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INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER XI. -- Gives the reason why we do not learn to love God perfectly in a short time. Begins, by means of a comparison, to describe four degrees of prayer, concerning the first of which something is here said. This is most profitable for beginners and for those who are receiving no consolations in prayer

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CHAPTER XIX. -- Continues the same subject. Begins to describe the effects produced in the soul by this degree of prayer. Exhorts souls earnestly not to turn back, even if after receiving this favour they should fall, and not to give up prayer. Describes the harm that will ensue if they do not follow this counsel. This chapter is to be read very carefully and will be of great comfort to the weak and to sinners

CHAPTER XX. -- Treats of the difference between union and rapture. Describes the nature of rapture and says something of the blessing that comes to the soul
AN OUTLINE OF THE LIFE OF ST. TERESA

(Abbreviations: F = Foundations; I.C. = Interior Castle; L = Life; LL = Letters; R = Relations. Roman numerals after F, I.C., L, R refer to chapters; Arabic numerals after LL, to the numbers of the Letters. The numerals in brackets after the names of the foundations record their chronological sequence.)

1515 (March 28). Birth of Teresa de (Cepeda y) Ahumada at Ávila.
1528. Teresa loses her mother.

c. 1531. Enters Augustinian Convent of St. Mary of Grace, Ávila, as a boarder. Stays there for eighteen months (L III).

1536 (November 2). Enters Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation, Ávila, as a novice (cf. n. 79. "It is forty years since this nun took the habit," wrote St. Teresa in 1576: R IV, p. 319).

1537 (November 3). Professed at Convent of the Incarnation.

1538 (Autumn: "before two years had passed": L V). Health gives way. Goes ("when the winter began") to stay with her half-sister, Doña María de Cepeda de Barrientos, at the village of Castellanos de la Cañada. On the way there, stays at Hortigosa with her uncle, Don Pedro de Cepeda, who gives her a copy of Osuna's Third Spiritual Alphabet.


1539 (August 15). Attack of catalepsy, which leaves her helpless "for more than eight months" (L VI).

1540 (about Easter). Returns to Incarnation. An invalid till late in 1541: "This (illness) I suffered for three years" (L V). The effects of the paralysis remain till the summer of 1542 (L VI) and recur intermittently (L VII) till about 1554.

1543 (December 24). Death of her father, Don Alonso Sánchez de Cepeda.

c. 1555-6. Begins to think she is "sometimes being addressed by interior voices and to see certain visions and experience revelations" (R IV).

c. 1556-7. Final "conversion" (after "nearly twenty years on that stormy sea": L VIII: p. 108). Cf. pp. 78, 117, n. 3. First contact with the Society of Jesus ("after almost twenty years' experience of prayer": L XXIII).

(1557. Visit of St. Francis Borgia to Ávila [L XXIV].)

1558. Experiences her first rapture (L XXIV) and perhaps (L XXVIII) an imaginary vision of Christ (usually dated January 25 or June 29-30, 1558. But a likelier date is 1560: see pp. 235, 260, 268, 271).

Discussions begin about the foundation in Ávila of a convent for Discalced nuns (R IV).

1559. P. Álvarez becomes her confessor. Transverberation of her heart (L XXIX).

1560. Makes a vow of greater perfection.

1561. P. Gaspar de Salazar comes to Ávila (April).
House for the first convent of the Reform bought in Ávila (August).

1562-7. At St. Joseph's, Ávila ("The most restful years of my life": F I).

1562

January-July. Stays with Doña Luisa de la Cerda at Toledo.

June. Finishes the first draft of the Life.

July. Brief (dated February) authorizing the foundation of St. Joseph's received from Rome on the night of her return to Ávila. The Bishop is persuaded by St. Peter of Alcántara to sanction the foundation.

August 24. Foundation of Convent of St. Joseph, Ávila (1).

August (to February 1563). "Commotion" in Ávila (L XXXVI).

(After August). Is commanded to write an amplified account of her life.

1563

(About March). Goes to live at St. Joseph's, Ávila.

July 3. Takes some further step (its exact nature not known) towards herself embracing the Reform.

August 22. Is granted a patent to transfer, with three companions, from the Incarnation to St. Joseph's.

1564

August 21. The Nuncio confirms the above-mentioned patent.

1565

(? December). Greater part of the second and final version of the Life written.

Completes the Life and sends it, at the end of the year, to P. García de Toledo (LL 3).

At about this time, begins the Way of Perfection.

1566


1567

February43. Visit to Castile of the Carmelite General, P. Rubeo (Rossi).

April. The General arrives (April 11) at Ávila and (April 27) visits St. Teresa, authorizing her to found further convents of the Reform, and later (August 14, from Barcelona) two monasteries.

August 15. Foundation of Convent at Medina del Campo (2).

September-November. Remains at Medina till early November. During her stay there (? early in September) discusses with Antonio de Jesús and St. John of the Cross the foundation of the first monastery of the Reform (F III).

In November, goes to Madrid and stays for a fortnight with Doña Leonor de Mascareñas. Thence goes to Alcalá de Henares, consults P. Báñez and stays till February 1568.

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43I.e., about six months after Maldonado's visit: cf. final words of F I (Vol. III, p. 4).
1568

February. Visits Doña Luisa de la Cerda at Toledo.

March (late in). Leaves for Malagón.

April 11. Foundation of Convent at Malagón (3).

May 19. Leaves Malagón for Ávila. On the way, stays at Toledo in Doña Luisa de la Cerda's house, during her absence: (LL 6). Visits the Marchioness of Villena at Escalona (LL 6).

June 2-30. At St. Joseph's, Ávila. Rafael Mejía offers her a house at Duruelo for use as a monastery. She leaves for Medina and Valladolid, calling at Duruelo on the way.

August 10. Arrives at Valladolid. St. John of the Cross has accompanied her from Medina to Valladolid and stays there till September 30 (F XIII; LL 10).

August 15. Foundation of Convent at Valladolid (4).

October. The Valladolid nuns fall ill and go to stay with Doña María de Mendoza, who takes over their house and gives them a new one.

(November 28. First Mass said at the Discalced monastery, Duruelo.)

1569

February 3. The Valladolid nuns enter their new house.


March 24. Arrives at Toledo (LL 19). (The King sends for her, believing her to be still in Madrid, after she has left for Toledo.)

May 14. Foundation of Convent at Toledo (5).

May 28. Receives a letter from the Princess of Éboli about a foundation at Pastrana.

May 30. Leaves Toledo. In Madrid, stays for a week at a Franciscan convent with Doña Leonor de Mascareñas. Refuses to found a convent in Madrid (LL 294).

July 9. Foundation of Convent at Pastrana (6). (A monastery founded there on July 13.)


1570

(? July). Visits Pastrana and (August-October) Ávila. On October 31 arrives at Salamanca.

November 1. Foundation of Convent at Salamanca (7).

1571

January 25. Foundation of Convent at Alba de Tormes (8).

Mid February. Leaves Alba. Goes to stay for some days with the Count and Countess of Monterrey. On March 29, is at Salamanca (LL 25); in May, by order of the Provincial of the Observance, P. Alonso González, at St. Joseph's; in June, at Medina del Campo; in mid-July, at Ávila.
August-October. Prioress at Medina (LL 27).
October 6. Goes from Medina to Ávila.
October 15 (to October 1574). Prioress of Convent of the Incarnation, Ávila (LL 29 ff.).

1572
(Between May and September). St. John of the Cross becomes confessor to Convent of the Incarnation, Ávila.

1573
June 11. Earliest extant letter (LL 45) written by St. Teresa to Philip II.
August. Visits the Salamanca Convent for the transference of the community there in September.
August 24. Begins to write the Foundations (at Salamanca: F VII). Writes about nine chapters: then stops on account of "numerous occupations".

1574
March. Travels to Segovia.
March 19. Foundation of Convent at Segovia (9).
Holy Week: April. Transfers Pastrana nuns to Segovia (F XVII). Remains there till September 30 (F XXI; LL 62).
October 6 (about). Returns to St. Joseph's, Ávila, as Prioress.
December (to January 1575). Visits Valladolid (LL 66-70).

1575
February. Travels from Ávila, via Toledo, Malagón and Almodóvar, to Beas.
February 24. Foundation of Convent at Beas (10).
March 10. Agreement for the Caravaca convent signed (F XXVII).
Before May 11 (LL 71). First meeting with Gracián (F XXIV, R XXXIX). Makes vow of obedience to Gracián (R XL, XLI).
May 29. Foundation of Convent at Seville (11).
June 9. New licence for the Caravaca convent granted by Philip II (F XXVII).
(May-June. Chapter-General of the Order, held at Piacenza, adopts harsh measures towards the Discalced Reform.)
July 19. Writes from Seville to Philip II (LL 77) on behalf of the plan for dividing the Order and asking that P. Gracián be made Provincial of the Discalced.
August. Arrival of her brothers Lorenzo and Pedro from Spanish America (F XXV, R XLVI, LL 87, P. Silverio, IX, 246).
(Shortly before Christmas). Receives a written order from the General to leave Andalusia and to go to reside in a Castilian convent. P. Gracián authorizes her to stay at Seville till the summer (LL 87, 91).

1576

(From June 1576 to June 1580 St. Teresa is mainly at Toledo and Ávila. Strife within the Order holds up the foundations.)

January 1. Foundation of Convent at Caravaca (12) during her stay in Seville (LL 92).

(March. P. Jerónimo Tostado arrives in Spain armed with powers from P. Rubeo to suppress certain Discalced foundations and to take other measures against the Reform.)

April 5. Agreement for the new house at Seville signed.

(May 12. Provincial Chapter of the Observance, held at La Moraleja, takes stern measures against the Reform.)

May 28. Ceremony of the inauguration of the new house at Seville.

June 4. Leaves Seville for Toledo, via Almodóvar del Campo and Malagón. Arrives at Malagón on June 11 (LL 95) and stays for at least a week (LL 96). Is in Toledo before June 30 (LL 97).

(August 8. P. Gracián meets the Superiors of the Reform at Almodóvar: they refuse to accept the decisions of the Moraleja Chapter.)


November 14. Completes Chapter XXVII of Foundations (See penultimate paragraph of that chapter).

1577

June 2. Begins Interior Castle.

(June 18. Death of the Nuncio Ormaneto.)

July. Goes from Toledo to Ávila to arrange for the transference of St. Joseph's from the jurisdiction of the Ordinary to that of the Carmelite Order. Interruption of her work on Interior Castle (I.C. V, iv).

(August 30. Arrival in Spain of the new Nuncio, Sega.)

September 18. Writes to Philip II on behalf of P. Gracián and of the Reform (LL 195).

October. Violent scenes at the election of a Prioress at the Incarnation, Ávila. Nuns voting for St. Teresa are excommunicated. Ana de Toledo chosen (LL 197-8, cf. 205-7).

(October 5. Royal Council opposes the policy of Tostado, who leaves for Rome.)

November 29. Finishes Interior Castle.

December 3. St. John of the Cross and a companion are carried off and imprisoned, at Toledo and La Moraleja respectively, by the friars of the Observance (LL 204, 219, 246-7).
December 4. St. Teresa complains of this act to Philip II (LL 204).
December 24. Falls and breaks her left arm.

1578
(Persecution of the Reform continues throughout this year: LL 237 ff. St. Teresa is in Ávila.)
(September 4. Death of P. Rubeo at Rome: LL 253.)
(October 9. Chapter-General of the Discalced held at Almodóvar.)
(October 16. Sega puts the Discalced under the jurisdiction of the Observance.)

1579
(April 1. Discalced removed from jurisdiction of the Observance: P. Angel de Salazar becomes their Superior.)
(May. P.P. Juan de Jesús [Roca] and Diego de la Trinidad leave for Rome, to attempt to effect the division of the Order: LL 273, 275.) P. Salazar authorizes St. Teresa to resume the visitation of her convents.

June 25. Leaves Ávila, with B. Ana de San Bartolomé, for Medina (stays 3-4 days), Valladolid (July 3-30), Salamanca (about 2 1/2 months) and Alba (a week).

July. Sends the *Way of perfection* to the Archbishop of Évora (LL 285).

November (early). Returns to Ávila.

November. Goes to Toledo (mid-November: LL 291) and Malagón; arrives at Malagón, November 25; is there when (December 8) the community moves into its new house (LL 295). Stays till February 1580.

1580

February 13. Leaves Malagón for Villanueva de la Jara (LL 307-8, 313), arriving there February 21, after making stops at Toledo and La Roda.

February 21. Foundation of Convent at Villanueva de la Jara (13).

March 20. Leaves Villanueva de la Jara.

March 26. Arrives at Toledo. On March 31 (LL 314) has a paralytic stroke. Asks the Archbishop of Toledo for a licence to make a foundation in Madrid: the request is not granted (LL 323).

June 7. Though still unwell, leaves for Madrid and Segovia. Reaches Segovia on June 15. While there, learns of the death (June 26) of her brother Lorenzo (LL 325-6, 342). Goes (July 6) from Segovia to Ávila, to settle his business affairs (LL 328). At Segovia, revises the *Interior Castle* in collaboration with P. Gracián and P. Yanguas. (Vole II, p. 194.)

(June 22. The Discalced Reform is recognized as a separate province by a Bull of Gregory XIII.)

August (early). Goes on from Ávila to Medina del Campo and (August 8) Valladolid where she is to see the Bishop about the projected foundation in his diocese. At

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44Some authorities believe that, between December 11 and 17 of this year, St. Teresa had an interview with Philip II at El Escorial (cf. P. Silverio, IX, 266).
Valladolid has a recurrence of the Toledo complaint and becomes dangerously ill (LL 336).

December 29. Foundation of Convent at Palencia (14) (LL 344).

1581


June 2. Arrives at Soria, after spending the night of May at Burgo de Osma (F XXX).

(June 1. The Palencia community moves to its new house.)


September 5. Arrives at Ávila (LL 378).

1582

January 2. Leaves for Burgos, via Medina del Campo (January 4-9), Valladolid (staying four days through illness: LL 404) and Palencia (arrives January 16), arriving at Burgos on January 26.

January 20. Foundation of Convent at Granada (16) in St. Teresa's absence.

April 19. Foundation of Convent at Burgos (17).

(July) Completes Foundations (F XXXI was being written at "the end of June": Vol. III, p. 191, n. 2).

July 26. Leaves Burgos for Ávila, with B. Ana de San Bartolomé and her niece Teresita. Visits Palencia (in August), Valladolid (again ill: leaves on September 15), Medina del Campo (September 16) and villages near Peñaranda. Though ill, goes to Alba de Tormes at the command of the Provincial, Fray Antonio de Jesús, to visit the Duchess of Alba.

September 20. Arrives at Alba de Tormes.

October 4. Dies at Alba de Tormes.

1614. April 24. Beatified by Paul V.

1617. Spanish Cortes votes her patroness of Spain. The vote not confirmed.


1726. Benedict XIII institutes the Feast of the Transverberation of her Heart.
Describes how the Lord began to awaken her soul in childhood to a love of virtue and what a help it is in this respect to have good parents.

If I had not been so wicked it would have been a help to me that I had parents who were virtuous and feared God, and also that the Lord granted me His favour to make me good. My father was fond of reading good books and had some in Spanish so that his children might read them too. These books, together with the care which my mother took to make us say our prayers and to lead us to be devoted to Our Lady and to certain saints, began to awaken good desires in me when I was, I suppose, about six or seven years old. It was a help to me that I never saw my parents inclined to anything but virtue. They themselves had many virtues. My father was a man of great charity towards the poor, who was good to the sick and also to his servants -- so much so that he could never be brought to keep slaves, because of his compassion for them. On one occasion, when he had a slave of a brother of his in the house, he was as good to her as to his own children. He used to say that it caused him intolerable distress that she was not free. He was strictly truthful: nobody ever heard him swear or speak evil. He was a man of the most rigid chastity.

My mother, too, was a very virtuous woman, who endured a life of great infirmity: she was also particularly chaste. Though extremely beautiful, she was never known to give any reason for supposing that she made the slightest account of her beauty; and, though she died at thirty-three, her dress was already that of a person advanced in years. She was a very tranquil woman, of great intelligence. Throughout her life she endured great trials and her death was most Christian.

We were three sisters and nine brothers: all of them, by the goodness of God, resembled their parents in virtue, except myself, though I was my father’s favourite. And, before I began to offend God, I think there was some reason for this, for it grieves me whenever I remember what good inclinations the Lord had given me and how little I profited by them. My brothers and sisters never hindered me from serving God in any way.

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59St. Teresa's father, Don Alonso Sánchez de Cepeda, was twice married. By his first wife he had three children; by his second, Doña Beatriz Dávila y Ahumada, nine. Of these nine, Rodrigo and Teresa were respectively the second and the third, white Lorenzo, father of the Teresa who copied the Life (p. 62) was the fourth. Both parents were well descended and the family was in comfortable circumstances, though not wealthy.
60At this time well-to-do families in Spain often kept as slaves Moors whose families had remained in the country after the Re-conquest.
61Doña Beatriz had married at fourteen, having been born in 1495, and died in 1528.
I had one brother almost of my own age.\(^{62}\) It was he whom I most loved, though I had a great affection for them all, as had they for me. We used to read the lives of saints together; and, when I read of the martyrdoms suffered by saintly women for God's sake, I used to think they had purchased the fruition of God very cheaply; and I had a keen desire to die as they had done, not out of any love for God of which I was conscious, but in order to attain as quickly as possible to the fruition of the great blessings which, as I read, were laid up in Heaven. I used to discuss with this brother of mine how we could become martyrs. We agreed to go off to the country of the Moors, begging our bread for the love of God, so that they might behead us there; and, even at so tender an age, I believe the Lord had given us sufficient courage for this, if we could have found a way to do it; but our greatest hindrance seemed to be that we had a father and a mother.\(^{63}\) It used to cause us great astonishment when we were told that both pain and glory would last for ever. We would spend long periods talking about this and we liked to repeat again and again, "For ever -- ever -- ever!" Through our frequent repetition of these words, it pleased the Lord that in my earliest years I should receive a lasting impression of the way of truth.

When I saw that it was impossible for me to go to any place where they would put me to death for God's sake, we decided to become hermits, and we used to build hermitages, as well as we could, in an orchard which we had at home. We would make heaps of small stones, but they at once fell down again, so we found no way of accomplishing our desires. But even now it gives me a feeling of devotion to remember how early God granted me what I lost by my own fault.

I gave alms as I could, which was but little. I tried to be alone when I said my prayers, and there were many such, in particular the rosary, to which my mother had a great devotion, and this made us devoted to them too. Whenever I played with other little girls, I used to love building convents and pretending that we were nuns; and I think I wanted to be a nun, though not so much as the other things I have described.

I remember that, when my mother died, I was twelve years of age or a little less.\(^{64}\) When I began to realize what I had lost, I went in my distress to an image of Our Lady\(^{65}\) and with many tears besought her to be a mother to me. Though I did this in my simplicity, I believe it was of some avail to me; for whenever I have commended myself to this Sovereign Virgin I have been conscious of her aid; and eventually she has brought me back to herself. It grieves me now when I observe and reflect how I did not keep sincerely to the good desires which I had begun.

\(^{62}\)The reference is almost certainly to Rodrigo, who was four years her senior. He emigrated to America in 1535 and died two years later fighting the Indians on the banks of the Rio de la Plata. On the incident in the text, see Yepes, Bk. I, Chap. II.

\(^{63}\)Ribera (Bk. I, Chap. IV) describes the attempt as having actually been made. The children left Ávila and "went on over the bridge, until they were met by an uncle who took them back home to their mother, greatly to her relief, for she had been having them searched for everywhere with great anxiety".

\(^{64}\)Actually, as we have seen, she was thirteen. Doña Beatriz made her will, shortly before her death, on November 24, 1528.

\(^{65}\)Tradition has it that the image was one which is now in Ávila Cathedral, and that Teresa and Rodrigo also commended themselves to this Virgin before setting out to be martyred. Yearly, on October 15, a ceremony commemorating the event described in the text takes place in Ávila.
O my Lord, since it seems Thou art determined on my salvation -- and may it please Thy Majesty to save me! -- and on granting me all the graces Thou hast bestowed on me already, why has it not seemed well to Thee, not for my advantage but for Thy honour, that this habitation wherein Thou hast had continually to dwell should not have become so greatly defiled? It grieves me, Lord, even to say this, since I know that the fault has been mine alone, for I believe there is nothing more Thou couldst have done, even from this early age, to make me wholly Thine. Nor, if I should feel inclined to complain of my parents, could I do so, for I saw nothing in them but every kind of good and anxiety for my welfare. But as I ceased to be a child and began to become aware of the natural graces which the Lord had given me, and which were said to be many, instead of giving Him thanks for them, as I should, I started to make use of them to offend Him. This I shall now explain.

CHAPTER II

Describes how these virtues were gradually lost and how important it is in childhood to associate with people of virtue.

What I shall now describe was, I think something which began to do me great harm. I sometimes reflect how wrong it is of parents not to contrive that their children shall always, and in every way, see things which are good. My mother, as I have said, was very good herself, but, when I came to the age of reason, I copied her goodness very little, in fact hardly at all, and evil things did me a great deal of harm. She was fond of books of chivalry; and this pastime had not the ill effects on her that is had on me, because she never allowed them to interfere with her work. But we were always trying to make time to read them; and she permitted this, perhaps in order to stop herself from thinking of the great trials she suffered, and to keep her children occupied so that in other respects they should not go astray. This annoyed my father so much that we had to be careful lest he should see us reading these books. For myself, I began to make a habit of it, and this little fault which I saw in my mother began to cool my good desires and lead me to other kinds of wrongdoing. I thought there was nothing wrong in my wasting many hours, by day and by night, in this useless occupation, even though I had to hide it from my father. So excessively was I absorbed in it that I believe, unless I had a new book, I was never happy.

I began to deck myself out and to try to attract others by my appearance, taking great trouble with my hands and hair, using perfumes and all the vanities I could get -- and there were a good many of them, for I was very fastidious. There was nothing wrong with my intentions, for I should never have wanted anyone to offend God because of me. This great and excessive fastidiousness about personal appearance, together with other practices which I thought were in no way sinful, lasted for many years: I see now how wrong they must have been. I had some cousins, who were the only people allowed to enter my father's house:66 he was very careful about this and I wish to God that he had been careful about my cousins too. For I now see the danger of intercourse, at an age when the virtues should be

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66Don Alonso's brother, Don Francisco, had a house near his own, in the Plazuela de Santo Domingo, where the seventeenth-century Discalced Carmelite monastery now stands. The cousins referred to were no doubt Don Francisco's children: he had at least four sons, as well as several daughters.
beginning to grow, with persons who, though ignorant of worldly vanity, arouse a
desire for the world in others. These cousins were almost exactly of my own age or a
little older than I. We always went about together; they were very fond of me; and I
would keep our conversation on things that amused them and listen to the stories
they told about their childish escapades and crazes, which were anything but
edifying. What was worse, my soul began to incline to the thing that was the cause
of all its trouble.

If I had to advise parents, I should tell them to take great care about the people
with whom their children associate at such an age. Much harm may result from bad
company and we are inclined by nature to follow what is worse rather than what is
better. This was the case with me: I had a sister much older than myself,67 from
whom, though she was very good and chaste, I learned nothing, whereas from a
relative whom we often had in the house I learned every kind of evil. This person
was so frivolous in her conversation that my mother had tried very hard to prevent
her from coming to the house, realizing what harm she might do me, but there were
so many reasons for her coming that she was powerless. I became very fond of
meeting this woman. I talked and gossiped with her frequently; she joined me in all
my favourite pastimes; and she also introduced me to other pastimes and talked to
me about all her conversations and vanities. Until I knew her (this was when I was
about fourteen or perhaps more: by knowing her I mean becoming friendly with her
and receiving her confidences) I do not think I had ever forsaken God by committing
any mortal sin, or lost my fear of God, though I was much more concerned about my
honour.68 This last fear was strong enough to prevent me from forfeiting my honour
altogether, and I cannot think that I would have acted differently about this for
anything in the world; nor was there anyone in the world whom I loved enough to
forfeit my honour for. So I might have had the strength not to sin against the
honour of God, as my natural inclination led me not to go astray in anything which I
thought concerned worldly honour, and I did not realize that I was forfeiting my
honour in many other ways.

I went to great extremes in my vain anxiety about this, though I took not the
slightest trouble about what I must do to live a truly honourable life. All that I was
seriously concerned about was that I should not be lost altogether. My father and
sister were very sorry about this friendship of mine and often reproved me for it.
But, as they could not prevent my friend from coming to the house, their efforts
were of no avail, for when it came to doing anything wrong I was very clever. I am
sometimes astonished at the harm which can be caused by bad company; if I had not
experienced it I could not believe it. This is especially so when one is young, for it is
then that the evil done is greatest. I wish parents would be warned by me and
consider this very carefully. The result of my intercourse with this woman was to
change me so much that I lost nearly all my soul's natural inclination to virtue, and
was greatly influenced by her, and by another person who indulged in the same
kinds of pastime.

From this I have learned what great advantage comes from good companionship;
and I am sure that if at that age I had been friendly with good people I should have
remained sound in virtue. For, if at that time I had had anyone to teach me to fear

67This was her half-sister, Doña María, her father's only daughter by his first wife.
68[The word honra, which St. Teresa uses in various senses -- good, bad and neutral -- I often render
"reputation" or "good name", but in this context -- i.e., of a girl of St. Teresa's age, living in the Spain
of her day -- the translation "honour" does not seem too strong: indeed, the contrast which she makes
between the two kinds of honra almost necessitates it.]
God, my soul would have grown strong enough not to fall. Later, when the fear of
God had entirely left me, I retained only this concern about my honour, which was a
torture to me in everything that I did. When I thought that nobody would ever
know, I was rash enough to do many things which were an offence both to my
honour and to God.

