt, but returneth unto a vulgar state and vile occupations, and unto work of great fatigue and labour, so that nothing remaineth unto him of all that he hath learnt, the father must assuredly feel great perturbation and indignation at his son."

Now such a son is he who is first instructed by preaching and the Scriptures, and afterwards especially enlightened by God, and unto whom it is given through especial light and divine inspiration to know and understand how he should follow in the way of Christ ; which learning God first caused him to be shown by others and did then Himself instruct him by His especial light and doctrine, which cannot be taught save by God alone. And this He doeth that the man may know how to direct himself and may also be as a light unto others. But if such a man declineth unto negligence, debasing himself and growing fat and despising the light which he hath and the divine doctrine and inspiration, then God will take away from him that light and that grace and will curse him instead. This was I commanded to have written down in order that I might tell it unto a brother unto whom I made confession, because it was a matter which concerned him.

In another heavenly conversation was I told that there is a certain generation which knoweth God only through the manifold goodness of the good things He hath done unto them, and that these know Him but little. And I was told that there is another generation of men who, albeit they know God through the aforesaid good things, do nevertheless know Him much better through His goodness which they experience in themselves.

In yet another conversation I heard a voice crying and saying, "Oh, how great are they! How great are they! Not the great readers of My Scriptures, but those who do them and fulfil them; for the whole of the divine Scriptures are fulfilled in the example of the Life of Christ Jesus."

Once when I was at prayer I said unto God—"I know, O Lord, that Thou art my Father, for Thou art my God; teach Thou me, therefore, that which Thou wouldst have me do, and instruct me in that which pleaseth Thee, for I am ready to obey Thee."

Now reflecting upon these words from morning even until the hour of tierce, I beheld and heard, but that which I beheld and heard am I in no wise able to declare. But it was a most unspeakable abyss, and it was shown me what it was, who dwelt therein and who dwelt not therein. And God said—

"Of a truth there is no other straight way than that which followeth My footsteps, for upon this road none are deceived."

And this hath been told unto me many times in truth and great clearness. Amen.

*Here end the Visions and Consolations of the
Blessed Angela of Fòligno.*

THE LAST WRITING OF THE BLESSED ANGELA OF FOLIGNO

THIS is the last writing and the last letter given by our Mother, the Blessed Angela of Foligno, before she fell sick unto death, and which she said was the last of her letters. She foresaw her happy passing away a long time before it happened, wherefore with great affection did she constrain her writer to write thus, saying—

“Oh my God, Jesus Christ, make me worthy that I may know Thy most high mystery, which hath been wrought by Thy most ardent charity. That is to say, the most high and profound mystery of Thy most holy Incarnation, which Thou hast wrought for our sake and which hath been the beginning of our salvation, for it doeth two things unto us. Firstly, it filleth us with love; and secondly, it maketh us to be verily certain of our salvation.

“Oh, how unspeakable is this charity! Truly there is none greater than this, that my God, the Creator of all, should have become a creature in order that He might

make me as God. Oh burning love ! Thou hast effaced Thyself and made Thyself the least of all in order that I might be great, and hast taken the form of a vile servant in order that Thou mightest confer upon me a royal and divine beauty. When Thou tookest my form, however, Thou didst not make Thyself so small that Thou didst in any way lessen aught of Thine own substance, or take away from Thy Godhead, but the depth of the humility of Thy Incarnation constraineth me to speak these difficult words. Oh Thou Incomprehensible One, who hast made Thyself comprehensible unto me, Thou God Uncreate made creature for me ! Oh Unthinkable One, made conceivable for me ! Oh Untouchable One, made so that I may touch Thee ! Oh Lord, make me worthy to behold the depth of this charity which Thou hast communicated unto us in this Thy most holy Incarnation ! Oh happy fault (which came not of thee, however, but of God's pity), unto whom it hath been permitted to show us the hidden depths of divine charity which had been concealed from us. And in very truth, a greater charity cannot be imagined.

“Oh Thou Most High, make me capable of understanding this high and ineffable charity. Oh Lord, make us capable of understanding the mysteries which Thou hast wrought for us ! The first is the mystery of Thy most holy Incarnation. The second is the ineffable mystery of the example of Thy doctrine of penitence and affliction. The third is the bitter death borne for our sake. The

fourth is the glory of Thy Resurrection. The fifth is the exaltation of Thine admirable Ascension.