At first, I believe, these things did me harm. The fault, I think, was not my friend's
but my own. For subsequently my own wickedness sufficed to lead me into sin,
together with the servants we had, whom I found quite ready to encourage me in all
kinds of wrongdoing. Perhaps, if any of them had given me good advice, I might
have profited by it; but they were as much blinded by their own interests as I was
by desire. And yet I never felt the inclination to do much that was wrong, for I had a
natural detestation of everything immodest and preferred passing the time in good
company. But, if an occasion of sin presented itself, the danger would be at hand
and I should be exposing my father and brothers to it. From all this God delivered
me, in such a way that, even against my own will, He seems to have contrived that I
should not be lost, though this was not to come about so secretly as to prevent me
from gravely damaging my reputation and arousing suspicions in my father. I could
hardly have been following these vanities for three months when I was taken to a
convent in the place where I lived,69 in which children like myself, though less
depraved in their habits than I, were being educated. The reason for this was so
carefully concealed that only one or two of my relatives and myself were aware of it.
They had waited for an occasion to arise naturally; and now, as my sister had
married, and I had no mother, I should have been alone in the house if I had not
gone there, which would not have been fitting.

So excessive was my father's love for me, and so complete was the deception which I
practised on him, that he could never believe all the ill of me that I deserved and
thus I never fell into disgrace with him. It had not been going on for long; and,
although they had some idea of what I had been doing, nothing could have been said
about it with any certainty. As I had such concern for my good name,70 I had made
the greatest efforts to keep it all secret, and I had not considered that it could not be
kept secret from Him Who sees all things. O my God, what harm is done in the
world by forgetfulness of this and by the belief that anything can be kept secret
which is done against Thee! I am sure that much wrongdoing would be avoided if we
realized that our business is to be on our guard, not against men, but against
displeasing Thee.

For the first week I suffered a great deal, though not so much from being in a
convent as from the suspicion that everyone knew about my vanity. For I had
already become tired of the life I had been leading; and even when I offended God I
never ceased to be sorely afraid of Him and I tried to make my confessions as soon
as possible after falling into sin. At first I was very restless; but within a week,
perhaps even earlier, I was much happier than I had been in my father's house. All
the nuns were pleased with me; for the Lord had given me grace, wherever I was, to
please people, and so I became a great favourite. Although at that time I had the
greatest possible aversion from being a nun, I was very pleased to see nuns who
were so good; for in that house they were all very good -- completely blameless in
their lives, devoted to their Rule and prudent in their behaviour. Yet in spite of this

69This was the Augustinian convent of Our Lady of Grace, a foundation some twenty years old
situated outside the city walls, which took girls from good families as boarders.
70[Honra.]
the devil did not cease tempting me and my friends outside tried to unsettle me by sending me messages. As that was not allowed, it soon came to an end, and my soul then began to return to the good habits of my earlier childhood and I realized what a great favour God does to those whom He places in the company of good people. It seems as if His Majesty was trying and trying again to find a way of bringing me back to Himself. Blessed be Thou, Lord, Who for so long hast suffered me! Amen.

If my faults had not been so numerous, there is one thing which I think might have served as an excuse for them: that my intimacy with this person was of such a kind that I thought it might end satisfactorily on her marriage; and both my confessor and other persons told me that in many respects I was not offending God. There was a nun who slept with those of us who were seculars and it was through her that the Lord seems to have been pleased to begin to give me light, as I shall now explain.

CHAPTER III

Describes how good companionship helped to awaken desires in her and the way in which the Lord began to give her light concerning the delusion under which she had been suffering.

As I began to enjoy the good and holy conversation of this nun, I grew to delight in listening to her, for she spoke well about God and was very discreet and holy. There was never a time, I think, when I did not delight in listening to her words. She began to tell me how she had come to be a nun through merely reading those words in the Gospel: Many are called but few chosen. She used to describe to me the reward which the Lord gives to those who leave everything for His sake. This good companionship began to eradicate the habits which bad companionship had formed in me, to bring back my thoughts to desires for eternal things, and to remove some of the great dislike which I had for being a nun, and which had become deeply engrained in me. If I saw anyone weeping as she prayed, or giving evidence of any other virtues, I now greatly envied her; for my heart was so hard in this respect that, even if I read the entire narrative of the Passion, I could not shed a tear; and this distressed me.

I remained in this convent for a year and a half, and was much the better for it. I began to say a great many vocal prayers and to get all the nuns to commend me to God and pray that He would bring me to the state in which I was to serve Him. But I was still anxious not to be a nun, for God had not as yet been pleased to give me this desire, although I was also afraid of marriage. By the end of my time there, I

71[St. Teresa's reference to this intimacy is so delicately vague that it is difficult for the translator not to express more than she actually says. The interpretation here given to her words I have decided upon after some hesitation. Dissenting readers may choose between P. Grégoire's "Il s'agissait de relations qui semblaient pouvoir aboutir à une alliance honorable pour moi", and Lewis's "The conversation I shared in was with one who, I thought, would do well in the estate of matrimony", the editor's footnote inferring that St. Teresa had "listened only to the story of her cousin's intended marriage". In default of other information I take the meaning to be that, as this woman was of marriageable (i.e., mature) age, the writer assumed that she would soon marry and their intimacy would come to an end; all would then be well that ended well. This seems a much more natural interpretation than one which represents St. Teresa as predicting her own marriage.]

72St. Matthew xx, 16.
was much more reconciled to being a nun -- though not in that house, because of the very virtuous practices which I had come to hear that they observed and which seemed to me altogether excessive. There were a few of the younger ones who encouraged me in this feeling; if all the nuns had been of one opinion, it would have been much better for me. I also had a close friend in another convent, and this gave me the idea that, if I was to be a nun, I would go only to the house where she was. I thought more about pleasures of sense and vanity than of my soul's profit. These good thoughts about being a nun came to me from time to time but they soon left me and I could not persuade myself to become one.

At this time, though I was not careless about my own improvement, the Lord became more desirous of preparing me for the state of life which was best for me. He sent me a serious illness, which forced me to return to my father's house. When I got better, they took me to see my sister, who was living in a village. She was so fond of me that, if she had had her way, I should never have left her. Her husband was also very fond of me -- at least, he showed me every kindness. This, too, I owe chiefly to the Lord, for I have always been well treated everywhere, and yet the only service I have rendered Him is to be what I am.

On the road leading to my sister's lived one of my father's brothers, a widower, who was a very shrewd man and full of virtues. Him, too, the Lord was preparing for Himself: in his old age he gave up all that he had and became a friar, and he ended his life in such a way that I believe he is now rejoicing in God. He wanted me to stay with him for some days. It was his practice to read good books in Spanish and his conversation was ordinarily about God and the vanity of the world. He made me read to him; and, although I did not much care for his books, I acted as though I did; for in the matter of pleasing others, even when I disliked doing it, I have been so excessively complacent, that in others it would have been a virtue, though in me it was a great fault because I was often very indiscreet. O God, in how many ways did His Majesty gradually prepare me for the state in which He was to be pleased to use me! In how many ways, against my own will, did He constrain me to exercise restraint upon myself? May He be blessed forever. Amen.

Though I stayed here for only a few days, such was the impression made on my heart by the words of God, both as read and as heard, and the excellence of my uncle's company, that I began to understand the truth, which I had learned as a child, that all things are nothing, and that the world is vanity and will soon pass away. I began to fear that, if I had died of my illness, I should have gone to hell; and though, even then, I could not incline my will to being a nun, I saw that this was the best and safest state, and so, little by little, I determined to force myself to embrace it.

This conflict lasted for three months. I used to try to convince myself by using the following argument. The trials and distresses of being a nun could not be greater than those of purgatory and I had fully deserved to be in hell. It would not be a great matter to spend my life as though I were in purgatory if afterwards I were to go straight to Heaven, which was what I desired. This decision, then, to enter the

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73Doña Juana Suárez, a nun in the Convent of the Incarnation at Ávila, where St. Teresa afterwards professed.
74Doña María, living at Castellanos de la Cañada. Cf. n. 80.
75Cf. n. 81.
76[Lit.: “did He force me to exercise force upon myself.” The play upon words cannot be fully brought out by any satisfactory translation.]
religious life seems to have been inspired by servile fear more than by love. The devil suggested to me that I could not endure the trials of the religious life as I had been so delicately brought up. This suggestion I met by telling him about the trials suffered by Christ and saying that it would not be too much for me to suffer a few for His sake. I must have thought that He would help me to bear them but that I cannot remember. I had many temptations in those days.

I had now begun to suffer from serious fainting fits, together with fever; my health has always been poor. The fact that I had now become fond of good books gave me new life. I would read the epistles of Saint Jerome; and these inspired me with such courage that I determined to tell my father of my decision, which was going almost as far as taking the habit; for my word of honour meant so much to me that I doubt if any reason would have sufficed to turn me back from a thing when I had once said I would do it. He was so fond of me that I was never able to get his consent, nor did the requests of persons whom I asked to speak with him about it succeed in doing so. The most I could obtain from him was permission to do as I liked after his death. As I distrusted myself and thought I might turn back out of weakness, this course seemed an unsuitable one. So I achieved my aim in another way, as I shall now explain.

CHAPTER IV

Describes how the Lord helped her to force herself to take the habit and tells of the numerous infirmities which His Majesty began to send her.

During this time, when I was considering these resolutions, I had persuaded one of my brothers, by talking to him about the vanity of the world, to become a friar, and we agreed to set out together, very early one morning, for the convent where that friend of mine lived of whom I was so fond. In making my final decision, I had already resolved that I would go to any other convent in which I thought I could serve God better or which my father might wish me to enter, for by now I was concerned chiefly with the good of my soul and cared nothing for my comfort. I remember -- and I really believe this is true -- that when I left my father's house my distress was so great that I do not think it will be greater when I die. It seemed to me as if every bone in my body were being wrenched asunder; for, as I had no love of God to subdue my love for my father and kinsfolk, everything was such a strain to me that, if the Lord had not helped me, no reflections of my own would have sufficed to keep me true to my purpose. But the Lord gave me courage to fight against myself and so I carried out my intention.

When I took the habit, the Lord at once showed me how great are His favours to those who use force with themselves in His service. No one realized that I had gone

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77A Spanish translation of these, by Juan de Molina, had been published at Valencia, in 1520.
78Her younger brother Antonio, who became a Dominican, and later a Hieronymite. Then ill health compelled him to return to the world and he died in the Indies, in 1546.
79The Convent of the Incarnation, Ávila, is situated on the north side of the city, outside the walls. It had been founded in 1479, as a residence for ladies who were members of the Third Order of Carmel but later it was converted into a convent with the title of Our Lady of the Incarnation. As to the date of her entry into the Convent, there has been a great deal of doubt, but documents [published by P. Silverio in his appendices] appear to have established that she took the habit on November 2, 1536,
through all this; they all thought I had acted out of sheer desire. At the time my entrance into this new life gave me a joy so great that it has never failed me even to this day, and God converted the aridity of my soul into the deepest tenderness. Everything connected with the religious life caused me delight; and it is a fact that sometimes, when I was spending time in sweeping floors which I had previously spent on my own indulgence and adornment, and realized that I was now free from all those things, there came to me a new joy, which amazed me, for I could not understand whence it arose. Whenever I recall this, there is nothing, however hard, which I would hesitate to undertake if it were proposed to me. For I know now, by experience of many kinds, that if I strengthen my purpose by resolving to do a thing for God's sake alone, it is His will that, from the very beginning, my soul shall be afraid, so that my merit may be the greater; and if I achieve my resolve, the greater my fear has been, the greater will be my reward, and the greater, too, will be my retrospective pleasure. Even in this life His Majesty rewards such an act in ways that can be understood only by one who has enjoyed them. This I know by experience, as I have said, in many very serious matters; and so, if I were a person who had to advise others, I would never recommend anyone, when a good inspiration comes to him again and again, to hesitate to put it into practice because of fear; for, if one lives a life of detachment for God's sake alone, there is no reason to be afraid that things will turn out amiss, since He is all-powerful. May He be blessed for ever. Amen.

O Supreme Good! O my Rest! The favours which Thou hadst given me until now should have sufficed me, since by Thy compassion and greatness I had been brought, along so many devious ways, to a state so secure and to a house in which there were so many servants of God from whom I might take example and thus learn to grow in Thy service. When I remember the way I made my profession and the great determination and satisfaction with which I made it and the betrothal that I contracted with Thee, I do not know how to proceed any farther with my story. I cannot speak of this without tears, and they ought to be tears of blood, and my heart ought to break, and even that would be showing no great sorrow for the offenses which I afterwards committed against Thee. It seems to me now that I was right not to wish for so great an honour, since I was to make such bad use of it. But Thou, my Lord, wert prepared to be offended by me for almost twenty years, during which time I made ill use of Thy favour, so that in the end I might become better. It would seem, my God, as if I had promised to break all the promises I had made Thee, although at the time that was not my intention. When I look back on these actions of mine, I do not know what my intention could have been. All this, my Spouse, reveals still more clearly the difference between Thy nature and mine. Certainly distress for my great sins is often tempered by the joy which comes to me at being the means of making known the multitude of Thy mercies.

In whom, Lord, can they shine forth as in me, who with my evil deeds have thus obscured the great favours which Thou hadst begun to show me? Alas, my Creator! If I would make an excuse, I have none, and none is to blame but I. For, had I repaid Thee any part of the love which Thou hadst begun to show me, I could have bestowed it on none but Thyself; and had I but done this, everything would have

and made her solemn profession on November 3, 1537, at the ages of twenty-one and twenty-two respectively. [Previously Ribera's dates of 1535 and 1536 had been generally accepted, though there was also evidence in favour of 1533 and 1534.] Cf. Relation IV (p. 319): "It is forty years since this nun took the habit." This was written in 1576.
been set right. But as I have not deserved this, nor had such good fortune, may Thy mercy, Lord, be availing for me.

The change in my life, and in my diet, affected my health; and, though my happiness was great, it was not sufficient to cure me. My fainting fits began to increase in number and I suffered so much from heart trouble that everyone who saw me was alarmed. I also had many other ailments. I spent my first year, therefore, in a very poor state of health, though I do not think I offended God very much during that time. My condition became so serious -- for I hardly ever seemed to be fully conscious, and sometimes I lost consciousness altogether -- that my father made great efforts to find me a cure. As our own doctors could suggest none, he arranged for me to be taken to a place where they had a great reputation for curing other kinds of illness and said they could also cure mine. This friend whom I have spoken of as being in the house, and who was one of the seniors among the sisters, went with me. In the house where I was a nun, we did not have to make a vow of enclosure. I was there for nearly a year, and during three months of that time I suffered the greatest tortures from the drastic remedies which they applied to me. I do not know how I managed to endure them; and in fact, though I did endure them, my constitution was unable to stand them, as I shall explain. My treatment was to commence at the beginning of the summer and I had left the convent when the winter began. All the intervening time I spent in the house of the sister whom I referred to above as living in a village, waiting for the month of April, which was near at hand, so that I should not have to go and come back again.

On the way there, I stopped at the house of this uncle of mine, which, as I have said, was on the road, and he gave me a book called Third Alphabet, which treats of the Prayer of Recollection. During this first year I had been reading good books (I no longer wanted to read any others, for I now realized what harm they had done me) but I did not know how to practise prayer, or how to recollect myself, and so I was delighted with the book and determined to follow that way of prayer with all my might. As by now the Lord had granted me the gift of tears, and I liked reading, I began to spend periods in solitude, to go frequently to confession and to start upon the way of prayer with this book for my guide. For I found no other guide (no confessor, I mean) who understood me, though I sought one for fully twenty years subsequently to the time I am speaking of. This did me great harm, as I had frequent relapses, and might have been completely lost; a guide would at least have helped me to escape when I found myself running the risk of offending God.

In these early days His Majesty began to grant me so many favours that at the end of this entire period of solitude, which lasted for almost nine months, although I was

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80 This last phrase has puzzled the commentators. I take the meaning to be that St. Teresa went to stay with her sister, Doña María who had married a certain Don Martín de Guzmán y Barrientos, in the late autumn ("when the winter began" -- but it begins early on the Castilian plateau), was under the supervision of the curandera, who lived near the sister, during the winter, and went to live with her, to take the intensive and painful course of treatment referred to in the text, in the following April, staying till July. It was presumably on a first visit to the curandera, made for the purpose of a consultation, that St. Teresa was accompanied by the older nun. But Becedas, where the curandera lived, was over forty miles from Ávila, whereas Doña María's village of Castellanos de la Canada was quite near Becedas, so that by going to stay with her sister she saved herself long journeys during the winter. This interpretation seems to me the only one which fits all the facts.

not so free from offending God as the book said one should be, I passed over that, for such great care seemed to me almost impossible. I was particular about not committing mortal sin -- and would to God I had always been so! But about venial sins I troubled very little and it was this which brought about my fall. Still, the Lord began to be so gracious to me on this way of prayer that He granted me the favour of leading me to the Prayer of Quiet, and occasionally even to Union, though I did not understand what either of these was, or how highly they were to be valued. Had I understood this I think it would have been a great blessing. It is true that my experience of Union lasted only a short time; I am not sure that it can have been for as long as an Ave Maria; but the results of it were so considerable, and lasted for so long that, although at this time I was not twenty years old, I seemed to have trampled the world beneath my feet, and I remember that I used to pity those who still clung to it, even in things that were lawful. I used to try to think of Jesus Christ, our Good and our Lord, as present within me, and it was in this way that I prayed. If I thought about any incident in His life, I would imagine it inwardly, though I liked principally to read good books, and this constituted the whole of my recreation. For God had not given me talents for reasoning with the understanding or for making good use of the imagination: my imagination is so poor that, even when I thought about the Lord's Humanity, or tried to imagine it to myself, as I was in the habit of doing, I never succeeded. And although, if they persevere, people may attain more quickly to contemplation by following this method of not labouring with the understanding, it is a very troublesome and painful process. For if the will has nothing to employ it and love has no present object with which to busy itself, the soul finds itself without either support or occupation, its solitude and aridity cause it great distress and its thoughts involve it in the severest conflict.

People in this condition need greater purity of conscience than those who can labour with the understanding. For anyone meditating on the nature of the world, on his duties to God, on God's great sufferings and on what he himself is giving to Him Who loves him, will find in his meditations instructions for defending himself against his thoughts and against perils and occasions of sin. Anyone unable to make use of this method is in much greater danger and should occupy himself frequently in reading, since he cannot find instruction in any other way. And inability to do this is so very painful that, if the master who is directing him forbids him to read and thus find help for recollection, reading is none the less necessary for him, however little it may be, as a substitute for the mental prayer which he is unable to practise. I mean that if he is compelled to spend a great deal of time in prayer without this aid it will be impossible for him to persist in it for long, and if he does so it will endanger his health, since it is a very painful process.

I believe now that it was through the Lord's good providence that I found no one to teach me; for, had I done so, it would have been impossible, I think, for me to persevere during the eighteen years for which I had to bear this trial and these great aridities, due, as I say, to my being unable to meditate. During all these years, except after communicating, I never dared begin to pray without a book; my soul was as much afraid to engage in prayer without one as if it were having to go and fight against a host of enemies. With this help, which was a companionship to me and a shield with which I could parry the blows of my many thoughts, I felt comforted. For it was not usual with me to suffer from aridity: this only came when I had no book, whereupon my soul would at once become disturbed and my thoughts

82[St. Teresa must have been mistaken. She cannot possibly have been less than twenty-three and was probably a little older.]
would begin to wander. As soon as I started to read they began to collect themselves and the book acted like a bait to my soul. Often the mere fact that I had it by me was sufficient. Sometimes I read a little, sometimes a great deal, according to the favour which the Lord showed me. It seemed to me, in these early stages of which I am speaking, that provided I had books and could be alone, there was no risk of my being deprived of that great blessing; and I believe that, by the help of God, this would have been the case if at the beginning I had had a master or some other person to advise me how to flee from occasions of sin, and, if I fell before them, to get me quickly free from them. If at that time the devil had attacked me openly, I believe I should never in any way have begun to sin grievously again. But he was so subtle, and I was so weak, that all my resolutions were of little profit to me, though, in the days when I served God, they became very profitable indeed, in that they enabled me to bear the terrible infirmities which came to me with the great patience given me by His Majesty.

I have often reflected with amazement upon God's great goodness and my soul has delighted in the thought of His great magnificence and mercy. May He be blessed for all this, for it has become clear to me that, even in this life, He has not failed to reward me for any of my good desires. However wretched and imperfect my good works have been, this Lord of mine has been improving them, perfecting them and making them of greater worth, and yet hiding my evil deeds and my sins as soon as they have been committed. He has even allowed the eyes of those who have seen them to be blind to them and He blots them from their memory. He gilds my faults and makes some virtue of mine to shine forth in splendour; yet it was He Himself Who gave it me and almost forced me to possess it.

I will now return and do what I have been commanded. I repeat that, if I had to describe in detail the way in which the Lord dealt with me in these early days, I should need much more intelligence than I have so as to be able to appreciate what I owe to Him, together with my own ingratitude and wickedness, all of which I have forgotten. May He be for ever blessed, Who has endured me for so long. Amen.

CHAPTER V

Continues to tell of the grievous infirmities which she suffered and of the patience given her by the Lord, and of how He brings good out of evil, as will be seen from an incident which happened to her in the place where she went for treatment.

I forgot to tell how, in the year of my novitiate, I suffered long periods of unrest about things which in themselves were of little importance. I was very often blamed when the fault was not mine. This I bore very imperfectly, and with great distress of mind, although I was able to endure it all because of my great satisfaction at being a nun. When they saw me endeavouring to be alone and sometimes weeping for my sins, they thought that I was discontented and said so. I was fond of everything to do with the religious life but I could not bear anything which seemed to make me ridiculous. I delighted in being thought well of; I was particular about everything I did; and all this I thought was a virtue, though that cannot serve me as an excuse, because I knew how to get pleasure for myself out of everything and so my wrongdoing cannot be excused by ignorance. Some excuse may be found in the
imperfect organization of the convent. But I, in my wickedness, followed what I knew to be wrong and neglected what was good.

At that time there was a nun who was afflicted by a most serious and painful illness: she was suffering from open sores in the stomach, which had been caused by obstructions, and these forced her to reject all her food. Of this illness she soon died. I saw that all the nuns were afraid of it but for my own part I had only great envy of her patience. I begged God that He would send me any illness He pleased if only He would make me as patient as she. I do not think I was in the least afraid of being ill, for I was so anxious to win eternal blessings that I was resolved to win them by any means whatsoever. And I am surprised at this; for, although I had not then, I think, such love for God as I have had since I began to pray, I had light enough to realize how trivial is the value of all things that pass away and how great is the worth of blessings which can be gained by despising them, for these are eternal. Well, His Majesty heard my prayer; for, before two years had passed, I myself had an illness which, though not of the same kind, was, I think, no less painful and troublesome. And this I suffered for three years, as I shall now relate.

When the time had come which I was awaiting in the place where, as I said, I was staying with my sister before undergoing my treatment, I was taken away, with the greatest solicitude for my comfort, by my father and sister and that nun who was my friend and had accompanied me when I had first left the convent because she loved me so dearly. It was now that the devil began to unsettle my soul, although God turned this into a great blessing. There was a priest who lived in the place where I had gone for the treatment: he was a man of really good family and great intelligence, and also of some learning, though not a great deal. I began to make my confessions to him, for I have always been attracted by learning, though confessors with only a little of it have done my soul great harm, and I have not always found men who had as much of it as I should have liked. I have discovered by experience that if they are virtuous and lead holy lives it is better they should have none at all than only a little; for then they do not trust themselves (nor would I myself trust them) unless they have first consulted those who are really learned; but a truly learned man has never led me astray. Not that these others can have meant to lead me astray; it is simply that they have known no better. I had supposed that they did and that my only obligation was to believe them, as they spoke to me in a very broad-minded way and gave me a great deal of freedom: if they had been strict, I am so wicked that I should have looked for others. What in reality was venial sin, they would tell me was no sin at all; and the most grievous of mortal sins was to them only venial. This did me such harm that it is not surprising if I speak of it here to warn others against so great an evil, for I see clearly that in God's sight I have no excuse; the fact that the things I did were themselves not good should have been sufficient to keep me from doing them. I believe God permitted these confessors to be mistaken and lead me astray because of my own sins. I myself led many others astray by repeating to them what had been told me. I continued in this state of blindness, I believe, for more than seventeen years, until a Dominican Father, who was a very learned man, undeceived me about certain things, and the Fathers

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83Lit.: "a person of the Church", but the context makes the meaning clear.
84P. Vicente Barrón, a theologian of repute, who was also her father's confessor.
of the Company of Jesus 85 made me very much afraid about my whole position by represen-
ting to me the gravity of these unsound principles, as I shall explain later.

After I had begun to make my confessions to this priest of whom I am speaking, he
took an extreme liking to me, for at that time I had little to confess by comparison
with what I had later -- I had not really had much ever since I became a nun. There
was nothing wrong in his affection for me, but it ceased to be good because there
was too much of it. He realized that nothing whatever would induce me to commit
any grave offence against God and he assured me that it was the same with him,
and so we talked together a good deal. But at that time, full of love for God as I was,
my greatest delight in conversation was to speak about Him; and, as I was such a
child, this caused him confusion, and, out of the great affection that he had for me,
he began to tell me about his unhappy condition. It was no small matter: for nearly
seven years he had been in a most perilous state because of his affection for a
woman in that very place, with whom he had had a good deal to do. Nevertheless,
he continued saying Mass. The fact that he had lost his honour and his good name
was quite well known, yet no one dared to reprove him for it. I was sorry for him
because I liked him very much: at that time I was so frivolous and blind that I
thought it a virtue to be grateful and loyal to anyone who liked me. Cursed be such
loyalty when it goes so far that it militates against loyalty to God! This is a
bewildering folly common in the world and it certainly bewilders me. For we owe to
God all the good that men show us, yet we consider it a virtue not to break off
friendships with men even if they cause us to act contrarily to His will. O blindness
of the world! May it please Thee, Lord, that I may be completely lacking in gratitude
to the whole world provided that in no respect I lack gratitude to Thee. But exactly
the reverse has been true of me, because of my sins.

I got to know more about this priest by making enquiries of members of his
household. I then realized what great trouble the poor man had got himself into and
found that it was not altogether his own fault. For the unhappy woman had cast a
spell over him, giving him a little copper figure and begging him, for love of her, to
wear it round his neck, and no one had been able to persuade him to take it off.
Now, with regard to this particular incident of the spell, I do not believe there is the
least truth in it. But I will relate what I saw, in order to warn men to be on their
guard against women who try to do such things to them. Let them be sure that, if
women (who are more bound to lead chaste lives even than men) lose all shame in
the sight of God, there is nothing whatever in which they can be trusted. In order to
obtain the pleasure of following their own will and an affection inspired in them by
the devil, they will stop at nothing. Wicked as I have been, I have never fallen into
any sin of this kind, nor have I ever tried to do wrong in this way; and, even if I
could have done so, I should never have wanted to force anyone's affection in my
favour, for the Lord has kept me from this. If He had forsaken me, however, I
should have done wrong in this respect, as I have done in others, for I am in no way
to be trusted.

When I heard about this spell I began to show the priest greater affection. My
intentions here were good, but my action was wrong, for one must never do the
smallest thing that is wrong in order to do good, however great. As a rule, I used to
speak to him about God. This must have done something to help him, although I
believe his liking for me did more; for, in order to please me, he gave me the little

85[Spanish writers always describe the Society of Jesus as the "Company" and that word is kept
throughout this translation.]
figu, which I at once got someone to throw into a river. When he had done this, he
became like a man awakening from a deep sleep and he began to recall everything
that he had been doing during those years. He was amazed at himself and grieved
at his lost condition and he began to hate the woman who had led him to it. Our
Lady must have been a great help to him, for he was most devoted to her
Conception and he used to keep the day commemorating it as a great festival. In the
end, he gave up seeing the woman, and never wearied of giving thanks to God for
having granted him light. Exactly a year from the day when I first saw him he died.
He had been active in God's service and I never thought there was anything wrong
in the great affection that he had for me, although it might have been purer. There
were also occasions when, if he had not had recourse to the presence of God, he
might have committed the gravest offenses. As I have said, I would not at that time
have done anything which I believed to be a mortal sin. And I think his realization
that that was so increased his affection for me; for I believe all men must have
greater affection for women when they see them inclined to virtue. Even in order to
obtain their earthly desires, women can get more from men in this way, as I shall
explain later. I am convinced that that priest is in the way of salvation. He died very
devoutly and completely delivered from that occasion of sin. It seems that the Lord's
will was that he should be saved by these means.

I remained in that place for three months, suffering the greatest trials, for the
treatment was more drastic than my constitution could stand. At the end of two
months, the severity of the remedies had almost ended my life, and the pain in my
heart, which I had gone there to get treated, was much worse; sometimes I felt as if
sharp teeth had hold of me, and so severe was the pain they caused that it was
feared I was going mad. My strength suffered a grave decline, for I could take
nothing but liquid, had a great distaste for food, was in a continual fever, and
became so wasted away that, after they had given me purgatives daily for almost a
month, I was, as it were, so shrivelled up that my nerves began to shrink. These
symptoms were accompanied by intolerable pain which gave me no rest by night or
by day. Altogether I was in a state of great misery.

Seeing that I had gained nothing here, my father took me away and once again
called in the doctors. They all gave me up, saying that, quite apart from everything
else, I was consumptive. This troubled me very little: it was the pains that
distressed me, for they racked me from head to foot and never ceased. Nervous
pains, as the doctors said, are intolerable, and, as all my nerves had shrunk, this
would indeed have been terrible torture if it had not all been due to my own fault. I
could not have been in this serious state for more than three months: it seemed
impossible that so many ills could all be endured at the same time. I am astonished
at myself now and consider the patience which His Majesty gave me to have been a
great favour from the Lord, for, as could clearly be seen, it was from Him that it
came. It was a great help to my patience that I had read the story of Job in the
Morals of St. Gregory,86 for the Lord seems to have used this for preparing me to
suffer. It was also a help that I had begun the practice of prayer, so that I could bear
everything with great resignation. All my conversation was with God. I had
continually in mind these words of Job, which I used to repeat: Since we have

86The Discalced nuns of St. Joseph's, Ávila, have an edition of St. Gregory's Morals, in two volumes,
which, according to an inscription in the second volume, were read and marked by St. Teresa. Both
in these volumes, however, and in the Alphabet, it can be stated with confidence that the majority of
the marks were not made by the Saint.
received good things at the hand of the Lord, why shall we not suffer evil things?87
This seemed to give me strength.

And now the August festival of Our Lady came round: I had been in torment ever
since April, though the last three months were the worst. I hastened to go to
confession, for I was always very fond of frequent confession. They thought that this
was due to fear of death, and, in order that I should not be distressed, my father
forbade me to go. Oh, what an excess of human love! Though my father was so good
a Catholic and so wise -- for he was extremely wise and so was not acting through
ignorance -- he might have done me great harm. That night I had a fit, which left
me unconscious for nearly four days.88 During that time they gave me the
Sacrament of Unction, and from hour to hour, from moment to moment, thought I
was dying; they did nothing but repeat the Creed to me, as though I could have
understood any of it. There must have been times when they were sure I was dead,
for afterwards I actually found some wax on my eyelids.

My father was in great distress because he had not allowed me to go to confession.
Many cries and prayers were made for me to God. Blessed be He Who was pleased
to hear them! For a day and a half there was an open grave in my convent, where
they were awaiting my body, and in one of the monasteries of our Order, some way
from here, they had performed the rites for the dead. But it pleased the Lord that I
should return to consciousness. I wished at once to go to confession. I communicated
with many tears; but they were not, I think, tears of sorrow and distress due only to
my having offended God, which might have sufficed to save me, if there had not
been sufficient excuse for me in the way I was misled by those who had told me that
certain things were not mortal sins which I have since seen clearly were so. My
sufferings were so intolerable that I hardly had the power to think, though I believe
my confession was complete as to all the ways in which I was conscious of having
offended God. There is one grace, among others, which His Majesty has granted me:
never since I began to communicate have I failed to confess anything which I
thought to be a sin, even if only a venial one. But I think that without doubt, if I had
died then, my salvation would have been very uncertain, because my confessors, on
the one hand, were so unlearned, and because I, on the other, was so wicked, and for
many other reasons.

The fact is, when I come to this point, and realize how the Lord seems to have raised
me from the dead I am so amazed that inwardly I am almost trembling. It would be
well, O my soul, if thou wouldst look at the danger from which the Lord has
delivered thee, so that if thou didst not cease to offend Him through love, thou
shouldst do so through fear. He might have slain thee on any of a thousand other
occasions and in a more perilous state still. I do not believe I am straying far from
the truth when I say "a thousand", though I may be reproved by him who has
commanded me to be temperate in recounting my sins, which I have presented in a
light only too favourable. I beg him, for the love of God, to excuse none of my faults,
for they only reveal the magnificence of God and His long-suffering to the soul. May
He be blessed for ever. And may it please His Majesty that I be utterly consumed
rather than cease to love Him.

87) Job ii, 10.
88) According to Ribera (Bk. I, Chap. VII), she was believed to be dead, a grave was dug for her at the
Incarnation and nuns came from that convent to keep vigil by her body. Her father, however, was
convinced that there was still life in her and refused to consent to the burial.
CHAPTER VI

Describes all that she owed to the Lord for granting her resignation in such great trials; and how she took the glorious Saint Joseph for her mediator and advocate; and the great profit that this brought her.

After this fit, which lasted for four days, I was in such a state that only the Lord can know what intolerable sufferings I experienced. My tongue was bitten to pieces; nothing had passed my lips; and because of this and of my great weakness my throat was choking me so that I could not even take water. All my bones seemed to be out of joint and there was a terrible confusion in my head. As a result of the torments I had suffered during these days, I was all doubled up, like a ball, and no more able to move arm, foot, hand or head than if I had been dead, unless others moved them for me. I could move, I think, only one finger of my right hand. It was impossible to let anyone come to see me, for I was in such a state of distress that I could not endure it. They used to move me in a sheet, one taking one end and another the other. This lasted until Easter Sunday. My only alleviation was that, if no one came near me, my pains often ceased; and when I had rested a little I used to think I was getting well. For I was afraid my patience would fail me; so I was very glad when I found myself without such sharp and constant pains, although I could hardly endure the terrible cold fits of quartan ague, from which I still suffered and which were very severe. I still had a dreadful distaste for food.

I was now so eager to return to the convent that they had me taken there. So, instead of the dead body they had expected, the nuns received a living soul; though the body was worse than dead and distressing to behold. My extreme weakness cannot be described, for by this time I was nothing but bones. As I have said, I remained in this condition for more than eight months, and my paralysis, though it kept improving, continued for nearly three years. When I began to get about on my hands and knees, I praised God. All this I bore with great resignation, and, except at the beginning, with great joy; for none of it could compare with the pains and torments which I had suffered at first. I was quite resigned to the will of God, even if He had left me in this condition for ever. My great yearning, I think, was to get well so that I might be alone when I prayed, as I had been taught to be -- there was no possibility of this in the infirmary. I made my confession very frequently, and talked a great deal about God, in such a way that all were edified and astonished at the patience which the Lord gave me; for if it had not come from His Majesty's hand it would have seemed impossible to be able to endure such great sufferings with such great joy.

It was a wonderful thing for me to have received the grace which God had granted me through prayer, for this made me realize what it was to love Him. After a short time I found these virtues were renewed within me, although not in great strength, for they were not sufficient to uphold me in righteousness. I never spoke ill of anyone in the slightest degree, for my usual practice was to avoid all evil-speaking. I used to remind myself that I must not wish or say anything about anyone which I should not like to be said of me. I was extremely particular about observing this rule on all possible occasions, although I was not so perfect as not to fail now and then when faced with difficult situations. Still, that was my usual habit; and those who were with me and had to do with me were so much struck by it that they made it a

89[Pascua florida. Lewis (p. 33) erroneously translates "Palm Sunday." ]
habit too. It came to be realized that in my presence people could turn their backs to me and yet be quite safe; and so, too, they were with my friends and kinsfolk and those who learned from me. But in other respects I shall have to give a strict account to God for the bad example which I set them. May it please His Majesty to forgive me, for I have been the cause of much wrongdoing, though my intentions were not so harmful as were the actions which resulted from them.

My desire for solitude continued and I was fond of speaking and conversing about God; if I found anyone with whom I could do so, it gave me more joy and recreation than indulgence in any of the refinements (which are really coarsenesses) of the conversation of the world. I communicated and confessed very much more frequently -- and this by my own wish; I loved reading good books; I was most sincerely penitent at having offended God; and I remember that often I dared not pray because I was afraid of the very deep distress which I should feel at having offended Him, and which was like a severe punishment. This continued to grow upon me and became such a torment that I do not know with what I can compare it. And its being greater or less had nothing to do with any fear of mine, for it would come when I thought of the favours which the Lord was giving me in prayer, and of all that I owed Him, and when I saw how ill I was requiting Him. I could not bear it; and I would grow very angry with myself at shedding so many tears for my faults, when I saw how little I improved and how neither my resolutions nor the trouble I took were sufficient to keep me from falling again when an occasion presented itself. My tears seemed to me deceptive and my faults the greater because I was conscious of the great favour which the Lord bestowed upon me in granting me these tears and this great repentance. I used to try to make my confession as soon as possible after I had fallen; and, I think, did all I could to return to grace. The whole trouble lay in my not cutting off the occasions of sin at the root, and in the scant help given me by my confessors. For, if they had told me how dangerous was the path I was taking and how incumbent upon me it was not to indulge in these conversations, I feel quite sure I could never have endured remaining in mortal sin for even a day with the knowledge that I was doing so. All these tokens of the fear of God came to me in prayer. The chief of them was that my fear was always swallowed up in love, for I never thought about punishment. All the time I was so ill, I kept a strict watch over my conscience with respect to mortal sin. O God, how I longed for health that I might serve Thee better! And that was the cause of all my wrongdoing.

For when I found that, while still so young, I was so seriously paralysed, and that earthly doctors had been unable to cure me, I resolved to seek a cure from heavenly doctors, for, though I bore my sickness with great joy, I none the less desired to be well again. I often reflected that, if I were to grow well and then to incur damnation, it would be better for me to remain as I was; but still I believed that I should serve God much better if I recovered my health. That is the mistake we make: we do not leave ourselves entirely in the Lord's hands; yet He knows best what is good for us.

I began by having Masses said for me, and prayers which had been fully approved; for I was never fond of other kinds of devotion which some people practise -- especially women -- together with ceremonies which I could never endure, but for which they have a great affection. Since then it has been explained to me that such things are unseemly and superstitious. I took for my advocate and lord the glorious Saint Joseph and commended myself earnestly to him; and I found that this my father and lord delivered me both from this trouble and also from other and greater

90[Envuelto. Lit.: "wrapped up", "swathed").]
troubles concerning my honour\textsuperscript{91} and the loss of my soul, and that he gave me
greater blessings than I could ask of him. I do not remember even now that I have
ever asked anything of him which he has failed to grant. I am astonished at the
great favours which God has bestowed on me through this blessed saint, and at the
perils from which He has freed me, both in body and in soul. To other saints the
Lord seems to have given grace to succour us in some of our necessities but of this
glorious saint my experience is that he succours us in them all and that the Lord
wishes to teach us that as He was Himself subject to him on earth (for, being His
guardian and being called His father, he could command Him) just so in Heaven He
still does all that he asks. This has also been the experience of other persons whom I
have advised to commend themselves to him; and even to-day there are many who
have great devotion to him through having newly experienced this truth.

I used to try to keep his feast with the greatest possible solemnity\textsuperscript{92}; but, though my
intentions were good, I would observe it with more vanity than spirituality, for I
always wanted things to be done very meticulously and well. I had this unfortunate
characteristic that, if the Lord gave me grace to do anything good, the way I did it
was full of imperfections and extremely faulty. I was very assiduous and skilful in
wrongdoing and in my meticulousness and vanity. May the Lord forgive me. I wish I
could persuade everyone to be devoted to this glorious saint, for I have great
experience of the blessings which he can obtain from God. I have never known
anyone to be truly devoted to him and render him particular services who did not
notably advance in virtue, for he gives very real help to souls who commend
themselves to him. For some years now, I think, I have made some request of him
every year on his festival and I have always had it granted. If my petition is in any
way ill directed, he directs it aright for my greater good.

If I were a person writing with authority, I would gladly describe, at greater length
and in the minutest detail, the favours which this glorious saint has granted to me
and to others. But in order not to do more than I have been commanded I shall have
to write about many things briefly, much more so than I should wish, and at
unnecessarily great length about others: in short, I must act like one who has little
discretion in all that is good. I only beg, for the love of God, that anyone who does
not believe me will put what I say to the test, and he will see by experience what
great advantages come from his commending himself to this glorious patriarch and
having devotion to him. Those who practise prayer should have a special affection
for him always. I do not know how anyone can think of the Queen of the Angels,
during the time that she suffered so much with the Child Jesus, without giving
thanks to Saint Joseph for the way he helped them. If anyone cannot find a master
to teach him how to pray, let him take this glorious saint as his master and he will
not go astray. May the Lord grant that I have not erred in venturing to speak of
him; for though I make public acknowledgment of my devotion to him, in serving
and imitating him I have always failed. He was true to his own nature when he
cured my paralysis and gave me the power to rise and walk; and I am following my
own nature in using this favour so ill.

Who would have said that I should fall so soon, after receiving so many favours from
God, and after His Majesty had begun to grant me virtues which themselves

\textsuperscript{91}[Honra. Cf. n. 68.]
\textsuperscript{92}[In many Spanish convents at this time it was customary to allow any nun who could afford to do so
to pay the expenses of the yearly festival of some one saint to whom she might be particularly
devoted. This custom obtained at the Incarnation.]
aroused me to serve Him; after I had seen myself at death's door and in such great peril of damnation; after He had raised me up, in soul and in body, so that all who saw me were amazed to see me alive? What it is, my Lord, to have to live a life so full of perils! For here I am writing this, and it seems to me that with Thy favour and through Thy mercy I might say with Saint Paul, though not so perfectly as he: For it is not I now who live, but Thou, my Creator, livest in me.93 For some years, so far as I can see, Thou hast held me by Thy hand, and I find I have desires and resolutions -- tested to a certain extent, during these years, in many ways, by experience -- to do nothing contrary to Thy will, however trifling it may be, though I must often have caused Thy Majesty numerous offences without knowing it. It seems to me, too, that nothing can present itself to me which I would not with great resolution undertake for love of Thee, and some of these things Thou hast helped me successfully to accomplish. I desire neither the world nor anything that is worldly, and nothing seems to give me pleasure unless it comes from Thee: everything else seems to me a heavy cross. I may well be mistaken and it may be that I have not the desire that I have described; but Thou seest, my Lord, that, so far as I can understand, I am not lying. I am afraid, and with good reason, that Thou mayest once more forsake me; for I know well how little my strength and insufficiency of virtue can achieve if Thou be not ever granting me Thy grace and helping me not to forsake Thee. May it please Thy Majesty that I be not forsaken by Thee even now, while I am thinking all this about myself. I do not know why we wish to live, when everything is so uncertain. I used to think, my Lord, that it was impossible to forsake Thee wholly; yet how many times have I forsaken Thee! I cannot but fear; for, when Thou didst withdraw from me but a little, I fell utterly to the ground. Blessed be Thou for ever! For, though I have forsaken Thee, Thou hast not so completely forsaken me as not to raise me up again by continually giving me Thy hand. Often, Lord, I would not take it, and often when Thou didst call me a second time I would not listen, as I shall now relate.

CHAPTER VII

Describes how she began to lose the favours which the Lord had granted her and how evil her life became. Treats of the harm that comes to convents from laxity in the observance of the rule of enclosure.

I began, then, to indulge in one pastime after another, in one vanity after another and in one occasion of sin after another. Into so many and such grave occasions of sin did I fall, and so far was my soul led astray by all these vanities, that I was ashamed to return to God and to approach Him in the intimate friendship which comes from prayer. This shame was increased by the fact that, as my sins grew in number, I began to lose the pleasure and joy which I had been deriving from virtuous things. I saw very clearly, my Lord, that this was failing me because I was failing Thee. The devil, beneath the guise of humility, now led me into the greatest of all possible errors. Seeing that I was so utterly lost, I began to be afraid to pray. It seemed to me better, since in my wickedness I was one of the worst people alive, to live like everyone else; to recite, vocally, the prayers that I was bound to say; and not to practise mental prayer or hold so much converse with God, since I deserved to be with the devils, and, by presenting an outward appearance of goodness, was only

93Galatians ii, 20.
deceiving others. No blame for this is to be attributed to the house in which I lived, for I was clever enough to see to it that the nuns had a good opinion of me, though I did not do so deliberately, by pretending to be a good Christian, for in the matter of vainglory and hypocrisy -- glory be to God! -- I do not remember having even once offended Him, so far as I am aware. For if ever I perceived within myself the first motions of such a thing, it distressed me so much that the devil would depart confounded and I would be all the better for it; so he has very seldom tempted me much in this way. Perhaps, if God had permitted me to be tempted as severely in this respect as in others, I should have fallen here too, but so far His Majesty has kept me from this. May He be for ever blessed. In reality, therefore, I was very much troubled that they should have such a good opinion of me, as I knew what sort of person I was inwardly.

This belief which they had that I was not so wicked was the result of their seeing me, young though I was and exposed to so many occasions of sin, withdrawing myself frequently into solitude, saying my prayers, reading a great deal, speaking about God, liking to have pictures of Him in a great many places, wanting an oratory of my own, trying to get objects of devotion for it, refraining from evil-speaking and doing other things of that kind which gave me the appearance of being virtuous. I myself was vain and liked to be well thought of in the things wont to be esteemed by the world. On account of this they gave me as much liberty as is given to the oldest nuns, and even more, and they had great confidence in me. For I did no such things as taking liberties for myself or doing anything without leave -- such as talking to people through crevices or over walls or by night -- and I do not think I could ever have brought myself to talk in such a way with anyone in the convent, for the Lord held me by His hand. It seemed to me -- for there were many things which I used to ponder deliberately and with great care -- that it would be very wrong of me to compromise the good name of so many of the sisters when I was wicked and they were good: just as though all the other things that I did had been good! In truth, though I often acted very wrongly, my faults were never so much the result of a set purpose as those others would have been.

For that reason, I think it was a very bad thing for me not to be in a convent that was enclosed. The freedom which the sisters, who were good, might enjoy without becoming less so (for they were not obliged to live more strictly than they did as they had not taken a vow of enclosure) would certainly have led me, who am wicked, down to hell, had not the Lord, through very special favours, using means and remedies which are all His own, delivered me from this peril. It seems to me, then, that it is a very great danger for women in a convent to have such freedom: for those who want to be wicked it is not so much a remedy for their weaknesses as a step on the way to hell. But this is not to be applied to my convent, where there are so many who serve the Lord in very truth and with great perfection, so that His Majesty, in His goodness, cannot fail to help them. Nor is it one of those which are completely open, for all religious observances are kept in it: I am comparing it now with others which I know and have seen.

This seems to me, as I say, a great pity; for, when a convent follows standards and allows recreations which belong to the world, and the obligations of the nuns are so ill understood, the Lord has perforce to call each of them individually, and not once but many times, if they are to be saved. God grant that they may not all mistake sin for virtue, as I so often did! It is very difficult to make people see this and the Lord must needs take the matter right into His own hands. Parents seem to give little thought to the placing of their daughters where they may walk in the way of salvation, but allow them to run into more danger than they would in the world;
nevertheless, if they will follow my advice, they will at least consider what concerns their honour. Let them be prepared to allow them to marry far beneath their stations rather than put them into convents of this kind, unless they are very devoutly inclined -- and God grant that their inclinations may lead them into what is good! Otherwise they will do better to keep them at home; for there, if they want to be wicked, they cannot long hide their wickedness, whereas in convents it can be hidden for a very long time indeed, until, in the end, it is revealed by the Lord. They do harm not only to themselves but to everybody else; and at times the poor creatures are really not to blame, for they only do what they find others doing. Many of them are to be pitied: they wish to escape from the world, and, thinking that they are going to serve the Lord and flee from the world and its perils, they find themselves in ten worlds at once, and have no idea where to turn or how to get out of their difficulties. Youth, sensuality and the devil invite and incline them to do things which are completely worldly; and they see that these things are considered, as one might say, "all right". To me, in some ways, they resemble those unhappy heretics, who wilfully blind themselves and proclaim that what they do is good; and believe it to be so, yet without real confidence, for there is something within them which tells them they are doing wrong.

Oh, what terrible harm, what terrible harm is wrought in religious (I am referring now as much to men as to women) when the religious life is not properly observed; when of the two paths that can be followed in a religious house -- one leading to virtue and the observance of the Rule and the other leading away from the Rule -- both are frequented almost equally! No, I am wrong: they are not frequented equally, for our sins cause the more imperfect road to be more commonly taken; being the broader, it is the more generally favoured. The way of true religion is frequented so little that, if the friar and the nun are to begin to follow their vocation truly, they need to be more afraid of the religious in their own house than of all the devils. They must observe greater caution and dissimulation when speaking of the friendship which they would have with God than in speaking of other friendships and affections promoted in religious houses by the devil. I cannot think why we should be astonished at all the evils which exist in the Church, when those who ought to be models on which all may pattern their virtues are annulling the work wrought in the religious Orders by the spirit of the saints of old. May His Divine Majesty be pleased to find a remedy for this, as He sees needful. Amen.

Now when I began to indulge in these conversations, I did not think, seeing them to be so usual, that they would cause the harm and distraction to my soul which I found would be the case later. For I thought that, as in many convents it is such a common practice to receive visitors, I should take no more harm from it than would others whom I knew to be good. I did not realize that they were far better than I and that what was dangerous for me would not be so dangerous for others. Yet I have no doubt that the practice is never quite free from danger, if only because it is a waste of time. I was once in the company of a certain person, right at the beginning of my acquaintance with her, when the Lord was pleased to make me realize that these friendships were not good for me, and to warn me and enlighten my great blindness. Christ revealed Himself to me, in an attitude of great sternness, and showed me what there was in this that displeased Him.94 I saw Him with the eyes of the soul more clearly than I could ever have seen Him with those of the body; and it made such an impression upon me that, although it is now more than twenty-six years

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94 [The Saint wrote, no doubt inadvertently, "that did not displease Him".] P. Báñez corrected this to: "that He did not like".
ago, I seem to have Him present with me still. I was greatly astonished and upset about it and I never wanted to see that person again.

It did me great harm not to know that it was possible to see anything otherwise than with the eyes of the body. It was the devil who encouraged me in this ignorance and made me think that anything else was impossible. He led me to believe that I had imagined it all, and that it might have been the work of the devil, and other things of that kind. I always had an idea that it was not due to my fancy but came from God. However, just because the vision did not please me, I forced myself to give the lie to my own instinct; and, as I dared not discuss it with anyone, and after a time great importunity was brought to bear on me, I entered into relations with that person once again. I was assured that there was no harm in my seeing such a person, and that by doing so I should not injure my good name but rather enhance it. On subsequent occasions I got to know other people in the same way; and I spent many years in this pestilential pastime, which, whenever I was engaged in it, never seemed to me as bad as it really was, though sometimes I saw clearly that it was not good. But no one caused me as much distraction as did the person of whom I am speaking, for I was very fond of her.