“The first is love unspeakable. Oh love supreme and transformed ! Oh love all too ineffable ! Blessed be Thou, oh Lord, because Thou makest me to understand that Thou wert made man. Oh how glorious is this knowledge and understanding, that I do see and know that Thou art born in me. Verily this understanding is full of all delight and sweetness. Oh Thou Admirable One, how admirable are the mysteries which Thou hast wrought for me !

“The second mystery which Thou hast wrought for us maketh us certain of the way of life. For Thou tookest our flesh upon Thee and wast born and didst live in such wise that we do possess Thy teaching and example, oh Jesus Christ, who wast born unto poverty, suffering and contempt, and therein didst live and die.

“The third is the mystery of Thy death, for thereunto wast Thou born, that by dying for us Thou mightest work our redemption. There are five things to be considered in this death of Christ. Firstly, the declaration and operation of our salvation ; secondly, our strengthening and our victory over our enemies ; thirdly, the fulness and superabundance of the divine love, as manifested by that same death ; fourthly, that He hath filled us with a most high, most loving, and profound truth, whereby we may know, see, and understand how God the Father hath shown forth, glorified and declared His Son ; and

fifthly, that hereby we may know also how the Son of God did make manifest the Father, by the obedience which He did observe throughout His whole life, even unto the bitter death of the Cross, and hath given satisfaction for the whole human race. Make me worthy, oh Thou God Uncreate, to know the depths of Thy love and the unfathomable extent of Thy ardent charity; make me worthy to understand the ineffable charity which Thou didst communicate unto us when Thou didst show unto us Thy Son Jesus Christ in this flesh and when this Thy Son did make Thee manifest unto us. Oh marvellous, indescribable, and joyful love, in Thee is all savour and sweetness and all delight, the contemplation whereof exalteth the soul above the world, making it able to stand alone in joy, peace and rest.

“The fourth mystery is in the triumphant Resurrection, in the which two things chiefly are to be considered. The first is, that His resurrection giveth us hope of our own; and the second is, that it maketh us perfectly to know the spiritual resurrection which God worketh of His grace when He raiseth up a dead man to life again and restoreth the sick to health. Oh most high, unspeakable, unknown and ineffable mystery wherein Thou hast shown the fulfilment of our perfection, make me, oh Lord, worthy of knowing this most high mystery.

“The fifth is the mystery of the Ascension. Make me, oh Lord, worthy and capable of understanding the most high mystery of Thine Ascension, whereby was fulfilled

the whole of our salvation. Oh Jesus Christ, then was it that Thou didst give us possession of Him who is Thy Father and ours !

“These five mysteries are the school of true scholars, and the veritable school where we learn continual prayer. Therefore, oh Lord, make me to know and understand the supreme charity through which Thou didst create and redeem me. Oh Thou Incomprehensible One, make me able to understand Thine inestimable and ardent charity and that burning love through which Thou hast chosen the human race unto all eternity to attain unto the vision of Thyself and through which Thou, oh Most High, hast deigned to look upon us. Make us, oh Lord, to know our faults that we may escape the punishments wherewith Thou hast threatened those who are ungrateful and who know not Thee nor Thine ineffable mysteries and benefits.”

Beside these things, she spake of seven spiritual gifts and benefits conferred upon us by the divine goodness, and she said—

“Oh most sweet Lord, make me able to understand these seven gifts which Thou hast bestowed upon us amongst the multitude of Thine other gifts ! The first gift is the ineffable creation. The second is the admirable election whereby Thou hast deigned to exalt us unto Thy glory. The third is the inestimable gift vouchsafed us when Thou didst send Thy Son to give us life. The fourth is the most high gift of Thy goodness, whereby

Thou didst deign to make me sensible and reasoning, and not brutal and unreasoning. This admirable power of reasoning which Thou hast placed in me doth work three things in me ; firstly, it maketh me to know that Thou art marvellous ; secondly, it maketh me to know my sins ; and thirdly, through Thy grace it maketh me able to resist sensuality, which doth make me inclined unto sin. Oh, Thou Incomprehensible One, there is no gift greater than this which Thou hast granted unto me ! Thou hast made me, oh Lord, in Thine own likeness ; Thou hast given me understanding and clothed me with Thy light and Thy reason.

“The fifth gift is wisdom. Oh Lord, make me to understand Thy most ardent charity through which Thou hast granted me this gift, namely wisdom. For verily this is the gift of gifts, that is to say, being able to enjoy Thee in very truth.

“The sixth is the gift of understanding. Oh Lord, make us to know this gift which Thou hast granted us, that is to say, the understanding, in order that we may understand Thee, oh my God.