On another occasion, when I was with that same person, we saw coming towards us -- and others who were there saw this too -- something like a great toad, but crawling much more quickly than toads are wont to do. I cannot imagine how such a reptile could have come from the place in question in broad daylight; it had never happened before, and the incident made such an impression on me that I think it must have had a hidden meaning, and I have never forgotten this either. O greatness of God! With what care and compassion didst Thou warn me in every way and how little did I profit by Thy warnings!

There was a nun in that convent, who was a relative of mine; she had been there a long time and was a great servant of God and devoted to the Rule of her Order. She, too, occasionally warned me; and not only did I disbelieve her but I was displeased with her, for I thought she was shocked without cause. I have mentioned this in order to make clear my wickedness and the great goodness of God and to show how by this great ingratitude of mine I had merited hell. I also mention it in order that, if it is the Lord's will and pleasure that it shall be read at any time by a nun, she may be warned by me. I beg all nuns, for the love of Our Lord, to flee from such pastimes as these. May His Majesty grant that some of those whom I have led astray may be set in the right path by me; I used to tell them that there was nothing wrong in this practice, and, blind that I was, reassure them about what was in reality a great danger. I would never have deliberately deceived them; but, through the bad example that I set them, as I have said, I was the cause of a great deal of wrongdoing without ever thinking I could be.

In those early days, during my illness, and before I knew how to take care of myself, I used to have the greatest desire to be of use to others. This is a very common temptation in beginners; in my case, however, its effects were good. I was so fond of my father that I longed for him to experience the benefit which I seemed to be deriving from the practice of prayer myself, for I thought that in this life there could be nothing greater. So by indirect methods, and to the best of my ability, I began to try to get him to practise it. To this end I gave him books to read. Being very virtuous, as I have said he was, he took so well to this exercise that in five or six
years (I think it must have been\textsuperscript{96}) he had made such progress that I praised the Lord greatly and was wonderfully encouraged. He had to bear the severest trials of many different kinds and he bore them with the greatest resignation. He often came to see me, for he derived great comfort from speaking of the things of God.

But now that I had fallen away so far, and no longer practised prayer, I could not bear him to think, as I saw he did, that I was still just as I used to be; so I had to undeceive him. For I had been a year or more without praying, thinking that to refrain from prayer was a sign of greater humility. This, as I shall afterwards explain, was the greatest temptation I had: it nearly brought about my ruin. For during the time I practised prayer, if I had offended God one day, I would recollect myself on the following days and withdraw farther from occasions of sin. When that dear good man came to visit me, it was very hard for me to see him under the false impression that I was still communing with God as I had been doing before. So I told him that I was no longer praying, without telling him the reason. I made my illnesses an excuse; for, though I had recovered from that very serious illness, I have suffered ever since from indispositions, and sometimes from grave ones, even to this day. For some time my complaints have been less troublesome, but they have by no means left me. In particular, for twenty years I suffered from morning sickness, so that I was not able to break my fast until after midday -- sometimes not until much later. Now that I go oftener to Communion, I have to bring on the sickness at night, with feathers or in some other way, before I go to bed, which is much more distressing; but if I let it take its course I feel much worse. I think I can hardly ever be free from aches and pains, and sometimes very serious ones, especially in the heart, although the trouble which I once had continually now occurs only rarely, and I have been free for quite eight years from the paralysis and the feverish complaints from which I used often to suffer. Of these troubles I now make such little account that I often rejoice in them, thinking that to some extent they are pleasing to the Lord.

My father believed me when I told him that it was because of my health that I had ceased to pray, since he never told a lie himself, and, in view of the relations between us, there was no reason why I should have done so either. I told him, in order to make my story the more credible (for I well knew that I had no such excuse really), that it was as much as I could do to attend the choir offices. Not that this would be any sufficient reason for giving up something which needs no bodily strength, but only love and the formation of a habit; and the Lord always gives us an opportunity if we want one. I say always; for, though there may be times when we are prevented by various hindrances, and even by illness, from spending much time alone, there are plenty of others when we are in sufficiently good health to do so. And even despite illness, or other hindrances, we can still engage in true prayer, when there is love in the soul, by offering up that very impediment, remembering Him for Whom we suffer it and being resigned to it and to a thousand other things which may happen to us. It is here that love comes in; for we are not necessarily praying when we are alone, nor need we refrain from praying when we are not.

With a little care, great blessings can be acquired at times when the Lord deprives us of our hours of prayer by sending us trials; and this I had myself found to be the case when my conscience had been good. But my father, holding the opinion of me

\textsuperscript{96}[Hardly quite so long, as] it seems certain that Don Alonso died on December 24, 1543. His will is dated December 3, 1543, and his son and executor Lorenzo opened it on December 26 [P. Silverio reproduces documents which disprove Mir's date of 1545 for Don Alonso's death].
that he did and loving me as he did, believed everything I told him and in fact was sorry for me. As he had now reached such a high state of prayer he used not to stay with me for so long, but after he had seen me would go away, saying that he was wasting his time. As I was wasting mine on other vanities, this remark made little impression upon me. There were other persons, as well as my father, whom I tried to lead into the practice of prayer. Indulging in vanities myself though I was, when I saw people who were fond of saying their prayers, I would show them how to make a meditation and help them and give them books; for ever since I began to pray, as I have said, I had this desire that others should serve God. And now that I was no longer serving the Lord according to my ability, I thought that the knowledge which His Majesty had given me ought not to be lost and wanted others to learn to serve Him through me. I say this in order to show how great was my blindness, which allowed me to do such harm to myself and yet to try to be of profit to others.

It was at this time that my father was stricken by the illness of which he died. It lasted for some days. I went to look after him, more afflicted in soul than he in body, on account of my vanities, though, as far as I was aware, I was never in mortal sin during the whole of this wasted time of which I am speaking: if I had known myself to be so I would on no account have continued in it. I was greatly distressed by his illness and I believe I was able to return him some part of all he had done for me when I was ill myself. Distressed as I was, I forced myself into activity; and though in losing him I lost my greatest blessing and comfort, for he was always that to me, I was so determined not to let him see my grief for as long as he lived that I behaved as if I felt no grief at all. Yet so dearly did I love him that, when I saw his life was ending, I felt as if my very soul were being torn from me.

The Lord must be praised for the death which he died, for his desire to die, for the advice which he gave us after receiving Extreme Unction, and for the way he charged us to commend him to God, to pray for mercy upon him and to serve God always, remembering how all things come to an end. He told us with tears how deeply grieved he was that he had not served God better: he would have liked to be a friar -- and by that I mean to have joined one of the strictest Orders in existence. I am quite sure that a fortnight before his death the Lord had made him realize that he would not live much longer; for down to that time, ill though he was, he had not believed he would die. But during that last fortnight, though he got much better and the doctors told him so, he took no notice of them but occupied himself in putting his soul right with God.

His chief ailment was a most acute pain in the back, which never left him: at times it was so severe that it caused him great anguish. I said to him that, as he used to think so devoutly of the Lord carrying the Cross on His back, he must suppose His Majesty wished him to feel something of what He Himself had suffered under that trial. This comforted him so much that I do not think I ever heard him complain again. For three days he was practically unconscious; but, on the day of his death, the Lord restored his consciousness so completely that we were astonished, and he remained conscious until, half-way through the Creed, which he was repeating to himself, he died. He looked like an angel; and so he seemed to me, as one might say, both in his soul and in his disposition, for he was very good. I do not know why I have said this, unless it be to blame myself the more for my wicked life; for, after witnessing such a death and realizing what his life had been, I ought to have tried to do something to resemble such a father by growing better. His confessor, who was
a Dominican and a very learned man, used to say that he had not the least doubt he had gone straight to Heaven; he had been his confessor for some years and spoke highly of his purity of conscience.

This Dominican father, who was a very good man and had a great fear of God, was of the very greatest help to me. I made my confessions to him and he took great pains to lead my soul aright and make me realize how near I was to perdition. He made me communicate once a fortnight; and gradually, as I got to know him, I began to tell him about my prayers. He told me never to leave these off, for they could not possibly do me anything but good. So I began to take them up once more (though I did not flee from occasions of sin) and I never again abandoned them. My life became full of trials, because by means of prayer I learned more and more about my faults. On the one hand, God was calling me. On the other, I was following the world. All the things of God gave me great pleasure, yet I was tied and bound to those of the world. It seemed as if I wanted to reconcile these two contradictory things, so completely opposed to one another -- the life of the spirit and the pleasures and joys and pastimes of the senses. I suffered great trials in prayer, for the spirit was not master in me, but slave. I could not, therefore, shut myself up within myself (the procedure in which consisted my whole method of prayer) without at the same time shutting in a thousand vanities. I spent many years in this way, and now I am amazed that a person could have gone on for so long without giving up either the one or the other. I know quite well that by that time it was no longer in my power to give up prayer, because He who desired me for His own in order to show me greater favours held me Himself in His hand.

Oh, God help me! If only I could describe the occasions of sin during these years from which God delivered me, and tell how I plunged into them again and how He continually saved me from the danger of losing my entire reputation! I would show by my actions the kind of person I was; yet the Lord would hide the wrongs I did and reveal some small virtue, if I had any, and magnify it in the eyes of all, so that people invariably had a high opinion of me. For, although my vanities were sometimes crystal-clear, they would not believe them to be such when they observed other things in me which they considered good. This happened because He Who knows all things saw it to be necessary, in order that hereafter I might be given some credence when speaking of things that concern His service. His sovereign bounty regarded not my great sins but the desires which I so often had to serve Him and my grief at not having in myself the strength to turn the desires into actions. O Lord of my soul! How can I magnify the favours which Thou didst bestow upon me during these years? And how, at the very time when I was offending Thee most sorely, didst Thou suddenly prepare me, by the deepest repentance, to taste Thy favours and graces! In truth, my King, Thou didst choose the most delicate and grievous chastisement that I could possibly have to bear, for well didst Thou know what would cause me the greatest pain. Thou didst chastise my faults with great favours. And I do not believe I am speaking foolishly, though well might I become distraught when I recall to mind my ingratitude and wickedness. In the condition I was in at that time, it was much more painful for me, when I had fallen into grievous faults, to be given favours, than to be given punishments. A single one of these faults, I feel sure, troubled and confounded and distressed me more than many sicknesses and many other grievous trials all put together. For these last I knew that I deserved and thought that by them I was making some amends for my

97P. Vicente Barrón [cf. p. 27, n. 2].
sins, although my sins were so numerous that everything I could do was very little. But when I find myself receiving new favours, after making so poor a return for those I have received already, I experience a kind of torture which is terrible to me, as I think it must be to all who have any knowledge or love of God. We can deduce our own unworthiness by imagining a state of real virtue. This accounts for my tears and vexation when I took stock of my own feelings, and realized that I was in such a state as to be on the point of falling again and again, though my resolutions and desires -- at that time, I mean -- were quite steadfast.

It is a great evil for a soul beset by so many dangers to be alone. I believe, if I had had anyone with whom to discuss all this, it would have helped me not to fall again, if only because I should have been ashamed in his sight, which I was not in the sight of God. For this reason I would advise those who practise prayer, especially at first, to cultivate friendship and intercourse with others of similar interests. This is a most important thing, if only because we can help each other by our prayers, and it is all the more so because it may bring us many other benefits. Since people can find comfort in the conversation and human sympathy of ordinary friendships, even when these are not altogether good, I do not know why anyone who is beginning to love and serve God in earnest should not be allowed to discuss his joys and trials with others -- and people who practise prayer have plenty of both. For, if the friendship which such a person desires to have with His Majesty is true friendship, he need not be afraid of becoming vainglorious: as soon as the first motion of vainglory attacks him, he will repel it, and, in doing so, gain merit. I believe that anyone who discusses the subject with this in mind will profit both himself and his hearers, and will be all the wiser for it; and, without realizing he is doing so, will edify his friends.

Anyone who could become vainglorious through discussing these matters would become equally so by hearing Mass with devotion in a place where people can see him, and by doing other things which he is obliged to do under pain of being no Christian at all: he cannot possibly refrain from doing these through fear of vainglory. This is also most important for souls which are not strengthened in virtue; they have so many enemies and friends to incite them to do what is wrong that I cannot insist upon it sufficiently. It seems to me that this scruple is an invention of the devil, who finds it extremely valuable. He uses it to persuade those who are anxious to try to love and please God to hide their good desires, while inciting others, whose wills are evilly inclined, to reveal their wrong intentions. This happens so frequently that people now seem to glory in it and the offences committed in this way against God are published openly.

I do not know if the things I am saying are nonsense: if so, Your Reverence must erase them; if not, I beg you to help my simplicity by adding to them freely. For people trouble so little about things pertaining to the service of God that we must all back each other up98 if those of us who serve Him are to make progress. People think it a good thing to follow the pleasures and vanities of the world and there are few who look askance at these; but if a single person begins to devote himself to God, there are so many to speak ill of him that self-defence compels him to seek the companionship of others until he is strong enough not to be depressed by suffering. Unless he does this he will find himself in continual difficulties. It must have been for this reason, I think, that some of the saints were in the habit of going into the desert. It is a kind of humility for a man not to trust himself but to believe that God

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98[The metaphor, hacerse espaldas, is St. Teresa's.]
will help him in dealing with those with whom he has intercourse. Charity grows when it is communicated to others and from this there result a thousand blessings. I should not dare to say this if I had not had a great deal of experience of its importance. It is true that of all who are born I am the weakest and wickedest; but I believe that anyone, however strong, who humbles himself and trusts not in himself but in someone who has experience, will lose nothing. As regards myself, I can say that, if the Lord had not revealed this truth to me and given me the means of speaking very frequently with people who practise prayer, I should have gone on rising and falling again until I fell right into hell. For I had many friends who helped me to fall; but, when it came to rising again, I found myself so completely alone that I marvel now that I did not remain where I was, and I praise the mercy of God, Who alone gave me His hand. May He be blessed for ever. Amen.

CHAPTER VIII

Treats of the great benefit which she derived from not entirely giving up prayer lest she should ruin her soul. Describes the excellence of prayer as a help towards regaining what one has lost. Urges all to practise it. Says what great gain it brings and how great a benefit it is, even for those who may later give it up, to spend some time on a thing which is so good.

It is not without reason that I have dwelt upon this period of my life at such length. I know well that nobody will derive any pleasure from reading about anyone so wicked, and I sincerely hope that those who read this will hold me in abhorrence, when they see that a soul which had received such great favours could be so obstinate and ungrateful. I wish I could be allowed to describe the many occasions on which I failed God during this period through not having leaned upon this strong pillar of prayer.

I spent nearly twenty years on that stormy sea, often falling in this way and each time rising again, but to little purpose, as I would only fall once more. My life was so far from perfection that I took hardly any notice of venial sins; as to mortal sins, although afraid of them, I was not so much so as I ought to have been; for I did not keep free from the danger of falling into them. I can testify that this is one of the most grievous kinds of life which I think can be imagined, for I had neither any joy in God nor any pleasure in the world. When I was in the midst of worldly pleasures, I was distressed by the remembrance of what I owed to God; when I was with God, I grew restless because of worldly affections. This is so grievous a conflict that I do not know how I managed to endure it for a month, much less for so many years. Nevertheless, I can see how great was the Lord's mercy to me, since, while I was still having intercourse with the world, He gave me courage to practise prayer. I say courage, because I know nothing in the world that needs more of this than to be dealing treacherously with the King and to know that He is aware of it and yet never to leave His presence. For, although we are always in the presence of God, it seems to me that those who practise prayer are specially so, because they can see all the time that He is looking at them; whereas others may be in God's presence for several days without ever remembering that He can see them.

It is true that, during these years, there were many months -- once, I believe, there was as much as a whole year -- in which I kept myself from offending the Lord,
devoted myself earnestly to prayer and took various and very careful precautions not to offend Him. As all that I have written is set down in the strictest truth, I am saying this now. But I remember little about these good days, so there can have been few of them, whereas the bad ones must have been numerous. Yet not many days would pass without my spending long periods in prayer, unless I was very ill or very busy. When I was ill, I was nearer to God; and I contrived that the persons who were around me should be near Him too and I begged the Lord that this might be so and often spoke of Him. So, not counting the year I have referred to, more than eighteen of the twenty-eight years which have gone by since I began prayer have been spent in this battle and conflict which arose from my having relations both with God and with the world. During the remaining years, of which I have still to speak, the conflict has not been light, but its causes have changed; as I believe I have been serving God and have come to know the vanity inherent in the world, everything has gone smoothly, as I shall say later.

Now the reason why I have related all this is, as I have already said, to make evident God's mercy and my own ingratitude. Another reason is to show what great blessings God grants to a soul when He prepares it to love the practice of prayer, though it may not be as well prepared already as it should be; and how, if that soul perseveres, notwithstanding the sins, temptations and falls of a thousand kinds into which the devil leads it, the Lord, I am certain, will bring it to the harbour of salvation, just as, so far as can at present be told, He has brought me. May His Majesty grant that I may never again be lost.

The blessings possessed by one who practises prayer -- I mean mental prayer -- have been written of by many saints and good men. Glory be to God for this! If it were not so, I should not have assurance enough (though I am not very humble) to dare to speak of it. I can say what I know by experience -- namely, that no one who has begun this practice, however many sins he may commit, should ever forsake it. For it is the means by which we may amend our lives again, and without it amendment will be very much harder. So let him not be tempted by the devil, as I was, to give it up for reasons of humility, but let him believe that the words cannot fail of Him Who says that, if we truly repent and determine not to offend Him, He will resume His former friendship with us and grant us the favours which He granted aforetime, and sometimes many more, if our repentance merits it.99 And anyone who has not begun to pray, I beg, for love of the Lord, not to miss so great a blessing. There is no place here for fear, but only desire. For, even if a person fails to make progress, or to strive after perfection, so that he may merit the consolations and favours given to the perfect by God, yet he will gradually gain a knowledge of the road to Heaven. And if he perseveres, I hope in the mercy of God, Whom no one has ever taken for a Friend without being rewarded; and mental prayer, in my view, is nothing but friendly intercourse, and frequent solitary converse, with Him Who we know loves us. If love is to be true and friendship lasting, certain conditions are necessary: on the Lord's side we know these cannot fail, but our nature is vicious, sensual and ungrateful. You cannot therefore succeed in loving Him as much as He loves you, because it is not in your nature to do so. If, then, you do not yet love Him, you will realize how much it means to you to have His friendship and how much He loves

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99[An apparent reference to Ezechiel xviii, 21.]
you, and you will gladly endure the troubles which arise from being so much with One Who is so different from you.

O infinite goodness of my God! It is thus that I seem to see both myself and Thee. O Joy of the angels, how I long, when I think of this, to be wholly consumed in love for Thee! How true it is that Thou dost bear with those who cannot bear Thee to be with them! Oh, how good a Friend art Thou, my Lord! How Thou dost comfort us and suffer us and wait until our nature becomes more like Thine and meanwhile dost bear with it as it is! Thou dost remember the times when we love Thee, my Lord, and, when for a moment we repent, Thou dost forget how we have offended Thee. I have seen this clearly in my own life, and I cannot conceive, my Creator, why the whole world does not strive to draw near to Thee in this intimate friendship. Those of us who are wicked, and whose nature is not like Thine, ought to draw near to Thee so that Thou mayest make them good. They should allow Thee to be with them for at least two hours each day, even though they may not be with Thee, but are perplexed, as I was, with a thousand worldly cares and thoughts. In exchange for the effort which it costs them to desire to be in such good company (for Thou knowest, Lord, that at first this is as much as they can do and sometimes they can do no more at all) Thou dost prevent the devils from assaulting them so that each day they are able to do them less harm, and Thou givest them strength to conquer. Yea, Life of all lives, Thou slayest none of those that put their trust in Thee and desire Thee for their Friend; rather dost Thou sustain their bodily life with greater health and give life to their souls.

I do not understand the fears of those who are afraid to begin mental prayer: I do not know what they are afraid of. The devil does well to instil fear into us so that he may do us real harm. By making me afraid he stops me from thinking of the ways in which I have offended God and of all I owe Him and of the reality of hell and of glory and of the great trials and griefs which He suffered for me. That was the whole extent of my prayer, and remained so for as long as I was subject to these perils, and it was about these things that I used to think whenever I could; and very often, over a period of several years, I was more occupied in wishing my hour of prayer were over, and in listening whenever the clock struck, than in thinking of things that were good. Again and again I would rather have done any severe penance that might have been given me than practise recollection as a preliminary to prayer. It is a fact that, either through the intolerable power of the devil's assaults or because of my own bad habits, I did not at once betake myself to prayer; and whenever I entered the oratory I used to feel so depressed that I had to summon up all my courage to make myself pray at all. (People say that I have little courage, and it is clear that God has given me much more than to most women, only I have made bad use of it.) In the end, the Lord would come to my help. Afterwards, when I had forced myself to pray, I would find that I had more tranquillity and happiness than at certain other times when I had prayed because I had wanted to.

Now if the Lord bore for so long with such a wicked creature as I -- and it is quite clear that it was in this way that all my wrong was put right -- what other person, however wicked he may be, can have any reason for fear? For, bad though he be, he will not remain so for all the years I did after having received so many favours from the Lord. Who can possibly despair, when He bore so long with me, merely because I

100[Lit.: “the grief (pena) of being...” “Discomfort,” “embarrassment,” “depression” would be modern equivalents of the substantive, but none of these is sufficiently comprehensive. St. Teresa is referring to all the varied reactions produced in man by the contact between his littleness and the greatness of God.]
desired and sought out some place and time for Him to be with me -- and that often happened without my willing it because I forced myself to seek it, or rather the Lord Himself forced me? If, then, prayer is so good, and so necessary, for those who do not serve God, but offend Him, and if no one can possibly discover any harm that prayer can do him which would not be much greater if he did not practise it, why should those who serve and desire to serve God give it up? Really I cannot see any reason, unless it is that they want to endure the trials of life by adding more trials to them and to shut the door upon God so that He shall not give them the joy of prayer. I am indeed sorry for such people, for they are serving God at great cost to themselves. But when people practise prayer the Lord Himself bears the cost: in exchange for a little labour on their part, He gives them such consolation as will enable them to bear their trials.

As I shall have a great deal to say about these consolations which the Lord gives to those who persevere in prayer, I am saying nothing here: I will only observe that prayer is the door to those great favours which He has bestowed upon me. Once the door is closed, I do not see how He will bestow them; for, though He may wish to take His delight in a soul and to give the soul delight, there is no way for Him to do so, since He must have it alone and pure, and desirous of receiving His favours. If we place numerous hindrances in His path, and do nothing to remove them, how can He come to us? And yet we wish God to grant us great favours!

In order that it may be seen what mercy He showed me and what a great blessing it was for me that I did not give up prayer and reading, I will now describe something which it is very important should be understood -- the assaults which the devil makes upon a soul in order to conquer it for his own, and the art and the loving-kindness with which the Lord endeavours to bring it back to Himself. My readers will then be on the watch for the perils for which I was not watchful myself. And, above all, I beg them, for the love of Our Lord, and for the great love wherewith He is continually seeking to bring us back to Himself, to be on the watch for occasions of sin; for, once we are in the midst of these, we have no cause for confidence, being attacked, as we are, by so many enemies and being so weak when it comes to defending ourselves.

I wish I knew how to describe the captivity of my soul at that time. I fully realized that I was a prisoner, and yet I could not see how, nor could I really believe that things which my confessors did not represent as being very serious were as wrong as in my soul I felt them to be. One of these confessors, when I went to him with a scruple, told me that, even if I were experiencing high contemplation, such intercourse and such occasions of sin were not doing me any harm. This was at the end of that period, when, by the grace of God, I was withdrawing farther and farther from grave perils, though I did not altogether flee from the occasions of them. When my confessors saw that I had good desires and was spending my time in prayer, they thought I was doing a great deal. But in my heart of hearts I knew that I was not doing what I was bound to do for Him to Whom I owed so much. I regret now all that my soul suffered and the scant help it had from anyone save God, and the numerous opportunities that were given it to indulge its pastimes and pleasures by those who said that these were lawful.

Sermons, again, caused me no small torture, for I was extremely fond of them, so that if I heard anyone preach a good, earnest sermon, I would conceive a special affection for him, without in any way trying to do so: I do not know to what this was due. A sermon rarely seemed to me so bad that I failed to listen to it with pleasure, even when others who heard it considered that the preaching was not good. If it
were good, it was a very special refreshment to me. To speak of God, or to listen to
others speaking of Him, hardly ever wearied me -- this, of course, after I began to
practise prayer. In one way I used to find great comfort in sermons; in another, they
would torture me, because they would make me realize that I was not what I ought
to be, or anything approaching it. I used to beseech the Lord to help me; but I now
believe I must have failed to put my whole confidence in His Majesty and to have a
complete distrust in myself. I sought for a remedy, and took great trouble to find
one, but I could not have realized that all our efforts are unavailing unless we
completely give up having confidence in ourselves and fix it all upon God. I wanted
to live, for I knew quite well that I was not living at all but battling with a shadow
of death; but there was no one to give me life and I was unable to take it for myself.
He Who could have given it me was right not to help me, since He had so often
brought me back to Himself and I had as often left Him.

CHAPTER IX

Describes the means by which the Lord began to awaken her soul and to
give her light amid such great darkness, and to strengthen the virtues
in her so that she should not offend Him.

By this time my soul was growing weary, and, though it desired to rest the
miserable habits which now enslaved it would not allow it to do so. It happened
that, entering the oratory one day, I saw an image which had been procured for a
certain festival that was observed in the house and had been taken there to be kept
for that purpose. It represented Christ sorely wounded;\textsuperscript{101} and so conducive was it
to devotion that when I looked at it I was deeply moved to see Him thus, so well did
it picture what He suffered for us. So great was my distress when I thought how ill I
had repaid Him for those wounds that I felt as if my heart were breaking, and I
threw myself down beside Him, shedding floods of tears and begging Him to give me
strength once for all so that I might not offend Him.

I had a great devotion to the glorious Magdalen and often thought of her conversion,
especially when I communicated, for, knowing that the Lord was certainly within
me then, I would place myself at His feet, thinking that my tears would not be
rejected. I did not know what I was saying; but in allowing me to shed those tears
He was very gracious to me, since I so soon forgot my grief; and I used to commend
myself to that glorious Saint so that she might obtain pardon for me.

But on this last occasion when I saw that image of which I am speaking, I think I
must have made greater progress, because I had quite lost trust in myself and was
placing all my confidence in God. I believe I told Him then that I would not rise
from that spot until He had granted me what I was beseeching of Him. And I feel
sure that this did me good, for from that time onward I began to improve. My
method of prayer was this. As I could not reason with my mind, I would try to make
pictures of Christ inwardly; and I used to think I felt better when I dwelt on those
parts of His life when He was most often alone. It seemed to me that His being
alone and afflicted, like a person in need, made it possible for me to approach Him. I

\textsuperscript{101} Tradition has it that this was an Ecce Homo, which is still venerated in the Convent of the
Incarnation, though some writers have described it as a representation of Christ bound to the
Column.
had many simple thoughts of this kind. I was particularly attached to the prayer in
the Garden, where I would go to keep Him company. I would think of the sweat and
of the affliction He endured there. I wished I could have wiped that grievous sweat
from His face, but I remember that I never dared to resolve to do so, for the gravity
of my sins stood in the way. I used to remain with Him there for as long as my
thoughts permitted it: I had many thoughts which tormented me.

For many years, on most nights before I fell asleep, when I would commend myself
to God so as to sleep well, I used to think for a little of that scene -- the prayer in the
Garden -- and this even before I was a nun, for I was told that many indulgences
could be gained by so doing; and I feel sure that my soul gained a great deal in this
way, because I began to practise prayer without knowing what it was, and the very
habitualness of the custom prevented me from abandoning it, just as I never
omitted making the sign of the Cross before going to sleep.

To return now to what I was saying about the torture caused me by my thoughts:
this method of praying in which the mind makes no reflections means that the soul
must either gain a great deal or lose itself -- I mean by its attention going astray.\textsuperscript{102}
If it advances, it goes a long way, because it is moved by love. But those who arrive
thus far will do so only at great cost to themselves, save when the Lord is pleased to
call them very speedily to the Prayer of Quiet, as He has called a few people whom I
know. It is a good thing for those who follow this method to have a book at hand, so
that they may quickly recollect themselves. It used also to help me to look at a field,
or water, or flowers. These reminded me of the Creator -- I mean, they awakened
me, helped me to recollect myself and thus served me as a book; they reminded me,
too, of my ingratitude and sins. But when it came to heavenly things, or to any
sublime subject, my mind was so stupid that I could never imagine them at all, until
the Lord showed them to me in another way.

I had so little ability for picturing things in my mind that if I did not actually see a
thing I could not use my imagination, as other people do, who can make pictures to
themselves and so become recollected. Of Christ as Man I could only think: however
much I read about His beauty and however often I looked at pictures of Him, I could
never form any picture of Him myself. I was like a person who is blind, or in the
dark: he may be talking to someone, and know that he is with him, because he is
quite sure he is there -- I mean, he understands and believes he is there -- but he
cannot see him. Thus it was with me when I thought of Our Lord. It was for this
reason that I was so fond of pictures. Unhappy are those who through their own
fault lose this blessing! It really looks as if they do not love the Lord, for if they
loved Him they would delight in looking at pictures of Him, just as they take
pleasure in seeing pictures of anyone else whom they love.

It was at this time that I was given the Confessions of Saint Augustine,\textsuperscript{103} and I
think the Lord must have ordained this, for I did not ask for the book nor had I ever
seen it. I have a great affection for Saint Augustine, because the convent in which I
had lived before becoming a nun belonged to his Order, and also because he had

\textsuperscript{102}[The original has an untranslatable play upon words: lit.: “must be (sic) gained or lost a great deal
-- I mean (its) meditation (will be) lost.”]

\textsuperscript{103}A Spanish translation of the Confessions was made by a Portuguese, P. Sebastián Toscano, and
dedicated by him to Doña Leonor de Mascareñas, a great friend of St. Teresa (cf. Foundations, Chap.
XVII: Vol. III, p. 81): the dedication is dated January 15, 1554. [If, as is likely, this was the edition
given to the Saint, the incident supports a later date than 1554-5, which is the date commonly given,
for her “second conversion”.]
been a sinner. I used to find a great deal of comfort in reading about the lives of saints who had been sinners before the Lord brought them back to Himself. As He had forgiven them I thought that He might do the same for me. There was only one thing that troubled me, and this I have already mentioned: namely that, after the Lord had once called them, they did not fall again, whereas I had fallen so often that I was distressed by it. But when I thought of His love for me, I would take heart once more, for I never doubted His mercy, though I often doubted myself.

Oh, God help me! How amazed I am when I think how hard my heart was despite all the help I had received from Him! It really frightens me to remember how little I could do by myself and how I was so tied and bound that I could not resolve to give myself wholly to God. When I started to read the Confessions, I seemed to see myself in them and I began to commend myself often to that glorious Saint. When I got as far as his conversion and read how he heard that voice in the garden, it seemed exactly as if the Lord were speaking in that way to me, or so my heart felt. I remained for a long time dissolved in tears, in great distress and affliction. Dear God, what a soul suffers and what torments it endures when it loses its freedom to be its own master! I am astonished now that I was able to live in such a state of torment. God be praised, Who gave me life to forsake such utter death!

I believe my soul gained great strength from the Divine Majesty: He must have heard my cries and had compassion on all my tears. I began to long to spend more time with Him, and to drive away occasions of sin, for, once they had gone, I would feel a new love for His Majesty. I knew that, so far as I could tell, I loved Him, but I did not know, as I should have done, what true love of God really means. I think I had not yet quite prepared myself to want to serve Him when His Majesty began to grant me favours again. It really seems that the Lord found a way to make me desire to receive what others strive to acquire with great labour -- that is to say, during these latter years, He gave me consolations and favours. I never presumed to beg Him to give me either these things or tenderness in devotion: I only asked for grace not to offend Him and for the pardon of my grievous sins. Knowing how grievous they were, I never dared consciously to desire favours or consolations. His compassion, I think, worked in me abundantly, and in truth He showed me great mercy in allowing me to be with Him and bringing me into His presence, which I knew I should not have entered had He not so disposed it. Only once in my life -- at a time when I was suffering from great aridity -- do I remember having asked Him for consolations, and when I realized what I was doing I became so distressed that my very shame at finding myself so lacking in humility gave me what I had presumed to ask. I knew quite well that it was lawful to ask for it, but I thought it was only so for those who have done all in their power to obtain true devotion by not offending God and by being ready and determined to do all that is good. Those tears of mine, as they did not obtain for me what I desired, seemed to me effeminate and weak. But all the same I think they were of some benefit to me; for, as I say, especially after those two occasions when they caused me such compunction and such distress of heart, I began to devote myself more to prayer and to have less to do with things that were hurtful for me: these last I did not wholly abandon, but, as I say, God kept on helping me to turn from them. As His Majesty was only awaiting some preparedness on my part, His spiritual favours continually increased, in the way I shall describe. It is not usual for the Lord to give them save to those who have a greater purity of conscience.

104[Confessions, Bk. VIII, Chap. XII.]
CHAPTER X

Begins to describe the favours which the Lord granted her in prayer. Explains what part we ourselves can play here, and how important it is that we should understand the favours which the Lord is granting us. Asks those to whom she is sending this that the remainder of what she writes may be kept secret, since she has been commanded to describe in great detail the favours granted her by the Lord.

I used sometimes, as I have said, to experience in an elementary form, and very fleetingly, what I shall now describe. When picturing Christ in the way I have mentioned, and sometimes even when reading, I used unexpectedly to experience a consciousness of the presence of God, of such a kind that I could not possibly doubt that He was within me or that I was wholly engulfed in Him. This was in no sense a vision: I believe it is called mystical theology. The soul is suspended in such a way that it seems to be completely outside itself. The will loves; the memory, I think, is almost lost; while the understanding, I believe, though it is not lost, does not reason -- I mean that it does not work, but is amazed at the extent of all it can understand; for God wills it to realize that it understands nothing of what His Majesty represents to it.

Previously to this, I had experienced a tenderness in devotion, some part of which, I think, can be obtained by one's own efforts. This is a favour neither wholly of sense nor wholly of spirit, but entirely the gift of God. It seems, however, that we can do a great deal towards the obtaining of it by reflecting on our lowliness and our ingratitude to God, on the great things that He has done for us, on His Passion, with its grievous pains, and on His life, which was so full of afflictions. We can also do much by rejoicing in the contemplation of His works, His greatness, His love for us, and a great deal more. Anyone really anxious to make progress often lights upon such things as these, though he may not be going about looking for them. If to this there be added a little love, the soul is comforted, the heart melts and tears begin to flow: sometimes we seem to produce these tears by force; at other times the Lord seems to be drawing them from us and we cannot resist Him. For the trifling pains we have taken His Majesty appears to be requiting us with the great gift of the comfort which comes to a soul from seeing that it is weeping for so great a Lord; and I do not wonder at this, for it has ample reason to be comforted. For here it finds encouragement, and here it finds joy.

The comparison which now suggests itself to me is, I think, a good one. These joys which come through prayer are something like what the joys of Heaven must be. As the souls in Heaven see no more than the Lord wills them to see, and as this is in proportion to their merits, and they realize how small their merits are, each of them is content with the place given to him, and yet there is the very greatest difference in Heaven between one kind of fruition and another -- a difference much more marked than that between different kinds of spiritual joy on earth, though this is tremendous. When a soul is in its early stages of growth and God grants it this favour, it really thinks there is nothing more left for it to desire and counts itself well recompensed for all the service it has done Him. And it has ample reason for thinking so: a single one of these tears, which, as I say, we can cause to flow almost by ourselves (though nothing whatever can be done without God), cannot, I think, be purchased with all the labours in the world, so great is the gain which it brings.
us. And what greater gain is there than to have some evidence that we are pleasing
God? Let anyone, then, who has arrived thus far give great praise to God and
recognize how much he is in His debt. For it now seems that He wants him to be a
member of His household and has chosen him for His kingdom, if he does not turn
back.

Let him not trouble about certain kinds of humility, of which I propose to treat. We
may think it humility not to realize that the Lord is bestowing gifts upon us. Let us
understand very, very clearly, how this matter stands. God gives us these gifts for
no merit of ours. Let us be grateful to His Majesty for them, for, unless we recognize
that we are receiving them, we shall not be aroused to love Him. And it is a most
certain thing that, if we remember all the time that we are poor, the richer we find
ourselves, the greater will be the profit that comes to us and the more genuine our
humility. Another mistake is for the soul to be afraid, thinking itself incapable of
receiving great blessings, with the result that, when the Lord begins to grant them,
it grows fearful, thinking that it is sinning through vainglory. Let us believe that,
when the devil begins to tempt us about this, He Who gives us the blessings will
also give us grace to realize that it is a temptation, and fortitude to resist it: I know
God will do this if we walk before Him in simplicity, endeavouring to please Him
alone and not men.

It is a very evident truth that we love a person most when we have a vivid
remembrance of the kind actions he has done us. If, then, it is lawful, and indeed
meritorious, for us to remember that it is from God that we have our being, and that
He created us from nothing, and that He preserves us, and also to remember all the
other benefits of His death and of the trials which He had suffered for all of us now
living long before any of us was created, why should it not be lawful for me to
understand, realize and consider again and again that, though once I was wont to
speak of vanities, the Lord has now granted me the desire to speak only of Himself.
Here is a jewel which, when we remember that it is given us, and that indeed we
already possess it, invites and constrains us to love, and all this is the blessing that
comes from prayer founded on humility. What, then, will it be when we find
ourselves in possession of other and more precious jewels, which some servants of
God have already received, such as contempt for the world and even for themselves?
It is clear that such persons must think of themselves as still more in God's debt
and under still greater obligations to serve Him. We must realize that nothing of all
this comes from ourselves and acknowledge the bounteousness of the Lord, Who on
a soul as poor and wretched and undeserving as mine -- for whom the first of these
jewels would have been enough, and more than enough -- was pleased to bestow
greater riches than I could desire.

We must seek new strength with which to serve Him, and endeavour not to be
ungrateful, for that is the condition on which the Lord bestows His jewels. Unless
we make good use of His treasures, and of the high estate to which He brings us, He
will take these treasures back from us, and we shall be poorer than before, and His
Majesty will give the jewels to some other person who can display them to
advantage and to his own profit and that of others. For how can a man unaware
that he is rich make good use of his riches and spend them liberally? It is
impossible, I think, taking our nature into consideration, that anyone who fails to
realize that he is favoured by God should have the courage necessary for doing great
things. For we are so miserable and so much attracted by earthly things that only
one who realizes that he holds some earnest of the joys of the next world will
succeed in thoroughly abhorring and completely detaching himself from the things
of this; for it is through these gifts that the Lord bestows upon us the fortitude of
which our sins have deprived us. And a man is unlikely to desire the disapproval and abhorrence of all, or the other great virtues possessed by the perfect, unless he have some earnest of the love which God bears him and also a living faith. For our nature is so dead that we pursue what we see before us and so it is these very favours which awaken and strengthen faith. But it may well be that I am judging others by my wicked self, and that there may be some who need no more than the truths of the Faith to enable them to perform works of great perfection, whereas I, wretched woman, have need of everything.

Such as these must speak for themselves. I am describing my own experiences, as I have been commanded to do; if he to whom I send this does not approve of it, he will tear it up, and he will know what is wrong with it better than I. But I beseech him, for the love of the Lord, that what I have thus far said concerning my wicked life and sins be published. I give this permission, here and now, both to him and to all my confessors, of whom he who will receive this is one. If they like, they can publish it now, during my lifetime, so that I may no longer deceive the world and those who think there is some good in me. I am speaking the absolute and literal truth when I say that, as far as I understand myself at present, this will give me great comfort. But I do not make that permission applicable to what I shall say from now onwards; if this should be shown to anyone, I do not wish it to be stated to whom it refers, whose experience it recounts or who is its author; and for that reason I do not mention myself or any one else by name. I shall write it all as well as I can, in order that my authorship may not be recognized. This I beg for the love of God. The authority of persons so learned and serious as my confessors suffices for the approval of any good thing that I may say, if the Lord gives me grace to say it, in which case it will not be mine but His; for I have no learning, nor have I led a good life, nor do I get my information from a learned man or from any other person whatsoever. Only those who have commanded me to write this know that I am doing so, and at the moment they are not here. I am almost stealing the time for writing, and that with great difficulty, for it hinders me from spinning and I am living in a poor house and have numerous things to do. If the Lord had given me more ability, and a better memory, I might have profited by what I have heard or read, but I have little ability or memory of my own. If, then, I say any good thing, it will be because the Lord has been pleased, for some good purpose, that I should say it, while whatever is bad is my own work and Your Reverence will delete it. In neither case is there any advantage in giving my name. During my lifetime, of course, nothing good that I may have done ought to be talked about; and after my death there will be no point in mentioning me, for to do so would bring discredit on this good, to which no one would give credence if it were to be related of one so base and wicked as I.

And as I think that Your Reverence, and others who are to see this, will do what, for love of the Lord, I am asking you, I am writing quite freely. In any other case, I should have great scruples about writing at all, except to confess my sins, about doing which I have none. For the rest, the very thought that I am a woman is enough to make my wings droop -- how much more, then, the thought that I am such a wicked one! So Your Reverence must take the responsibility for everything beyond the simple story of my life (since you have importuned me so earnestly to write some account of the favours which God grants me in prayer), if it be in accordance with the truths of our holy Catholic Faith; and if it be not, Your

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105These persons, according to a manuscript note by P. Gracián to be found in a copy of the first edition of St. Teresa’s works, were “Master Fray Domingo Báñez and Fray García de Toledo”.
Reverence must burn it at once--I am quite willing for you to do that. I will
describe my experiences, so that, if what I write is in accordance with these truths,
it may be of some use to Your Reverence; if it be not, my soul will be disillusioned,
and, if I am not gaining anything myself, as I trust I am, there will at least be no
gain for the devil. The Lord well knows that, as I shall say later, I have always tried
to seek out those who will enlighten me.

However clearly I may wish to describe these matters which concern prayer, they
will be very obscure to anyone who has no experience of it. I shall describe certain
hindrances, which, as I understand it, prevent people from making progress on this
road, and also certain other sources of danger about which the Lord has taught me
by experience. More recently I have discussed these things with men of great
learning and persons who have led spiritual lives for many years; and they have
seen that in the twenty-seven years during which I have been practising prayer, His
Majesty has given me experiences, ill as I have walked and often as I have stumbled
on this road, for which others need thirty-seven, or even forty-seven, in spite of
having made steady progress and practised penitence and attained virtue. May His
Majesty be blessed for everything, and may He, for His name's sake, make use of
me. For my Lord well knows that I have no other desire than this, that He may be
praised and magnified a little when it is seen that on so foul and malodorous a
dunghill He has planted a garden of sweet flowers. May His Majesty grant that I
may not root them up through my faults and become what I was before. This I
beseech Your Reverence, for love of the Lord, to beg Him for me, for you know what
I am more clearly than you have permitted me to say here.

CHAPTER XI

Gives the reason why we do not learn to love God perfectly in a short
time. Begins, by means of a comparison, to describe four degrees
of prayer, concerning the first of which something is here said. This is
most profitable for beginners and for those who are receiving no
consolations in prayer.

I shall now speak of those who are beginning to be the servants of love--for this, I
think, is what we become when we resolve to follow in this way of prayer Him Who
so greatly loved us. So great a dignity is this that thinking of it alone brings me a
strange comfort, for servile fear vanishes at once if while we are at this first stage
we act as we should. O Lord of my soul and my Good! Why, when a soul has
resolved to love Thee and by forsaking everything does all in its power towards that
end, so that it may the better employ itself in the love of God, hast Thou been
pleased that it should not at once have the joy of ascending to the possession of this
perfect love? But I am wrong: I should have made my complaint by asking why we
ourselves have no desire so to ascend, for it is we alone who are at fault in not at
once enjoying so great a dignity. If we attain to the perfect possession of this true
love of God, it brings all blessings with it. But so niggardly and so slow are we in
giving ourselves wholly to God that we do not prepare ourselves as we should to
receive that precious thing which it is His Majesty's will that we should enjoy only
at a great price.

I am quite clear that there is nothing on earth with which so great a blessing can be
purchased; but if we did what we could to obtain it, if we cherished no attachment to
earthly things, and if all our cares and all our intercourse were centred in Heaven, I believe there is no doubt that this blessing would be given us very speedily, provided we prepared ourselves for it thoroughly and quickly, as did some of the saints. But we think we are giving God everything, whereas what we are really offering Him is the revenue or the fruits of our land while keeping the stock and the right of ownership of it in our own hands. We have made a resolve to be poor, and that is a resolution of great merit; but we often begin to plan and strive again so that we may have no lack, not only of necessaries, but even of superfluities; we try to make friends who will give us these, lest we should lack anything; and we take greater pains, and perhaps even run greater risks, than we did before, when we had possessions of our own. Presumably, again, when we became nuns, or previously, when we began to lead spiritual lives and to follow after perfection, we abandoned all thought of our own importance; and yet hardly is our self-importance wounded than we quite forget that we have surrendered it to God and we try to seize it again, and wrest it, as they say, out of His very hands, although we had apparently made Him Lord of our will. And the same thing happens with everything else.

A nice way of seeking the love of God is this! We expect great handfuls of it, as one might say, and yet we want to reserve our affections for ourselves! We make no effort to carry our desires into effect or to raise them far above the earth. It is hardly suitable that people who act in this way should have many spiritual consolations; the two things seem to me incompatible. So, being unable to make a full surrender of ourselves, we are never given a full supply of this treasure. May His Majesty be pleased to give it to us little by little, even though the receiving of it may cost us all the trials in the world.

The Lord shows exceeding great mercy to him whom He gives grace and courage to resolve to strive after this blessing with all his might. For God denies Himself to no one who perseveres but gradually increases the courage of such a one till he achieves victory. I say "courage" because of the numerous obstacles which the devil at first sets in his path to hinder him from ever setting out upon it, for the devil knows what harm will come to him thereby and that he will lose not only that one soul but many more. If by the help of God the beginner strives to reach the summit of perfection, I do not believe he will ever go to Heaven alone but will always take many others with him: God treats him like a good captain, and gives him soldiers to go in his company. So many are the dangers and difficulties which the devil sets before him that if he is not to turn back he needs not merely a little courage but a very great deal, and much help from God.

To say something, then, of the early experiences of those who are determined to pursue this blessing and to succeed in this enterprise (I shall continue later with what I began to say about mystical theology, as I believe it is called): it is in these early stages that their labour is hardest, for it is they themselves who labour and the Lord Who gives the increase. In the other degrees of prayer the chief thing is fruition, although, whether at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the road, all have their crosses, different as these may be. For those who follow Christ must take the way which He took, unless they want to be lost. Blessed are their labours

106[Honra. n. 68. This is an example of the use of the word to denote something reprehensible in nuns: elsewhere she adjures her sisters to think (in another sense) of their own honra, or reputation.]
107[Lit.: "hardly have they touched us in a point of honour." Cf. the use of "punto de honra" or "pundonor" in Spanish drama.]
which even here, in this life, have such abundant recompense I shall have to employ some kind of comparison, though, being a woman and writing simply what I am commanded, I should like to avoid doing so; but this spiritual language is so hard to use for such as, like myself, have no learning, that I shall have to seek some such means of conveying my ideas. It may be that my comparison will seldom do this successfully and Your Reverence will be amused to see how stupid I am. But it comes to my mind now that I have read or heard of this comparison: as I have a bad memory, I do not know where it occurred or what it illustrated, but it satisfies me at the moment as an illustration of my own.

The beginner must think of himself as of one setting out to make a garden in which the Lord is to take His delight, yet in soil most unfruitful and full of weeds. His Majesty uproots the weeds and will set good plants in their stead. Let us suppose that this is already done -- that a soul has resolved to practise prayer and has already begun to do so. We have now, by God's help, like good gardeners, to make these plants grow, and to water them carefully, so that they may not perish, but may produce flowers which shall send forth great fragrance to give refreshment to this Lord of ours, so that He may often come into the garden to take His pleasure and have His delight among these virtues.

Let us now consider how this garden can be watered, so that we may know what we have to do, what labour it will cost us, if the gain will outweigh the labour and for how long this labour must be borne. It seems to me that the garden can be watered in four ways: by taking the water from a well, which costs us great labour; or by a water-wheel and buckets, when the water is drawn by a windlass (I have sometimes drawn it in this way: it is less laborious than the other and gives more water); or by a stream or a brook, which waters the ground much better, for it saturates it more thoroughly and there is less need to water it often, so that the gardener's labour is much less; or by heavy rain, when the Lord waters it with no labour of ours, a way incomparably better than any of those which have been described.

And now I come to my point, which is the application of these four methods of watering by which the garden is to be kept fertile, for if it has no water it will be ruined. It has seemed possible to me in this way to explain something about the four degrees of prayer to which the Lord, of His goodness, has occasionally brought my soul. May He also of His goodness grant me to speak in such a way as to be of some profit to one of the persons who commanded me to write this book, whom in four months the Lord has brought to a point far beyond that which I have reached in seventeen years. He prepared himself better than I, and thus his garden, without labour on his part, is watered by all these four means, though he is still receiving the last watering only drop by drop; such progress is his garden making that soon, by the Lord's help, it will be submerged. It will be a pleasure to me for him to laugh at my explanation if he thinks it foolish.

Beginners in prayer, we may say, are those who draw up the water out of the well: this, as I have said, is a very laborious proceeding, for it will fatigue them to keep their senses recollected, which is a great labour because they have been accustomed to a life of distraction. Beginners must accustom themselves to pay no heed to what they see or hear, and they must practise doing this during hours of prayer; they must be alone and in their solitude think over their past life -- all of us, indeed, whether beginners or proficients, must do this frequently. There are differences,
however, in the degree to which it must be done, as I shall show later. At first it
causes distress, for beginners are not always sure that they have repented of their
sins (though clearly they have, since they have so sincerely resolved to serve God).
Then they have to endeavour to meditate upon the life of Christ and this fatigues
their minds. Thus far we can make progress by ourselves -- of course with the help
of God, for without that, as is well known, we cannot think a single good thought.
This is what is meant by beginning to draw up water from the well -- and God grant
there may be water in it! But that, at least, does not depend on us: our task is to
draw it up and to do what we can to water the flowers. And God is so good that
when, for reasons known to His Majesty, perhaps to our great advantage, He is
pleased that the well should be dry, we, like good gardeners, do all that in us lies,
and He keeps the flowers alive without water and makes the virtues grow. By water
here I mean tears -- or, if there be none of these, tenderness and an interior feeling
of devotion.