“The seventh gift is love. Oh Supreme Being, make me to understand this gift, for all the angels and saints do behold naught else save Thee, loving Thee and contemplating Thee. Oh, gift above all other gifts, for Thou Thyself art love ! Oh Supreme Good, Thou hast deigned to make us know that Thou art Love and makest us to love that Love, wherefore shall they who come before

Thy Face be rewarded according unto their love, and there is nothing which leadeth the contemplative unto contemplation saving true love alone. Oh, Marvellous One, how marvellous are the things which Thou workest in Thy children! Oh Supreme Good—oh Incomprehensible Goodness and Ardent Charity! Oh, Person Divine, who hast deigned to grant us substance in the midst of Thine own Substance! Marvellous above all other things which Thou workest in Thy children! Oh, hidden and marvellous thing, there is no human understanding which faileth not before this substance, but through divine grace and light do we feel it. And this is the pledge of those who do verily live solitary, and all the choirs of angels are herewith occupied. And in this true occupation are engaged all true contemplatives, who shall afterwards be solitary and separated from the earth, having their conversation in heaven. Thanks be unto God for ever and ever. Amen.”

*Here endeth the last writing given by the Blessed
Angela of Foligno unto her children.*

THE TESTAMENT AND LAST ADMONITION OF THE BLESSED
ANGELA OF FOLIGNO WHICH SHE GAVE UNTO HER
CHILDREN, SHE BEING NIGH UNTO DEATH

“THAT which I now speak unto you, oh my children, I speak for no other reason save for the love of God, and

because I did promise unto you that I would not willingly carry away with me beneath the earth aught of what I do know which might be profitable unto you.

“That which I am about to say is not of myself, but wholly of God, because it hath pleased His divine goodness to give into my care all His sons and daughters who are in this world, both here and beyond the sea. I have been as careful of them as I was able, and I have grieved for them and have suffered more sorrow because of them than ye would readily believe. Oh my God, now do I render them unto Thee again, and I pray Thee that of Thine ineffable charity Thou do protect them from all evil and do keep them in the way of all goodness, in the love of poverty, contempt, and suffering, and in the transformation and imitation of Thy life and perfection, which it hath pleased Thee to show forth in word and deed and actual life.

“Oh, my beloved sons, I do exhort you in this my last exhortation that ye strive to be little and truly humble and meek, not only in outward works but in the depth of your hearts, in order that ye may be true scholars and disciples of Him who said, ‘Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.’

“Have no care for power, or honours, or being preferred before others, but strive ye to be of no account in order that Christ may exalt you in the perfection of merits and in His grace. Be ye so humble that ye do perpetually esteem yourselves as nothing. Cursed are those self-

sufficiencies which make souls proud, such as power, honour and preferment,—fly ye from them, for in them lieth great deception and danger. And greater deception still is there in spiritual self-sufficiency even than in the worldly—that is to say, in knowing how to speak of God, in understanding the Scriptures, in performing great penances and keeping the heart busied over spiritual things. For the spiritually self-sufficient do often fall into error and are more difficult to correct than those who have worldly self-sufficiency. Esteem yourselves, therefore, as nothing, as nothing known or nothing unknown. Of a truth, the soul can possess no better insight or knowledge than to perceive its own nothingness and to remain within its own prison.

“Strive ye, oh my sons, to possess charity, without which there is neither salvation nor merit. Behold, God saith, ‘All My things are thine.’ Who is there who deserveth this, that all God’s things should be his? Verily, there is naught else that deserveth this save the most ardent charity.

“Oh my sons, fathers and brothers, see that ye love one another amongst yourselves and that ye have true charity and love; for if it hath this, the soul deserveth to inherit the divine possessions. And I do exhort you that ye desire not only to have this charity amongst yourselves, but likewise unto all people. For I say unto you that of a certainty my soul hath received more profit from weeping and lamenting over the sins of my neighbour than over

mine own. And the world doth scoff at that which I now say, namely that a man may weep for his neighbour's sins as for his own, or even more than for his own, for it seemeth to be contrary unto nature, but the charity which bringeth this about is not of this world.

“Oh my children, strive to possess this charity and judge not any man, even though ye should behold him commit a mortal sin. I do not say that sin should not be displeasing unto you and that ye should not hold it in the greatest horror, but I do say that ye should never judge the sinners, and moreover I say that ye should never despise them, for ye know not the judgments of our Lord God ; and many are there who do appear unto men to be condemned unto hell, but who are saved in the sight of God, and many who appear unto men to be saved are reprobate in the sight of God and condemned unto hell. I could tell you of some whom ye have despised, but of whom I have the sure hope that God will lead them back into His own Hand.