What, then, will he do here who finds that for many days he experiences nothing
but aridity, dislike, distaste and so little desire to go and draw water that he would
give it up entirely if he did not remember that he is pleasing and serving the Lord of
the garden; if he were not anxious that all his service should not be lost, to say
nothing of the gain which he hopes for from the great labour of lowering the bucket
so often into the well and drawing it up without water? It will often happen that,
even for that purpose, he is unable to move his arms -- unable, that is, to think a
single good thought, for working with the understanding is of course the same as
drawing water out of the well. What, then, as I say, will the gardener do here? He
will be glad and take heart and consider it the greatest of favours to work in the
garden of so great an Emperor; and, as he knows that he is pleasing Him by so
working (and his purpose must be to please, not himself, but Him), let him render
Him great praise for having placed such confidence in him, when He has seen that,
without receiving any recompense, he is taking such great care of that which He
had entrusted to him; let him help Him to bear the Cross and consider how He lived
with it all His life long; let him not wish to have his kingdom on earth or ever cease
from prayer; and so let him resolve, even if this aridity should persist his whole life
long, never to let Christ fall beneath the Cross. The time will come when he shall
receive his whole reward at once. Let him have no fear that his labour will be lost.
He is serving a good Master, Whose eyes are upon him. Let him pay no heed to evil
thoughts, remembering how the devil put such thoughts into the mind of Saint
Jerome in the desert.109

These trials bring their own reward. I endured them for many years; and, when I
was able to draw but one drop of water from this blessed well, I used to think that
God was granting me a favour. I know how grievous such trials are and I think they
need more courage than do many others in the world. But it has become clear to me
that, even in this life, God does not fail to recompense them highly; for it is quite
certain that a single one of those hours in which the Lord has granted me to taste of
Himself has seemed to me later a recompense for all the afflictions which I endured
over a long period while keeping up the practice of prayer. I believe myself that
often in the early stages, and again later, it is the Lord's will to give us these
tortures, and many other temptations which present themselves, in order to test His
lovers and discover if they can drink of the chalice and help Him to bear the Cross
before He trusts them with His great treasures. I believe it is for our good that His

109The reference as to the twenty-second epistle of St. Jerome "Ad Eustochium", which describes
how vividly there would come to him in the desert pictures of the pomp and vanities of pagan Rome.
Majesty is pleased to lead us in this way so that we may have a clear understanding of our worthlessness; for the favours which come later are of such great dignity that before He grants us them He wishes us to know by experience how miserable we are, lest what happened to Lucifer happen to us also.

What is there that Thou doest, my Lord, which is not for the greater good of the soul that Thou knowest to be already Thine and that places itself in Thy power, to follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest, even to the death of the Cross, and is determined to help Thee bear that Cross and not to leave Thee alone with it? If anyone finds himself thus determined, there is nothing for him to fear. No, spiritual people, there is no reason to be distressed. Once you have reached so high a state as this, in which you desire to be alone and to commune with God, and abandon the pastimes of the world, the chief part of your work is done. Praise His Majesty for this and trust in His goodness, which never yet failed His friends. Close the eyes of your thought and do not wonder: "Why is He giving devotion to that person of so few days' experience, and none to me after so many years?" Let us believe that it is all for our greater good; let His Majesty guide us whithersoever He wills; we are not our own, but His. It is an exceeding great favour that He shows us when it is His pleasure that we should wish to dig in His garden, and we are then near the Lord of the garden, Who is certainly with us. If it be His will that these plants and flowers should grow, some by means of the water drawn from this well and others without it, what matter is that to me? Do Thou, O Lord, what Thou wilt; let me not offend Thee and let not my virtues perish, if, of Thy goodness alone, Thou hast given me any. I desire to suffer, Lord, because Thou didst suffer. Let Thy will be in every way fulfilled in me, and may it never please Thy Majesty that a gift so precious as Thy love be given to people who serve Thee solely to obtain consolations.

It must be carefully noted -- and I say this because I know it by experience -- that the soul which begins to walk resolutely in this way of mental prayer and can persuade itself to set little store by consolations and tenderness in devotion, and neither to be elated when the Lord gives them nor disconsolate when He withholds them, has already travelled a great part of its journey. However often it may stumble, it need not fear a relapse, for its building has been begun on a firm foundation. Yes, love for God does not consist in shedding tears, in enjoying those consolations and that tenderness which for the most part we desire and in which we find comfort, but in serving Him with righteousness, fortitude of soul and humility. The other seems to me to be receiving rather than giving anything.

As for poor women like myself, who are weak and lack fortitude, I think it fitting that we should be led by means of favours: this is the way in which God is leading me now, so that I may be able to suffer certain trials which it has pleased His Majesty to give me. But when I hear servants of God, men of weight, learning and intelligence, making such a fuss because God is not giving them devotion, it revolts me to listen to them. I do not mean that, when God gives them such a thing, they ought not to accept it and set a great deal of store by it, because in that case His Majesty must know that it is good for them. But I do mean that if they do not receive it they should not be distressed: they should realize that, as His Majesty does not give it them, it is unnecessary; they should be masters of themselves and go on their way. Let them believe that they are making a mistake about this: I have proved it and seen that it is so. Let them believe that it is an imperfection in them

110[The metaphors here follow the Spanish exactly.]
if, instead of going on their way with freedom of spirit, they hang back through weakness and lack of enterprise.

I am not saying this so much for beginners (though I lay some stress upon it, even for these, because it is of great importance that they should start with this freedom and determination): I mean it rather for others. There must be many who have begun some time back and never manage to finish their course, and I believe it is largely because they do not embrace the Cross from the beginning that they are distressed and think that they are making no progress. When the understanding ceases to work, they cannot bear it, though perhaps even then the will is increasing in power, and putting on new strength, without their knowing it. We must realize that the Lord pays no heed to these things: to us they may look like faults, but they are not so. His Majesty knows our wretchedness and the weakness of our nature better than we ourselves and He knows that all the time these souls are longing to think of Him and to love Him. It is this determination that He desires in us. The other afflictions which we bring upon ourselves serve only to disturb our souls, and the result of them is that, if we find ourselves unable to get profit out of a single hour, we are impeded from doing so for four. I have a great deal of experience of this and I know that what I say is true, for I have observed it carefully and have discussed it afterwards with spiritual persons. The thing frequently arises from physical indisposition, for we are such miserable creatures that this poor imprisoned soul shares in the miseries of the body, and variations of season and changes in the humours often prevent it from accomplishing its desires and make it suffer in all kinds of ways against its will. The more we try to force it at times like these, the worse it gets and the longer the trouble lasts. But let discretion be observed so that it may be ascertained if this is the true reason: the poor soul must not be stifled. Persons in this condition must realize that they are ill and make some alteration in their hours of prayer; very often it will be advisable to continue this change for some days.

They must endure this exile as well as they can, for a soul which loves God has often the exceeding ill fortune to realize that, living as it is in this state of misery, it cannot do what it desires because of its evil guest, the body. I said we must observe discretion, because sometimes the same effects will be produced by the devil; and so it is well that prayer should not always be given up when the mind is greatly distracted and disturbed, nor the soul tormented by being made to do what is not in its power. There are other things which can be done -- exterior acts, such as reading or works of charity -- though sometimes the soul will be unable to do even these. At such times the soul must render the body a service for the love of God, so that on many other occasions the body may render services to the soul. Engage in some spiritual recreation, such as conversation (so long as it is really spiritual), or a country walk, according as your confessor advises. In all these things it is important to have had experience, for from this we learn what is fitting for us; but let God be served in all things. Sweet is His yoke, and it is essential that we should not drag the soul along with us, so to say, but lead it gently, so that it may make the greater progress.

I repeat my advice, then (and it matters not how often I say this, for it is of great importance), that one must never be depressed or afflicted because of aridities or unrest or distraction of the mind. If a person would gain spiritual freedom and not

111[Lit.: "is growing fat and taking strength." Fatness is often spoken of in Spain as synonymous with robustness and made a subject of congratulation.]
be continually troubled, let him begin by not being afraid of the Cross and he will
find that the Lord will help him to bear it; he will then advance happily and find
profit in everything. It is now clear that, if no water is coming from the well, we
ourselves can put none into it. But of course we must not be careless: water must
always be drawn when there is any there, for at such a time God's will is that we
should use it so that He may multiply our virtues.

CHAPTER XII
Continues to describe this first state. Tells how far, with the help of
God, we can advance by ourselves and describes the harm that ensues
when the spirit attempts to aspire to unusual and supernatural
experiences before they are bestowed upon it by the Lord.

Although in the last chapter I digressed a good deal about other things, because
they seemed to me very necessary, what I was trying to make clear was how much
we can attain by our own power and how in this first stage of devotion we can do a
certain amount for ourselves. For, if we examine and meditate upon the Lord's
sufferings for us, we are moved to compassion, and this grief and the tears which
proceed from it are very sweet. And then if we think about the glory we hope for,
and the love which the Lord bore us, and His resurrection, we are moved to a
rejoicing which is neither wholly spiritual nor wholly sensual, but is a virtuous joy;
the grief also is of great merit. Of this nature are all the things which cause a
devotion acquired in part by the understanding, though this can be neither merited
nor attained unless it be given by God. It is best for a soul which has been raised no
higher than this not to try to rise by its own efforts. Let this be noted carefully, for if
the soul does try so to rise it will make no progress but only go backward.

In this state it can make many acts of resolution to do great things for God and it
can awaken its own love. It can make other acts which will help the virtues to grow,
as is explained in a book called The Art of sensing God,112 which is very good and
suitable for persons in this state, because in it the understanding is active. The soul
can picture itself in the presence of Christ, and accustom itself to become enkindled
with great love for His sacred Humanity and to have Him ever with it and speak
with Him, ask Him for the things it has need of, make complaints to Him of its
trials, rejoice with Him in its joys and yet never allow its joys to make it forgetful of
Him. It has no need to think out set prayers but can use just such words as suit its
desires and needs. This is an excellent way of making progress, and of making it
very quickly; and if anyone strives always to have this precious companionship,
makes good use of it and really learns to love this Lord to Whom we owe so much,
such a one, I think, has achieved a definite gain.

For this reason, as I have said, we must not be troubled if we have no conscious
devotion, but thank the Lord Who allows us to harbour a desire to please Him,
although our deeds may be of little worth. This method of bringing Christ into our
lives is helpful at all stages; it is a most certain means of making progress in the
earliest stage, of quickly reaching the second degree of prayer, and, in the final
stages, of keeping ourselves safe from the dangers into which the devil may lead us.

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112By the Franciscan P. Alonso de Madrid: first published at Seville in 1521 and reprinted many
times in the sixteenth century.
This, then, is what we can do. If anyone tries to pass beyond this stage and lift up his spirit so as to experience consolations which are not being given to him, I think he is losing both in the one respect and in the other. For these consolations are supernatural and, when the understanding ceases to act, the soul remains barren and suffers great aridity. And, as the foundation of the entire edifice is humility, the nearer we come to God, the greater must be the progress which we make in this virtue: otherwise, we lose everything. It seems to be a kind of pride that makes us wish to rise higher, for God is already doing more for us than we deserve by bringing us near to Him. It must not be supposed that I am referring here to the lifting up of the mind to a consideration of the high things of Heaven or of God, and of the wonders which are in Heaven, and of God's great wisdom. I never did this myself, for, as I have said, I had no ability for it, and I knew myself to be so wicked that even when it came to thinking of earthly things God granted me grace to understand this truth, that it was no small presumption in me to do so -- how much more as to heavenly things! Other persons will profit in this way, especially if they are learned, for learning, I think, is a priceless help in this exercise, if humility goes with it. Only a few days ago I observed that this was so in certain learned men, who began but a short while since and have made very great progress; and this gives me great longings that many more learned men should become spiritual, as I shall say later.

When I say that people should not try to rise unless they are raised by God I am using the language of spirituality; anyone who has had any experience will understand me and if what I have already said cannot be understood I do not know how to explain it. In the mystical theology which I began to describe, the understanding loses its power of working, because God suspends it, as I shall explain further by and by if God grants me His help for that purpose. What I say we must not do is to presume or think that we can suspend it ourselves; nor must we allow it to cease working: if we do, we shall remain stupid and cold and shall achieve nothing whatsoever. When the Lord suspends the understanding and makes it cease from its activity, He gives it something which both amazes it and keeps it busy, so that, without reasoning in any way, it can understand more in a short space of time than we, with all our human efforts, in many years. To keep the faculties of the soul busy and to think that, at the same time, you can keep them quiet, is foolishness. And I say once more that, although the fact is not generally realized, there is no great humility in this: it may not be sinful, but it certainly causes distress, for it is lost labour, and the soul feels slightly frustrated, like a man who is just about to take a leap and then is pulled back, so that he seems to have put forth his strength and yet finds that he has not accomplished what he had expected to. Anyone who will consider the matter will detect, in the slightness of the gain achieved by the soul, this very slight lack of humility of which I have spoken. For that virtue has this excellent trait -- that when an action is accompanied by it the soul is never left with any feeling of irritation. I think I have made this clear, though it may possibly be so only to me. May the Lord open the eyes of those who read this by granting them experience of it, and, however slight that experience may be, they will at once understand it.

I spent a good many years doing a great deal of reading and understanding nothing of what I read; for a long time, though God was teaching me, I could not utter a word to explain His teaching to others, and this was no light trial to me. When His Majesty so wills He can teach everything in a moment, in a way that amazes me. I can truthfully say this: though I used to talk with many spiritual persons, who would try to explain what the Lord was teaching me so that I might be able to speak
about it, I was so stupid that I could not get the slightest profit from their
instruction. Possibly, as His Majesty has always been my teacher -- may He be
blessed for everything, for I am thoroughly ashamed at being able to say that this is
the truth --, it may have been His will that I should be indebted to no one else for
my knowledge. In any case, without my wishing it or asking for it (for I have never
been curious about such things, as it would have been a virtue in me to be, but only
about vanities), God suddenly gave me a completely clear understanding of the
whole thing, so that I was able to speak about it in such a way that people were
astounded. And I myself was more astounded even than my own confessors, for I
was more conscious than they of my own stupidity. This happened only a short time
ago. So I do not now attempt to learn what the Lord has not taught me, unless it be
something affecting my conscience.

Once more I repeat my advice that it is very important that we should not try to lift
up our spirits unless they are lifted up by the Lord: in the latter case we shall
become aware of the fact instantly. It is specially harmful for women to make such
ttempts, because the devil can foster illusions in them, although I am convinced
that the Lord never allows anyone to be harmed who strives to approach Him with
humility: rather will He derive more profit and gain from the very experience
through which the devil thought to send him to perdition. As this road is that most
generally taken by beginners, and the counsels that I have given are of great
importance, I have said a good deal about it. I confess that others have written
about it much better elsewhere, and I have felt great confusion and shame in
writing of it, though less than I should. May the Lord be blessed for it all, Whose
will and pleasure it is that one such as I should speak of things that are His --
things of such a nature as these and so sublime!

CHAPTER XIII

Continues to describe this first state and gives counsels for dealing with
certain temptations which the devil is sometimes wont to prepare. This
chapter is very profitable.

It has seemed to me appropriate to speak of certain temptations which, as I have
observed, often attack beginners -- I have had some of them myself -- and to give
counsels about matters which appear to me necessary. In the early stages, then, one
should strive to feel happy and free. There are some people who think that devotion
will slip away from them if they relax a little. It is well to have misgivings about
oneself and not to allow self-confidence to lead one into occasions which habitually
involve offenses against God. This is most necessary until one becomes quite perfect
in virtue; and there are not many who are so perfect as to be able to relax when
occasions present themselves which tempt their own peculiar disposition. It is well
that, all our lives long, we should recognize the worthlessness of our nature, if only
for the sake of humility. Yet there are many circumstances in which, as I have said,
it is permissible for us to take some recreation, in order that we may be the stronger
when we return to prayer. In everything we need discretion.

We must have great confidence, for it is most important that we should not cramp
our good desires, but should believe that, with God's help, if we make continual
efforts to do so, we shall attain, though perhaps not at once, to that which many
saints have reached through His favour. If they had never resolved to desire to
attain this and to carry their desires continually into effect, they would never have risen to as high a state as they did. His Majesty desires and loves courageous souls if they have no confidence in themselves but walk in humility; and I have never seen any such person hanging back on this road, nor any soul that, under the guise of humility, acted like a coward, go as far in many years as the courageous soul can in few. I am astounded at how much can be done on this road if one has the courage to attempt great things; the soul may not have the strength to achieve these things at once but if it takes a flight it can make good progress, though, like a little unfledged bird, it is apt to grow tired and stop.

At one time I used often to bear in mind the words of Saint Paul, that everything is possible in God:113 I realized quite well that in myself I could do nothing. This was a great help to me, as were also the words of Saint Augustine: "Give me, Lord, what Thou commandest me and command what Thou wilt."114 I used often to reflect that Saint Peter had lost nothing by throwing himself into the sea, though after he had done so he was afraid.115 These first resolutions are of great importance, although during this first stage we have to go slowly and to be guided by the discretion and opinion of our director; but we must see to it that he is not the kind of person to teach us to be like toads, satisfied if our souls show themselves fit only to catch lizards. We must always keep humility before us, so that we may realize that this strength cannot proceed from any strength of our own.

But it is necessary that we should realize what kind of humility this must be, for I believe the devil does a great deal of harm to those who practise prayer by encouraging misunderstandings about humility in them so as to prevent them from making much progress. He persuade us that it is pride which makes us have ambitious desires and want to imitate the saints and wish to be martyrs. Then he tells us, or induces us to believe, that we who are sinners may admire the deeds of the saints but must not copy them. I myself would agree with him to the extent that we must consider which of their deeds we are to admire and which to imitate. For it would not be a good thing for a person who was weak and ill to indulge in a great deal of fasting and in severe penances, or to go to a desert where he could not sleep or get anything to eat, or to attempt other things of that kind. But we must reflect that, with the help of God, we can strive to have a great contempt for the world, no regard for honour, and no attachment to possessions. For so ungenerous are we that we imagine the earth will go from under our feet if we try to forget the body a little and to cultivate the spirit. Or, again, we think that to have an abundance of all we need is a help to recollection because anxieties disturb prayer.

It distresses me to reflect that we have so little confidence in God, and so much love for ourselves, that anxieties like this upset us. When we have made so little spiritual progress, the smallest things will trouble us as much as important and weighty things will trouble others, and yet in our own minds we presume to think ourselves spiritual. Now to me it seems that this kind of life is an attempt to reconcile body and soul, so that we may lose neither comfort in this world nor fruition of God in the world to come. We shall get along all right if we walk in righteousness and hold fast to virtue, but it will mean advancing at the pace of a hen and will never lead us to spiritual freedom. This is a procedure which seems to

113[Presumably a reference to Philippians iv, 13, unless the author is attributing Our Lord's words in St. Matthew xix, 26 to St. Paul.]
114"Da quod jubes et jube quod vis" (Confessions, Bk. X, Chap. XXIX).
115St. Matthew xiv, 29.
me quite good for people who are in the married state and have to live in accordance
with their vocation; but in any other state I should not at all like to see such a
method of progress nor will anyone persuade me to think it a good one. For I have
tried it; and I should have been practising it still if the Lord in His goodness had not
shown me another and a shorter road.

With regard to this matter of desires, my own were always ambitious, but I strove,
as I have said, to practise prayer and yet to live according to my own pleasure. If
there had been anyone to encourage me to soar higher, I think he might have
brought me to a state in which these desires were carried into effect; but, for our
sins, those who are not over-cautious in this respect are very few and far between,
and that, I think, is sufficient reason why those who begin do not more quickly
attain to great perfection. For the Lord never fails us and the fault is not His: it is
we who are faulty and miserable.

We may also imitate the saints by striving after solitude and silence and many
other virtues; such things will not kill these wretched bodies of ours, which want to
have everything organized for their benefit in such a way as to disorganize the soul
and which the devil does his best to incapacitate when he sees that we are getting
fearful about them. That is quite enough for him: he tries at once to persuade us
that all these habits of devotion will kill us, or ruin our health; he even makes us
afraid that if we weep we shall go blind. I have experienced this, so I know it -- and I
also know that we can desire no better kind of sight or health than to lose both in so
good a cause. As my own health is so bad, I was always impeded by my fears, and
my devotion was of no value at all until I resolved not to worry any more about my
body or my health; and now I trouble about them very little. For it pleased God to
reveal to me this device of the devil; and so, whenever the devil suggested that I
should ruin my health, I would reply: "Even if I die it is of little consequence." "Rest,
indeed!" I would say. "I need no rest; what I need is crosses." And so with other
things. I saw clearly that in very many cases, although in fact I have very bad
health, it was a temptation either of the devil or of my own weakness; and since I
have been less self-regarding and indulgent my health has been very much better. It
is of great importance, when we begin to practise prayer, not to let ourselves be
frightened by our own thoughts. And you may take my word for this, for I have
learned it by experience; this mere narration of my faults might be of use to others
if they will take warning by me.

There is another temptation which is very common -- namely to desire that
everyone should be extremely spiritual when one is beginning to find what
tranquillity, and what profit, spirituality brings. It is not wrong to desire this but it
may not be right to try to bring it about unless we do so with such discretion and
dissimulation that we give no impression of wanting to teach others. For if a person
is to do any good in this respect he must be very strong in the virtues so as not to
put temptation in others' way. This I found out for myself -- and that is why I
realize it. When, as I have said, I tried to get others to practise prayer, and when on
the one hand they would hear me saying so much about the blessedness of prayer,
while on the other they would observe that I, who practised it, was so poverty
stricken in virtue, it would lead them into temptations and various kinds of
foolishness. And they had good reason on their side; for, as they have since told me,
they could not see how one of these things could be compatible with the other. And
so they came to believe that there was nothing wrong in what was intrinsically evil;
for they saw that I sometimes did such things and at that time they had rather a
good opinion of me.
This is the devil's doing. He seems to make use of the virtues which we have, and which are good, in order to give such authority as he can to the evil which he is trying to make us do; however trifling the evil may be, it must be of great value to him when it is done in a religious community -- how much more, then, must he have gained from the evil which I did, for it was very great. So, over a period of many years, only three persons derived any profit from what I said to them;\footnote{According to P. Gracián, these persons were María de San Pablo, Ana de los Ángeles and Doña María de Cepeda. The same names are given by P. Gracián's sister, M. María de San José. (B.Nac., MS. 12,936.) [Lewis, however (p. 98, n. 6), aptly remarks that, as shown in Chap. VII (p. 101), one of the three must have been St. Teresa's father.]} whereas, now that the Lord has made me stronger in virtue, many persons have derived such profit in the course of two or three years, as I shall afterwards relate. In addition, there is another great disadvantage in yielding to this temptation: namely, the harm caused to our own soul; for the utmost we have to do at first is to take care of our soul and to remember that in the entire world there is only God and the soul;\footnote{[While there are too many similarities between the writings of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross for more than a very small proportion of them to be referred to, I cannot forbear quoting here the latter's well-known maxim: "Live in this world as though there were in it but God and thy soul, so that thy heart may be detained by aught that is human" (St. John of the Cross, III, 256.).]} and this is a thing which it is very profitable to remember.

Another temptation comes from the distress caused by the sins and failings which we see in others, for we all have a zeal for virtue and so we must learn to understand ourselves and walk warily. The devil tells us that this distress arises solely from our desire that God should not be offended and from our concern for His honour and then we immediately try to set matters right. This makes us so excited that is prevents us from praying, and the greatest harm of all is that we think this to be a virtue, and a sign of perfection and of great zeal for God. I am not referring to the distress caused by public offenses in a religious congregation, if they become habitual, or of wrongs done to the Church, such as heresies, through which, as we see, so many souls are lost; for distress caused by these is right, and, being right, causes us no excitement. Safety, then, for the soul that practises prayer will consist in its ceasing to be anxious about anything and anybody, and in its watching itself and pleasing God. This is most important. If I were to describe the mistakes I have seen people make because they trusted in their good intentions!

Let us strive, then, always to look at the virtues and the good qualities which we find in others, and to keep our own grievous sins before our eyes so that we may be blind to their defects. This is a course of action which, though we may not become perfect in it all at once, will help us to acquire one great virtue -- namely, to consider all others better than ourselves. In this way we shall begin to profit, by God's help (which is always necessary, and, when it fails, our own efforts are useless), and we must beg Him to give us this virtue, which, if we exert our own efforts, He will deny to none. This counsel must also be remembered by those who use their intellects a great deal and from one subject can extract many ideas and conceptions. To those who cannot do this -- and I used to be one -- there is no need to offer any counsel, save that they must have patience until the Lord gives them occupation and enlightenment, for of themselves they can do so little that their intellect hinders rather than helps them.

Returning, then, to those who can make use of their reasoning powers, I advise them not to spend all their time in doing so; their method of prayer is most meritorious, but, enjoying it as they do, they fail to realize that they ought to have a
kind of Sunday -- that is to say, a period of rest from their labour. To stop working, they think, would be a loss of time, whereas my view is that this loss is a great gain; let them imagine themselves, as I have suggested, in the presence of Christ, and let them remain in converse with Him, and delighting in Him, without wearying their minds or fatiguing themselves by composing speeches to Him, but laying their needs before Him and acknowledging how right He is not to allow us to be in His presence. There is a time for one thing and a time for another; were there not, the soul would grow tired of always eating the same food. These foods are very pleasant and wholesome; and, if the palate is accustomed to their taste, they provide great sustenance for the life of the soul, and bring it many other benefits.

I will explain myself further, for these matters concerning prayer are difficult, and, if no director is available, very hard to understand. It is for this reason that, though I should like to write more briefly, and though merely to touch upon these matters concerning prayer would suffice for the keen intellect of him who commanded me to write of them, my own stupidity prevents me from describing and explaining in a few words a matter which it is so important to expound thoroughly. Having gone through so much myself, I am sorry for those who begin with books alone, for it is extraordinary what a difference there is between understanding a thing and knowing it by experience. Returning, then, to what I was saying, we begin to meditate upon a scene of the Passion -- let us say upon the binding of the Lord to the Column. The mind sets to work to seek out the reasons which are to be found for the great afflictions and distress which His Majesty must have suffered when He was alone there. It also meditates on the many other lessons which, if it is industrious, or well stored with learning, this mystery can teach it. This method should be the beginning, the middle and the end of prayer for all of us: it is a most excellent and safe road until the Lord leads us to other methods, which are supernatural.