“I will make no other testament, saving that I do commend unto you this mutual love and profound humility. And all mine heritage do I leave unto you, the which is likewise that of Christ Jesus, namely poverty, suffering, and scorn. Your life is that of Jesus Christ. Those who shall possess this heritage of the Life of Christ shall be my children, because they are the children of God ; wherefore is there no doubt that they shall possess the heritage of eternal life.”

When she had made an end of saying these things, she placed her hand upon the head of each person, saying—

“Blessed be ye, both of the Lord and of me, oh my children, ye and all the others who are not here present. And even as it hath been signified and shown forth unto me by the Lord, even so do I give this eternal blessing unto you who are present and unto those who are absent, and may that same Christ Himself give it unto you with the Hand whereby He was nailed upon the Cross. Amen.”

THE PASSING AWAY OF THE BLESSED ANGELA

ABOUT the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ (at which time she passed away unto Christ), as she lay very sick, she said, “The Word is made Flesh,” and after a long silence, as though she were returning from some other place, she said, “Oh, every creature faileth, and the whole of the angelic understanding sufficeth not to comprehend this.” Then she added, “My soul is washed and cleansed in the blood of Jesus Christ, the which was as fresh and warm as though it had but this moment issued from the body of the Crucified.”

After this she said: “Christ Jesus, the Son of God, hath now presented me unto the Father, and these words have been spoken unto me—

“‘Oh bride and fair one, oh thou who art beloved of Me with perfect love, of a truth I would not that thou

shouldst come unto Me with these exceeding great sufferings, but I would thou shouldst come with the utmost rejoicing and with joy unspeakable, even as it is seemly that the King should lead home the bride whom He hath loved so long, and clothed with the royal robe.'

"And he showed me the robe, even as the bridegroom showeth it unto the bride whom he hath loved a long time. It was neither of purple nor of scarlet, nor of sendal, nor of samite, but it was a certain marvellous light which clothed the soul. And then He showed unto me the Bridegroom, the Eternal Word, so that now I do understand what thing the Word is and what it doth mean—that is to say, this Word which for my sake was made Flesh. And the Word entered into me and touched me throughout and embraced me, saying, 'Come, My love, My bride, beloved of Me with true delight—come, for all the saints do await thee with exceeding great joy.' And He said again unto me, 'I will not commit thee in charge unto the blessed angels or other saints that they should lead thee unto Me, but I will come personally and fetch thee and will raise thee unto Myself, for thou hast made thyself meet for Me and pleasing unto My Majesty.'"

Now when she was nigh unto the time of her passing away (being the day before it), she did often repeat, "Father, into Thy Hands I do commend my soul and my spirit." Once, after repeating these words, she said unto us who were present—

“Now hath an answer unto those words been given unto me, and it is this : ‘It is impossible that in death thou shouldst lose that which hath been impressed upon thine heart in life.’” Then did we say unto her, “Wilt thou, then, depart and leave us ?” And she made answer — “A long time have I hidden it from you, but now will I conceal it no longer. I say unto you that I must needs depart.”

And upon that same day ceased all those sufferings with which for many days previously she had been grievously tormented in all her limbs, both within and without, and afflicted in many ways. And she did then lie in such repose of the body and cheerfulness of spirit that she appeared as though she already tasted somewhat of the joy which had been promised unto her.

Then did we ask of her whether that aforesaid joy had yet been granted unto her, and she replied that the above-mentioned joy had commenced.

And in this repose of body and cheerfulness of spirit she lay very joyfully until the hour of Compline on the Saturday, surrounded by many of the brethren who did administer the Holy Mysteries unto her. And upon that same day, that is to say, upon the Octave of the Innocents, at the last hour of the day she gently fell asleep and rested in peace. And that most holy soul was set free from the flesh, and being drawn into the abyss of the divine infinitude, it received from Christ, its Bridegroom, the garment of innocence and immortality,

in order that it might reign together with Him. And unto this same place may He likewise bring us, through the virtue of the Cross, the merits of the Virgin, His Mother, and the intercession of this our mother, the Blessed Angela. Amen.

*End of the Testament and Passing Away of the
Blessed Angela.*

The venerable bride of Christ, Angela of Foligno, passed from the shipwreck of this world unto the joys of heaven, which had long been promised unto her, in the year of our Lord's Incarnation, one thousand, three hundred and nine, on the fourth day of January, in the time of Pope Clement the Fifth.

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