I say "for all of us," but there will be many souls who derive greater benefits from other meditations than from that of the Sacred Passion. For, just as there are many mansions in Heaven, so there are many roads to them. Some people derive benefit from imagining themselves in hell; others, whom it distresses to think of hell, from imagining themselves in Heaven. Others meditate upon death. Some, who are tender hearted, get exhausted if they keep thinking about the Passion, but they derive great comfort and benefit from considering the power and greatness of God in the creatures, and the love that He showed us, which is pictured in all things. This is an admirable procedure, provided one does not fail to meditate often upon the Passion and the life of Christ, which are, and have always been, the source of everything that is good.

The beginner needs counsel to help him ascertain what benefits him most. To this end a director is very necessary, but he must be a man of experience, or he will make a great many mistakes and lead souls along without understanding them or without allowing them to learn to understand themselves; for the soul, knowing that it is a great merit to be subject to its director, dares not do other than what he commands it. I have come across souls so constrained and afflicted because of the inexperience of their director that I have been really sorry for them. And I have found some who had no idea how to act for themselves; for directors who cannot understand spirituality afflict their penitents both in soul and in body and prevent them from making progress. One person who spoke to me about this had been kept in bondage by her director for eight years; he would not allow her to aim at anything but self-knowledge, yet the Lord was already granting her the Prayer of Quiet, so she was suffering great trials.
At the same time, this matter of self-knowledge must never be neglected. No soul on this road is such a giant that it does not often need to become a child at the breast again. (This must never be forgotten: I may repeat it again and again, for it is of great importance.) For there is no state of prayer, however sublime, in which it is not necessary often to go back to the beginning. And self-knowledge with regard to sin is the bread which must be eaten with food of every kind, however dainty it may be, on this road of prayer: without this bread we could not eat our food at all. But bread must be taken in moderate proportions. When a soul finds itself exhausted and realizes clearly that it has no goodness of its own, when it feels ashamed in the presence of so great a King and sees how little it is paying of all that it owes Him, what need is there for it to waste its time on learning to know itself? It will be wiser to go on to other matters which the Lord sets before it, and we are not doing right if we neglect such things, for His Majesty knows better than we what kind of food is good for us.

It is of great importance, then, that the director should be a prudent man -- of sound understanding, I mean -- and also an experienced one: if he is a learned man as well, that is a very great advantage. But if all these three qualities cannot be found in the same man, the first two are the more important, for it is always possible to find learned men to consult when necessary. I mean that learning is of little benefit to beginners, except in men of prayer. I do not mean that beginners should have no communication with learned men, for I should prefer spirituality to be unaccompanied by prayer than not to be founded upon the truth. Learning is a great thing, for it teaches those of us who have little knowledge, and gives us light, so that, when we are faced with the truth of Holy Scripture, we act as we should. From foolish devotions may God deliver us!

I want to explain myself further, for I seem to be getting involved in a great many subjects. I have always had this failing -- that I cannot explain myself, as I have said, except at the cost of many words. A nun begins to practise prayer: if her director is a simpleton and gets the idea into his head, he will give her to understand that it is better for her to obey him than her superior, and he will do this without any evil intention, thinking he is right. Indeed, if he is not a religious, it will probably seem right to him. If he is dealing with a married woman, he will tell her it is better for her to be engaged in prayer when she has work to do in her home, although this may displease her husband: he cannot advise her about arranging her time and work so that everything is done as true Christianity demands. Not being enlightened himself, he cannot enlighten others, even if he tries. And although learning may not seem necessary for this, my opinion has always been, and always will be, that every Christian should try to consult some learned person, if he can, and the more learned this person, the better. Those who walk in the way of prayer have the greater need of learning; and the more spiritual they are, the greater is their need.

Let us not make the mistake of saying that learned men who do not practise prayer are not suitable directors for those who do. I have consulted many such; and for some years past, feeling a greater need of them, I have sought them out more. I have always got on well with them; for, though some of them have no experience, they are not averse from spirituality, nor are they ignorant of its nature, for they study Holy Scripture, where the truth about it can always be found. I believe myself that, if a person who practises prayer consults learned men, the devil will not deceive him with illusions except by his own desire; for I think devils are very much afraid of learned men who are humble and virtuous, knowing that they will find them out and defeat them.
I have said this because some people think that learned men, if they are not spiritual, are unsuitable for those who practise prayer. I have already said that a spiritual director is necessary, but if he has no learning it is a great inconvenience. It will help us very much to consult learned men, provided they are virtuous; even if they are not spiritual they will do us good and God will show them what they should teach and may even make them spiritual so that they may be of service to us. I do not say this without proof and I have had experience of quite a number. Anyone, I repeat, who surrenders his soul to a single director, and is subject to him alone, will be making a great mistake, if he is a religious, and has to be subject to his own superior, in not obtaining a director of this kind. For the director may be lacking in all the three things, and that will be no light cross for the penitent to bear without voluntarily submitting his understanding to one whose understanding is not good. For myself, I have never been able to bring myself to do this, nor do I think it right. If such a person be in the world, let him praise God that he is able to choose the director to whom he is to be subject and let him not give up such righteous freedom; let him rather remain without a director until he finds the right one, for the Lord will give him one if his life is founded upon humility and he has the desire to succeed. I praise God greatly, and we women, and those who are not learned, ought always to give Him infinite thanks, that there are persons who with such great labour have attained to the truth of which we ignorant people know nothing.

I am often amazed that learned men, and religious in particular, will give me the benefit of what they have gained with so much labour, and at no cost to myself save the labour of asking for it. And to think that there may be people who have no desire to reap such benefits! God forbid it be so! I see these learned fathers bearing the trials of the religious life, which are grievous ones -- its penances, its poor food and its obligation to obey: really, I am sometimes downright ashamed to think of it. And then, the scant sleep they get: nothing but trials, nothing but crosses! I think it would be very wrong for anyone, through his own fault, to forfeit the benefits of such a life as that. It may be that some of us who are free from these trials -- who are pampered, as they say -- and live just as we like, think ourselves superior to those who undergo them, merely because we practise a little more prayer than they.

Blessed be Thou, Lord, Who has made me so incompetent and unprofitable! Most heartily do I praise Thee because Thou quickenest so many to quicken us! We should pray most regularly for those who give us light. What would become of us without them amid these great storms which the Church now has to bear? If some of them have been wicked, the good will shine the more. May it please the Lord to keep them in His hand and help them to help us. Amen.

I have wandered far from the aim with which I began, but for those who are beginners it is all to the point, and it will help them, as they set out upon so high a journey, to keep their feet planted upon the true road. Returning to what I was saying -- the meditation upon Christ bound to the Column -- it is well to reflect for a time and to think of the pains which He bore there, why He bore them, Who He is that bore them and with what love He suffered them. But we must not always tire ourselves by going in search of such ideas; we must sometimes remain by His side with our minds hushed in silence. If we can, we should occupy ourselves in looking upon Him Who is looking at us; keep Him company; talk with Him; pray to Him; humble ourselves before Him; have our delight in Him; and remember that He never deserved to be there. Anyone who can do this, though he may be but a

118[Lit.: "of more than two" -- but the expression is a figurative one.]
CHAPTER XIV

Begins to describe the second degree of prayer, in which the Lord grants the soul experience of more special consolations. This description is made in order to explain the supernatural character of these consolations. It should be most carefully noted.

Having now spoken of the labour and manual effort with which this garden is watered when one draws water from the well, let us now speak of the second way of drawing it which is ordained by the Lord of the garden. By using a device of windlass and buckets the gardener draws more water with less labour and is able to take some rest instead of being continually at work. It is this method, applied to the prayer called the Prayer of Quiet, that I now wish to describe.

This state, in which the soul begins to recollect itself, borders on the supernatural, to which it could in no way attain by its own exertions. True, it sometimes seems to have been wearied by its work at the windlass -- its labouring with the understanding and its filling of the buckets; but in this state the water is higher and thus much less labour is required than for the drawing of it from the well. I mean that the water is nearer to it, for grace reveals itself to the soul more clearly. This state is a recollecting of the faculties within the soul, so that its fruition of that contentment may be of greater delight. But the faculties are not lost, nor do they sleep. The will alone is occupied, in such a way that, without knowing how, it becomes captive. It allows itself to be imprisoned by God, as one who well knows itself to be the captive of Him Whom it loves. Oh, my Jesus and Lord, how much Thy love now means to us! It binds our own love so straitly that at that moment it leaves us no freedom to love anything but Thee.

The other two faculties help the will so that it may be come more and more capable of enjoying so great a blessing, though sometimes it comes about that, even when the will is in union, they hinder it exceedingly. When that happens it should take no notice of them but remain in its fruition and quiet; for, if it tries to recollect them, both it and they will suffer. At such a time they are like doves which are not pleased with the food given them by the owner of the dovecot, without their having worked for it, and go in search of food elsewhere, but are so unsuccessful that they return. Just so these faculties come and go, to see if the will give them some part of what it is enjoying. If this be the Lord's pleasure, it throws them food and they stop; if not, they return to their search. They must reflect that they are benefiting the will; or sometimes the memory or the imagination may do it harm by trying to present it with a picture of what it is enjoying. The will, then, must be careful in its dealings with them, as I shall explain.

Everything that now takes place brings the greatest consolation, and so little labour is involved that, even if prayer continues for a long time, it never becomes wearisome. For the understanding is now working very gradually and is drawing very much more water than it drew from the well. The tears which God bestows
here flow joyfully; though the soul is conscious of them, it does nothing to induce them.

This water of great blessings and favours which the Lord gives in this state makes the virtues grow much more, beyond all comparison, than in the previous one; for the soul is already rising from its miserable condition and gaining some slight foreknowledge of the joys of glory. This, I believe, makes the virtues grow and also brings them nearer to that true Virtue from Whom all virtues spring -- namely, God. For His Majesty begins to communicate Himself to this soul and wishes it to be conscious of the method of His communication. As soon as it arrives at this state, it begins to lose its covetousness for the things of earth. And small merit to it, for it sees clearly that on earth it cannot have a moment of this joy; that there are no riches, or dominions, or honours, or delights which suffice to give it such satisfaction even for the twinkling of an eye; for this is true joy, and the soul realizes that it is this which gives genuine satisfaction. Those of us who are on earth, it seems to me, rarely understand where this satisfaction lies. It comes and goes. First it is with us; then it leaves us, and we find that it is all gone, and we can not get it back again, having no idea how to do so. For even if we wear ourselves to pieces with penances and prayers and all kinds of other things, we can acquire but little if the Lord is not pleased to bestow it. God, of His greatness, desires the soul to realize that His Majesty is so near it that it need not send Him messengers, but may speak with Him itself; nor need it cry aloud, because He is so near it that it has only to move its lips and He will understand it.

It seems beside the point to say this, as we know that God always understands us and is always with us. There is no possible doubt that this is so; but this Emperor and Lord of ours desires us now to realize that He understands us, and what is accomplished by His presence, and that He is about to begin a special work in the soul through the great satisfaction, both inward and outward, that He gives it, and through the difference which there is, as I have said, between this particular delight and contentment and others which we experience on earth, for He seems to be filling the void in our souls that we have caused by our sins. This satisfaction resides in the most intimate part of the soul, and the soul cannot tell whence or how it has come to it; often it knows neither what to do, nor to wish, nor to ask. It seems to find everything at once, yet not to know what it has found: I do not myself know how to explain this. For many purposes it is necessary to be learned; and it would be very useful to have some learning here, in order to explain what is meant by general or particular help (for there are many who do not know this) and how it is now the Lord's will that the soul should see this particular help (as they say) with its own eyes; and learning would also serve to explain many other things about which mistakes may be made. However, as what I write is to be seen by persons who will know if I am wrong, I am going on without worrying about it. I know I have no need to worry from the point of view either of learning or of spirituality, as this is going into the possession of those who will be able to judge it and will cut out anything which may be amiss.

I should like, then, to explain this, because it is a fundamental matter, and, when the Lord begins to grant these favours, the soul itself does not understand them, or know what it ought to do. If God leads it, as He led me, by the way of fear, and there is no one who understands it, its trial will be a heavy one; and it will be very glad to read a description of itself which will show clearly that it is travelling on the right

119[Cf. St. John of the Cross: Spiritual Canticle, Stanza VI.]
road. And it will be a great blessing for it to know what it has to do in order to continue to make progress in any of these states: I myself, through not knowing what to do, have suffered much and lost a great deal of time. I am very sorry for souls who reach this state and find themselves alone; for, although I have read many spiritual books which touch upon the matter, they explain very little; and if the soul has not had a great deal of practice in prayer it will have as much as it can do to understand its own case, however much the books may explain.

I wish very much that the Lord would help me to set forth the effects which these things produce in the soul and which are already verging on the supernatural, so that it may be known by the effects which they produce whether or no they proceed from the Spirit of God. Known, I mean, to the extent to which it is possible to know things on earth: it is always well that we should act with fear and caution, for, even if these things come from God, the devil may sometimes be able to transform himself into an angel of light.\textsuperscript{120} If the soul has not had a great deal of experience it will not realize this, and so much experience is necessary that, in order to understand it, one must have reached the very summit of prayer. The little time I have makes it none too easy for me to explain this, for which reason it is necessary that His Majesty should make the matter clear, for I have my work to do in the community and many other occupations (being now in a recently founded house, as will be seen later\textsuperscript{121}) and so I can never settle down to what I write but have to do a little at a time. I wish I had more time, for, when the Lord gives inspiration, one can write better and more easily. I seem to be like one working with a pattern before her and copying it with her needle: I can perform my task, but if inspiration is wanting I can no more put my words together properly than if I were writing gibberish, as one might say, however many years I may have spent in prayer. And so I think it is a very great advantage to be immersed in prayer when I am writing. I realize clearly that it is not I who am saying this; for I am not putting it together with my own understanding and afterwards I cannot tell how I have managed to say it at all. This often happens to me.

Let us now return to our garden, or orchard, and see how these trees begin to take new life before putting forth flowers and afterwards giving fruit, and the flowers -- carnations and so forth\textsuperscript{122} -- begin to give out their fragrance. I am pleased with this comparison, for often, when I was a beginner (and may the Lord grant that I have in fact even now begun to serve His Majesty -- but I mean a beginner by comparison with what I shall say about my life hereafter), it used to give me great delight to think of my soul as a garden and of the Lord as walking in it. I would beg Him to increase the fragrance of the little buds of virtue which seemed to be beginning to appear, and to keep them alive so that they might bloom to His glory -- for I wanted nothing for myself -- and I would ask Him to prune away any of them He wished to, for I knew that the plants would be all the better if He did. I speak of pruning, for there come times when the soul feels like anything but a garden: everything seems dry to it and no water comes to refresh it, and one would think there had never been any kind of virtue in it at all. The soul suffers many trials, for the Lord wants the poor gardener to think that all the trouble he has taken in watering the garden and keeping it alive is lost. Then is the proper time for weeding and rooting out the

\textsuperscript{120}[2 Corinthians xi, 14.]
\textsuperscript{121}I.e., St. Joseph's, Ávila.
\textsuperscript{122}[Lit.: "the flowers and carnations." No doubt carnations, with their strong fragrance, were flowers which particularly appealed to St. Teresa: she often lays special stress on some such thing when it catches her imagination.]
smaller plants, and this must be done, however small they may be, if they are useless; for we know that no efforts of ours are availing if God withholds from us the water of grace, and we must despise ourselves as nothing and as less than nothing. By doing this we can gain great humility and then the flowers will begin to grow afresh.

O my Lord and my Good! I cannot say this without tears and great delight of soul that Thou, Lord, shouldst wish to be with us, and art with us, in the Sacrament. We may believe that this is so, in very truth, for so it is, and with the utmost truth we may make this comparison; and if our faults do not impede us we may rejoice in Thee and Thou wilt take Thy delight in us, since Thou sayest that Thy delight is to be with the children of men.\footnote{Proverbs viii, 31.} O my Lord! What is this? Whenever I hear these words they are a great comfort to me, as they were even when I had gone far astray. Is it possible, Lord, that there can be a soul which reaches a state in which Thou dost grant it such graces and favours and can realize that Thou takest Thy delight in it, and yet offends Thee again after Thou hast shown it so many favours and such signal marks of love that it cannot doubt them since it sees Thy work so clearly? Yes, there is indeed such a soul -- there is myself. And I have done this not once, but often. May it please Thy goodness, Lord, that I may be alone in my ingratitude, that I may be the only one to have committed so great a wrong and been so excessively ungrateful. Yet even from me some good has been brought forth by Thine infinite goodness, and, the greater have been my sins, the more has the great blessing of Thy mercies shone forth in me. How many reasons have I for singing of them for ever! I beseech Thee, my God, that it may be so: may I sing of them, and that without end, since Thou hast seen good to work such exceeding great mercies in me that they amaze those who behold them, while as for me, I am drawn out of myself by them continually, that I may be the better able to sing Thy praise. For, so long as I am in myself, my Lord, and without Thee, I can do nothing but be cut off\footnote{[The verb cortar, here translated "cut off", is rendered "prune", "prune away" earlier in this chapter. The sense is different here but the author seems to have the earlier passage in mind.]} [like the flowers in this garden, and this miserable earth will become a dunghill again as before. Permit it not, Lord. Let it not be Thy will that a soul which Thou hast purchased with so many trials should be lost, when Thou hast so often redeemed it anew and hast snatched it from the teeth of the horrible dragon.

Your Reverence must forgive me for wandering from my subject: as I am speaking with a purpose in my mind you must not be surprised. I am writing what comes to my soul; and at times when, as I write, the greatness of the debt I owe Him rises up before me, it is only by a supreme effort that I can refrain from going on to sing praises to God. And I think Your Reverence will not be displeased by it, because I believe we can both sing the same song, though in a different way; for my debt to God is much the greater, since He has forgiven me more, as Your Reverence knows.

\textbf{CHAPTER XV}

Continues speaking of the same subject and gives certain counsels as to how the soul must behave in this Prayer of Quiet. Tells how there are many souls who attain to this prayer and few who pass beyond it. The things touched herein are very necessary and profitable.
Let us now return to our subject. This quiet and recollectedness in the soul makes itself felt largely through the satisfaction and peace which it brings to it, together with a very great joy and repose of the faculties and a most sweet delight. As the soul has never gone beyond this stage, it thinks there is no more left for it to desire and, like Saint Peter, it wishes that it could make its abode here.\textsuperscript{125} It dares not move or stir, for it thinks that if it does so this blessing may slip from its grasp: sometimes it would like to be unable even to breathe. The poor creature does not realize that, having been unable to do anything of itself to acquire that blessing, it will be still less able to keep it longer than the time for which the Lord is pleased that it shall possess it. I have already said that, in this first state of recollection and quiet, the faculties of the soul do not fail; but the soul has such satisfaction in God that, although the other two faculties may be distracted, yet, since the will is in union with God for as long as the recollection lasts, its quiet and repose are not lost, but the will gradually brings the understanding and memory back to a state of recollection again. For, although the will is not yet completely absorbed it is so well occupied, without knowing how, that, whatever the efforts made by the understanding and memory, they cannot deprive it of its contentment and rejoicing: indeed, without any labour on its part, it helps to prevent this little spark of love for God from being quenched.

May His Majesty give me grace to explain this clearly, for there are many, many souls that reach this state and few that pass beyond it, and I do not know who is to blame for this. Most certainly it is not God; for, since His Majesty grants us the favour of advancing to this point, I do not believe that, unless there are faults on our part, He will fail to grant us many more favours. It is very important that the soul which arrives thus far should recognize the great dignity of its state and the greatness of the favours which the Lord has granted it, and how there is good reason why it should not belong to the earth, since, unless its own faults impede it, His goodness seems to be making it a citizen of Heaven. Alas for such a soul if it turns back! If it does so, I think it will begin to go downhill, as I should have done had not the Lord’s mercy saved me. For, as a rule, I believe, it can be due only to grave faults: it is impossible to forfeit so great a blessing save through gross blindness caused by much evil.

And so, for love of the Lord, I beg the souls whom His Majesty has granted so great a favour as to remain in this state to learn to know themselves, and to hold themselves, with a humble and a holy presumption, in high esteem, so that they shall not return to the flesh-pots of Egypt. And if, through their weakness and wickedness and their miserable and wretched nature, they fall, as I did, let them ever bear in mind what a blessing they have lost, and preserve their misgivings and walk fearfully, as they have good reason to do, for unless they return to prayer they will go from bad to worse. I should call anything a real fall which made us hate the road that had led us to so great a blessing. In talking to these souls I do not say that they will not offend God and fall into sin; anyone who has begun to receive these favours would be right in guarding himself carefully against falling; for we are miserable sinners. What I strongly advise them to do is not to give up prayer, for prayer will enlighten them as to what they are doing, and the Lord will grant them repentance and strength to rise again. They must believe, and keep on believing, that if they cease from prayer they are running (or so I think) into danger. I am not

\textsuperscript{125}St. Matthew xvii, 4.
sure if I understand what I am saying, because, as I have said, I am judging from my own experience.

This prayer, then, is a little spark of true love for the Lord which He begins to enkindle in the soul, and His will is that it should come to understand the nature of this love with its attendant joy. This quiet and recollection -- this little spark -- if it proceeds from the Spirit of God and is not a pleasure bestowed on us by the devil or sought by ourselves, is not a thing that can be acquired, as anyone who has experience of it must perforce realize immediately, but this nature of ours is so eager for delectable experiences that it tries to get all it can. Soon, however, it becomes very cold; for, hard as we may try to make the fire burn in order to obtain this pleasure, we seem only to be throwing water on it to quench it. This little spark, then, planted within us by God, small though it is, makes a loud noise; and if we do not quench it through some fault of our own, it is this that begins to kindle the great fire which (as I shall say in due course) sends forth the flames of that most ardent love of God with which His Majesty endows the souls of the perfect.

This spark is given to the soul by God as a sign or pledge that He is already choosing it for great things if it will prepare itself to receive them. It is a great gift, much greater than I can say. I am very sorry for this, for, as I have said, I know many souls who attain thus far; and I know, too, that those who go farther, as they ought to do, are so few that I am ashamed to confess it. I do not mean that they are really few, for there must be a great many of them, since God does not uphold us without a purpose. I am merely telling what I have seen. I should like very much to advise such persons to be careful not to hide their talent, for it would seem that God is pleased to choose them to the advantage of many, especially in these times when He needs His friends to be strong so that they may uphold the weak. Let those who recognize that they themselves have this grace look upon themselves as His friends if they can fulfill the obligations which even the world demands of faithful friendship. Otherwise, as I have just said, let them fear and tremble lest they be doing some harm to themselves -- and please God it be to themselves alone!

What the soul has to do at these seasons of quiet is merely to go softly and make no noise. By noise, I mean going about with the understanding in search of many words and reflections with which to give thanks for this benefit and piling up its sins and imperfections so as to make itself realize that it does not deserve it. It is now that all this movement takes place: the understanding brings forward its representations and the memory becomes active -- and sometimes I myself find these faculties really wearisome, for, weak though my memory is, I cannot subdue it. The will must be calm and discreet and realize that we cannot treat effectively with God by the might of our own efforts and that these are like great logs of wood being heaped up indiscriminately so that they will quench this spark. Let it recognize this and with all humility say: "Lord, what can I do here? What has the servant to do with her Lord? What has earth to do with Heaven?" Or let it utter any words of love which come to its mind, with the firm and sure knowledge that what it is saying is the truth; and let it take no notice of the understanding, which is merely making itself a nuisance. And if the will wishes to communicate its joy to the understanding, or strives to lead it into recollection (as will often happen in this union of the will and state of tranquillity), and the understanding is very much disturbed, it will do better to leave it alone than to run after it. Let it (the will, I mean) continue in the fruition of that favour, and be as recollected as the wise little bee, for if no bees entered the hive and they all went about trying to bring each other in, there would not be much chance of their making any honey.
The soul will lose a great deal if it is not careful about this, especially if it has a lively understanding, with the result that, when it begins to hold discourse with itself and think out reflections, it will soon begin to fancy it is doing something worth while if its discourses and reflections are at all clever. All that the reason has to do in this state is to understand that there is no reason, save His goodness alone, why God should grant us so great a favour, and to realize that we are very near Him, and to beg favours of His Majesty, and to pray to Him for the Church and for those who have been commended to us and for the souls in purgatory -- not, however, with any noise of words, though with a hearty desire that He may hear us. This is a prayer that comprises a great deal and achieves more than any amount of meditation on the part of the understanding. Let the will, in order to quicken its love, arouse within itself certain reasons which reason itself will picture to it when it sees itself in so much better a state. Let it make certain acts of love, too, concerning what it will do for Him to Whom it owes so much, without allowing the understanding to make any noise, as I have said, in its search for these clever reflections. A few little straws laid down with humility (and they will be less than straws if it is we who lay them down) are more to the point here, and of more use for kindling the fire, than any amount of wood -- that is, of the most learned reasoning -- which, in our opinion, will put it out in a moment. This will be good advice for the learned men who are commanding me to write, for, by the goodness of God, all of them will reach this state, and it may be they will spend their time in making applications of verses from Scripture; but, although they will have no difficulty in making good use of their learning both before and after prayer, they will have little need for it, in my view, during their actual periods of prayer, when it will only make their will lukewarm; for at those times the understanding, through being so near the light, sees with the greatest clearness, so that even I, though the sort of person I am, seem to be quite different.

Thus, when in this state of Quiet, I, who understand hardly anything that I recite in Latin, particularly in the Psalter, have not only been able to understand the text as though it were in Spanish but have even found to my delight that I can penetrate the meaning of the Spanish. Let us leave out of account occasions when these learned men have to preach or teach, for then it will be well for them to make use of their learning, so as to help poor ignorant creatures like myself, for charity is a great thing, and so is a constant care for souls, when undertaken simply and purely for the sake of God. In these periods of Quiet, then, let the soul repose in its rest; let them put their learning aside; the time will come when they will use it in the Lord's service and will esteem it so much that they would not have failed to acquire it for all the treasures imaginable, simply because they can serve His Majesty with it and for this purpose find it a great help. But in the sight of Infinite Wisdom, believe me, there is more value in a little study of humility and in a single act of it than in all the knowledge in the world. So in this state there is no room for argument but only for a plain recognition of what we are, a presenting of ourselves in our simplicity before God, Whose will is that the soul should become a fool, as in truth it is in His sight, for it is due to His Majesty's great humility, we being what we are, that He suffers it to be near Him.

The understanding is also active now and gives thanks in set terms; but the will, in its tranquillity, is like the publican and dares not lift up its eyes, yet perhaps makes a better thanksgiving than the understanding can even when it has exhausted all

126 Without altering the word "humility", P. Báñez wrote underneath it, in the original manuscript, "humanity". This emendation [if it was meant for one] has been adopted by none of the editions.
its rhetoric. In short, mental prayer must not be completely given up, nor yet must vocal prayer, if we ever wish to turn to it and are able to do so; for, if the state of quiet is intense, it becomes difficult to speak except with great distress. In my own opinion, it is possible to tell if this state comes from the Spirit of God or if, starting from devotion given us by God, we have attained to it by our own efforts. In the latter case, as I have said, we try of our own accord to pass on to this quiet of the will, and nothing comes of it; everything is quickly over and we are left in a state of aridity. If it comes from the devil, I think a practised soul will realize this, for it leaves behind it disquiet and very little humility and does little to prepare the soul for the effects produced by such prayer when it comes from God. It leaves neither light in the understanding nor steadfastness in the will.127

The devil, in such a case, can do little or no harm if the soul directs the delight and sweetness which it now feels towards God and fixes its thoughts and desires upon Him, as it has already been advised to do. He can gain nothing; in fact, by Divine permission, the very delight which he causes in the soul will contribute to his frustration. For this delight will help the soul: thinking it to be of God, it will often come to its prayer with a desire for Him; and if it is a humble soul, and not curious or eager for joys, even for spiritual joys, but attached to the Cross, it will pay little attention to pleasure given by the devil, but will be unable to disregard that which comes from the Spirit of God, for this it will hold in high esteem. When the devil, being altogether a liar, sends the soul any pleasure or delight, and sees that this is causing it to humble itself (and it should try to be humble in all that concerns prayer and consolations), he will often see how he has been frustrated and refrain from trying again. For this and for many reasons, in writing of the first kind of prayer, and of the first water, I pointed out that it is most important for souls, when they begin to practise prayer, to start by detaching themselves from every kind of pleasure, and to enter upon their prayer with one sole determination, to help Christ bear His Cross. Anxious, like good knights, to serve their King without pay, since they are quite sure of their final reward, they will keep their eyes fixed upon the true and everlasting kingdom to which we are striving to attain.

It is a very great thing always to bear this in mind, especially at first; later, we realize it so clearly that we need to forget it, so that we may live out our lives, rather than to try to recall to our memory how brief is the duration of everything, and how nothing is of any value, and how such earthly rest as we have must be reckoned as no rest at all. This seems to be a very low ideal, and so indeed it is, and those who have reached a more advanced state, and a greater degree of perfection, would consider it a reproach and be ashamed if they thought that the reason they were renouncing the good things of this world was because these must pass away: even were such things everlasting, they would rejoice to give them up for God. The nearer are these souls to perfection, the greater would be their joy, and the greater, too, would it be if these earthly blessings lasted longer.

In souls like these love is already highly developed and it is love which works in them. But for beginners this other consideration is of the greatest importance, and they must not look upon it as a low ideal, for the blessing that it brings is a great one, and for this reason I strongly commend it to them: even those who have

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127The original has “truth” (verdad), not “will” (voluntad). [P. Silverio, while agreeing that voluntad is more logical, respects the clear reading of the autograph and gives verdad; but the context, I think, makes it quite clear that “will” is meant, and the two words, in the Spanish, are sufficiently alike to be confused by a writer as often inaccurate as St. Teresa. Lewis, p. 122, n., cites three Spanish commentators who have adopted voluntad, though he himself translates “truth.”]
reached great heights of prayer will find it necessary, when from time to time God is pleased to prove them and His Majesty seems to have forsaken them. For, as I have already said -- and I should not like this to be forgotten -- in this life of ours the soul does not grow in the way the body does, though we speak as if it did, and growth does in fact occur. But whereas a child, after attaining to the full stature of a man, does not diminish in size so that his body becomes small again, in spiritual matters the Lord is pleased that such diminution should take place -- at least, according to my own observation, for I have no other means of knowing. This must be in order to humble us for our greater good, and so that we may not grow careless while we are in this exile; for, the higher a person has climbed, the more fearful he should be and the less he should trust himself. There come times when those whose will is so completely subjected to the will of God that they would let themselves be tortured rather than be guilty of one imperfection and die a thousand deaths rather than commit sins, find it necessary, if they are to be free from offending God, when they see themselves assaulted by temptations and persecutions, to make use of the primary weapons -- that is, of prayer -- and thus to recall to themselves that everything comes to an end, that there is a heaven and a hell, and other truths of the same kind.

Returning now to what I was saying, the great foundation which we must lay, if we are to be delivered from the snares and pleasures sent by the devil, is the initial determination not to desire these pleasures, but to walk from the first in the way of the Cross. For the Lord Himself showed us this way of perfection when He said: "Take up thy cross and follow Me" 128. He is our Pattern; and those who follow His counsels with the sole aim of pleasing Him have nothing to fear.

They will know, by the improvement which they discern in themselves, that this is not the work of the devil. For, even though they keep falling, there is one sign that the Lord has been with them -- namely, the speed with which they rise again. There are also other signs, which I shall now describe. When the Spirit of God is at work, there is no need to go about looking for ways of inducing humility and confusion; for the Lord Himself reveals these to us in a very different manner from any which we can find by means of our puny reflections, which are nothing by comparison with a true humility proceeding from the light given us in this way by the Lord. This produces a confusion which quite overwhelms us. The bestowal upon us of this knowledge by God so that we may learn that we ourselves have nothing good is a well-known experience, and the greater are the favours we receive from Him, the better we learn it. He gives us a burning desire to make progress in prayer, and not to abandon it, however great the trials it may bring us. We offer ourselves wholly to Him and we experience a security combined with humility and fear with respect to our salvation. This casts out from the soul all servile fear and implants in it a very much maturer fear which springs from faith. We realize that there is beginning to develop within us a love of God entirely devoid of self-interest and we desire periods of solitude in order to have the greater fruition of that blessing.

Let me end, lest I should grow weary, by saying that this prayer is the beginning of all blessings: the flowers have now reached a point at which they are almost ready to bloom. The soul is very conscious of this and at such a time it could not possibly decide that God was not with it; only when it be comes conscious once more of its failings and imperfections does it grow fearful of everything, as it is well that it should. There are souls, nevertheless, whose confidence that God is with them

128St. Matthew xvi, 24.
brings them benefits which are greater than all the fears that can beset them. For, if a soul is by nature loving and grateful, the remembrance of the favour which God has granted it causes it to turn to God despite all the punishments of hell which it can imagine. This, at any rate, was what happened to me, wicked as I am.

As I shall go on later to speak of the signs of true spirituality -- and it has cost me much labour to apprehend them clearly -- I am not going to speak of them here and now. I believe that, by God's help, I shall be able to do so with some degree of success; for, quite apart from the experiences which have done me so much good, I have been taught by certain very learned men and very holy persons to whom it is right that credence should be given, so that souls which by the Lord's goodness reach this point may not become as fatigued as I did.

CHAPTER XVI

Treats of the third degree of prayer and continues to expound very lofty matters, describing what the soul that reaches this state is able to do and the effects produced by these great favours of the Lord. This chapter is well calculated to uplift the spirit in praises to God and to provide great consolation for those who reach this state.

Let us now go on to speak of the third water with which this garden is watered -- that is, of running water proceeding from a river or a spring. This irrigates the garden with much less trouble, although a certain amount is caused by the directing of it. But the Lord is now pleased to help the gardener, so that He may almost be said to be the gardener Himself, for it is He Who does everything. This state is a sleep of the faculties, which are neither wholly lost nor yet can understand how they work. The pleasure and sweetness and delight are incomparably greater than in the previous state, for the water of grace rises to the very neck of the soul, so that it is unable to go forward, and has no idea how to do so, yet neither can it turn back: it would fain have the fruition of exceeding great glory. It is like a person holding the candle in his hand, who is soon to die a death that he longs for; and in that agony it is rejoicing with ineffable joy. This seems to me to be nothing less than an all but complete death to everything in the world and a fruition of God. I know no other terms in which to describe it or to explain it, nor does the soul, at such a time, know what to do: it knows not whether to speak or to be silent, whether to laugh or to weep. This state is a glorious folly, a heavenly madness, in which true wisdom is acquired, and a mode of fruition in which the soul finds the greatest delight.

It is now, I believe, some five, or perhaps six, years since the Lord granted me this prayer in abundance, and granted it me many times, yet I never understood it or knew how to describe it. My intention, therefore, when I reached this point, was to say very little about it, or even nothing at all. I fully realized that it was not a complete union of all the faculties and yet it was very obviously something higher than the previous state of prayer; but I confess that I could neither decide nor understand the nature of this difference. I believe it is because of Your Reverence's humility in consenting to be helped by simplicity as great as mine that to-day, after I had communicated, the Lord granted me this prayer, without allowing me to go

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129[I have translated literally, but the phrase, a common one in Spanish, is equivalent to “at the point of death.”]
beyond it, and set these comparisons before me, and taught me how to express all
this and to describe what the soul in this state must do. I was certainly astonished,
for in a moment I understood everything. I used often to commit follies because of
this love, and to be inebriated with it, yet I had never been able to understand its
nature. I realized that it came from God but I could not understand the method of
His working; for the truth is that the faculties are in almost complete union, though
not so much absorbed as not to act. I am extremely pleased at having understood it
at last. Blessed be the Lord, Who has given me this consolation!

The faculties retain only the power of occupying themselves wholly with God; not
one of them, it seems, ventures to stir, nor can we cause any of them to move except
by trying to fix our attention very carefully on something else, and even then I do
not think we could entirely succeed in doing so. Many words are spoken, during this
state, in praise of God, but, unless the Lord Himself puts order into them, they have
no orderly form. The understanding, at any rate, counts for nothing here; the soul
would like to shout praises aloud, for it is in such a state that it cannot contain itself
-- a state of delectable disquiet. Already the flowers are opening: see, they are
beginning to send out their fragrance. The soul would like everyone to see her now,
and become aware of her glory, to the praise of God, and help her to sing His
praises. She seems to me like the woman spoken of in the Gospel, who wanted to
call (or did call) her neighbours.130 Such as these, I think, must have been the
wondrous feelings of the royal prophet David, when he played on the harp and sang
in praise of God. I am very much devoted to this glorious king and I wish all were,
especially those of us who are sinners.131

O God, what must that soul be like when it is in this state! It would fain be all
tongue, so that it might praise the Lord. It utters a thousand holy follies, striving
ever to please Him Who thus possesses it. I know a person who, though no poet,
composed some verses in a very short time, which were full of feeling and admirably
descriptive of her pain132: they did not come from her understanding, but, in order
the better to enjoy the bliss which came to her from such delectable pain, she
complained of it to her God. She would have been glad if she could have been cut to
pieces, body and soul, to show what joy this pain caused her. What torments could
have been set before her at such a time which she would not have found it
delectable to endure for her Lord's sake? She sees clearly that, when the martyrs
suffered their torments, they did hardly anything of themselves, for the soul is well
aware that fortitude comes from somewhere outside itself. But what will the soul
experience when it regains its senses and goes back to live in the world and has to
return to the world's preoccupations and formalities? I do not think what I say is in
the least exaggerated; I have rather fallen short of the truth in describing this kind
of rejoicing which the Lord desires a soul to experience while in this exile. Blessed
be Thou, Lord, for ever; let all things for ever praise Thee. Be pleased now, my King,
I beseech Thee, to ordain that since, as I write this, I am, by Thy goodness and
mercy, not yet recovered from this holy heavenly madness -- a favour which Thou
grantest me through no merits of my own -- either those with whom I shall have to
do may also become mad through Thy love or I myself may have no part in anything
to do with the world or may be taken from it. This servant of Thine, my God, can no

131The feast of King David is to be found in the Carmelite calendar revised by the Chapter-General
in 1564.
132The "person", as so often in St. Teresa, was the author herself. [The description of the poem is too
vague for it to be identified.]
longer endure such trials as come when she finds herself without Thee; for, if she is
to live, she desires no repose in this life nor would she have Thee give her any. This
soul would fain see itself free: eating is killing it; sleep brings it anguish. It finds
itself in this life spending its time upon comforts, yet nothing can comfort it but
Thee: it seems to be living against nature, for it no longer desires to live to itself, but
only to Thee.

O my true Lord and Glory, what a cross -- light and yet most heavy -- hast Thou
prepared for those who attain to this state! Light, because it is sweet; heavy,
because there come times when there is no patience that can endure it: never would
the soul desire to be free from it save to find itself with Thee. When it remembers
that as yet it has rendered Thee no service and that by living\textsuperscript{133} it can still serve
Thee, it would gladly take up a much heavier cross and never die until the end of
the world. It sets no store by its own repose if by forfeiting this it can do Thee a
small service. It knows not what to desire, but it well knows that it desires nothing
else but Thee.

O my son! (He to whom this is addressed and who commands me to write it is so
humble that he desires to be addressed thus).\textsuperscript{134} May Your Reverence alone see
some of these things in which I am transgressing my proper limits! For there is no
reason strong enough to keep me within the bounds of reason when the Lord takes
me out of myself. And since I communicated this morning I cannot believe that it is
I who am speaking at all: I seem to be dreaming what I see and I wish all the people
I see were suffering from the same complaint that I have now. I beseech Your
Reverence, let us all be mad, for the love of Him Who was called mad for our sakes.
Your Reverence says that you are attached to me: I want you to show it by
preparing yourself for God to grant you this favour, for I see very few people who
are not too worldly-wise to do what is incumbent upon them. I may of course be
more so than anybody else: Your Reverence must not allow me to be. You are my
confessor, my father,\textsuperscript{135} and it is to you that I have entrusted my soul: undeceive
me, then, by telling me the truth, for such truths as these are very seldom told.

I wish we five,\textsuperscript{136} who now love each other in Christ, could make an agreement
together. Just as others in recent times have been meeting secretly to contrive evil
deeds and heresies against His Majesty,\textsuperscript{137} so we might try to meet sometimes to
undeceive one another and to advise one another as to ways in which we might
amend our lives and be more pleasing to God; for there is no one who knows himself
as well as he is known by those who see him if they observe him lovingly and are
anxious to help him. I say "secretly", because it is no longer the fashion to talk in

\textsuperscript{133}[Lit.: "by seeing" (viendo), which reading P. Silverio adopts; but I think we may assume this to be
an error for "by living" (viviendo).]

\textsuperscript{134}The reference is to P. Pedro Ibáñez. The parenthetical sentence [which I have bracketed in the
text] is scored through in the autograph, by some hand other than the Saint's -- probably by P.
Báñez.

\textsuperscript{135}After this word come three or four others, which have been so effectively scored through that they
are indecipherable. No doubt they were words eulogizing P. Ibáñez.

\textsuperscript{136}Probably the other four were P. Daza, Don Francisco de Salcedo, Doña Guiomar de Ulloa and P.
Ibáñez.

\textsuperscript{137}The reference is to clandestine meetings held at Valladolid by a group of people suspected of
heresy, under the leadership of Dr. Austin Cazalla, a Canon of Salamanca and a Chaplain to the
Emperor Charles V. These meetings came to an end in 1559, when an auto was held which involved
persons of high rank and caused a great sensation in the country. The unorthodox propaganda of the
Cazallist group spread as far as Ávila and St. Teresa had herself come into contact with it.
this way: even preachers nowadays phrase their sermons so as not to give offence.\textsuperscript{138} No doubt their intention is good, and the work they do is good too, but they lead few people to amend their lives. How is it that there are not many who are led by sermons to forsake open sin? Do you know what I think? That it is because preachers have too much worldly wisdom. They are not like the Apostles, flinging it all aside and catching fire with love for God; and so their flame gives little heat: I do not say that their flame is as great as the Apostles' was, but I could wish it were stronger than I see it is. Does Your Reverence know what our great care ought to be? To hold our life in abhorrence and to consider our reputation as quite unimportant. Provided we say what is true and maintain it to the glory of God, we ought to be indifferent whether we lose everything or gain everything. For he who in all things is truly bold in God's service will be as ready to do the one as the other. I do not say I am that kind of person, but I wish I were.

Oh, what great freedom we enjoy! It makes us look upon having to live and act according to the laws of the world as captivity! It is a freedom which we obtain from the Lord; and there is not a slave who would not risk everything in order to get his ransom and return to his native country. And as this is the true road, there is no reason for lingering on it, for we shall never gain complete possession of that great treasure until our life is over. May the Lord give us His help to this end. Your Reverence must tear up what I have written if it seems good to you to do so; in that case consider it as a letter addressed to yourself and forgive me for having been so bold.

\textbf{CHAPTER XVII}

Continues the same subject, the exposition of this third degree of prayer. Concludes her exposition of the effects produced by it. Describes the hindrances caused in this state by the imagination and the memory.

A reasonable amount has been said concerning this mode of prayer and of what the soul must now do -- or, more correctly, of what God does within it, for it is He Who now undertakes the work of the gardener and is pleased that the soul should be idle. The will has only to consent to those favours which it is enjoying and to submit to all that true Wisdom may be pleased to accomplish in it. And for this it needs courage, that is certain; for the joy is so great that sometimes the soul seems to be one the point of leaving the body -- and what a happy death that would be!

In this state I think it is well, as Your Reverence has been told, for the soul to abandon itself wholly into the arms of God. If He is pleased to take it to Heaven, let it go; if to hell, it is not distressed, so long as it is going there with its Good. If its life is to come to an end for ever, that is its desire; if it is to live a thousand years, that is its desire also. Let His Majesty treat it as His own: it no longer belongs to itself; it is given wholly to the Lord; it can cease to worry altogether. When God grants the soul prayer as sublime as that which belongs to this state, He can do all this and much more, for that is the effect it produces. The soul realizes that He is doing this without any fatiguing of its understanding; only I think it is, as it were, astonished to see what a good gardener the Lord is making, and to find that He does not desire the soul to undertake any labour, but only to take its delight in the first fragrance of

\textsuperscript{138}P. Báñez wrote in the margin of the autograph here: "Legant praedicatorum."
the flowers. In any one of these visits, brief as its duration may be, the Gardener, being, as He is, the Creator of the water, gives the soul water without limit; and what the poor soul could not acquire, even if it laboured and fatigued its understanding for as much as twenty years, this heavenly Gardener achieves in a moment; the fruit grows and ripens in such a way that, if the Lord wills, the soul can obtain sufficient nourishment from its own garden. But He allows it to share the fruit with others only when it has eaten so much of it that it is strong enough not to consume it all by merely nibbling at it, and not to fail to get profit from it, nor to omit to recompense Him Who has bestowed it, but to maintain others and give them food at its own cost while itself perhaps dying of hunger. This will be understood perfectly by persons of intelligence and they will be able to apply it more effectively than I can describe it, for I am growing tired.

The virtues, then, are now stronger than they were previously, in the Prayer of Quiet, for the soul sees that it is other than it was, and does not realize how it is beginning to do great things with the fragrance that is being given forth by the flowers. It is the Lord's will that these shall open so that the soul may see that it possesses virtues, though it also knows very well that it could not itself acquire them, and has in fact been unable to do so even after many years, whereas in this short space of time they have been given to it by the heavenly Gardener. The humility, too, which remains in the soul is much greater and deeper than it was previously, for it sees more clearly that it has done nothing at all of itself save to consent that the Lord shall grant it favours and to receive them with its will.

This kind of prayer, I think, is quite definitely a union of the entire soul with God, except that His Majesty appears to be willing to give the faculties leave to understand, and have fruition of, the great things that He is now doing. It happens at certain seasons, very often indeed (I say this now so that Your Reverence may know that it can happen and recognize it when it happens to you: I myself was quite distracted by it), that, when the will is in union, the soul realizes that the will is captive and rejoicing, and that it alone is experiencing great quiet, while, on the other hand, the understanding and the memory are so free that they can attend to business and do works of charity. This may seem to be just the same as the Prayer of Quiet of which I spoke, but it is really different -- partly because in that prayer the soul would fain neither stir nor move and is rejoicing in that holy repose which belongs to Mary, while in this prayer it can also be a Martha. Thus the soul is, as it were, occupied in the active and in the contemplative life at one and the same time: it is doing works of charity and also the business pertaining to its mode of life, as well as busying itself with reading. Those in this state, however, are not wholly masters of themselves and they know very well that the better part of the soul is elsewhere. It is as if we were speaking to one person while someone else was speaking to us: we cannot be wholly absorbed in either the one conversation or the other.

This is a thing which can be very clearly apprehended, and which, when experienced, gives great satisfaction and pleasure; it is also a most effective

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139[Tan fuerte... que no se le vaya en gostaduras. A difficult phrase, which used to be interpreted by assuming gastadura, a presumably archaic substantive from gastar (spend, waste, fail to profit from), for gostadura, of which the modern form is gustadura, and which denotes the action of tasting. But I greatly prefer gostadura, and, though the figure could not be pressed to its logical conclusion, the translation I suggest seems wholly in accord with St. Teresa's realistic way of looking at things, whereas the gastadura reading ("strong enough not to fritter it all away", ". . . not to waste it all") is by comparison conventional.]
preparation for attainment to a very restful state of quiet, since it gives the soul a
period of solitude or freedom from its business. It works in this way. A person may
have so far satisfied his appetite that he has no need to eat; he feels quite well fed
and would not look at ordinary food; yet he is not so replete that, if he sees
something nice, he will not be glad to eat some of it. Just so here: the soul in this
state is not satisfied by the pleasures of the world and has no desire for them
because it has within it that which satisfies it more: greater joys in God and desires
to satisfy its desire, to have greater fruition and to be with Him -- that is what the
soul seeks.

There is another kind of union, which, though not complete union, is more nearly so
than the one which I have just described, but not so much so as the one which has
been referred to in speaking of this third water. Your Reverence will be very glad, if
the Lord grants them all to you (assuming that you do not possess them already), to
have a written description of them and thus to be able to understand their nature.
For it is one favour that the Lord should grant this favour; but quite another to
understand what favour and what grace it is; and still another to be able to describe
and explain it. And although only the first of these favours seems necessary for the
soul to be able to proceed without confusion and fear and to walk in the way of the
Lord with the greater courage, trampling underfoot all the things of the world, it is
a great benefit and favour to understand it, and it is right that everyone who can do
so, as well as everyone who cannot, should praise the Lord because His Majesty has
granted it to a few people who are alive so that we may reap advantage from it. Now
frequently this kind of union which I wish to describe comes about as follows (and
this is specially true of myself, for God very often grants me this favour in this way).
God constrains the will, and also, I think, the understanding, as it does not reason
but occupies itself in the fruition of God, like one who, as he looks, sees so much that
he does not know where to look next: as he sees one thing he loses sight of another
so that he can give no description of anything. The memory remains free -- both it
and the imagination must be so -- and when they find themselves alone one would
never believe what a turmoil they make and how they try to upset everything.
Personally, I get fatigued by it and I hate it, and often I beseech the Lord, if He
must upset me so much, to let me be free from it at times like these. "My God," I say
to Him sometimes, "when shall my soul be wholly employed in Thy praise, instead
of being torn to pieces in this way, and quite helpless?" This makes me realize what
harm is done to us by sin, which has bound us in this way so that we cannot do as
we would -- namely, be always occupied in God.

As I say, it happens at times -- to-day has been one of them, so I have it clearly in
mind -- that I find my soul is becoming unwrought, because it wants to be wholly
where the greater part of it is, yet it knows this to be impossible. Memory and
imagination make such turmoil within it that they leave it helpless; and the other
faculties, not being free, are unable to do anything, even harm. They do the soul
extreme harm, of course, by disturbing it; but, when I say "unable to do harm", I
mean that they have no strength and cannot concentrate. The understanding gives
the soul no help whatever by what it presents to the imagination; it rests nowhere,
but goes from one thing to another, like nothing so much as those restless,
importunate little moths that fly by night: just so the understanding flies from one
extreme to another. This comparison, I think, is extremely apt; for though the
understanding has not the strength to do any harm, it importunes those who
observe it. I do not know what remedy there is for this, for so far God has not
revealed one to me. If He had, I would very willingly make use of it, for, as I say, I
am often tormented in this way. Here we have a picture of our own wretchedness
and a very clear one of God's great power; the faculty which remains free causes us all this fatigue and harm, whereas the others, which are with His Majesty, bring us rest.

The remedy which I finally discovered, after having caused myself much fatigue for many years, is the one I spoke of when describing the Prayer of Quiet: the soul must take no more notice of the will than it would of a madman, but leave it to its work, for God alone can set it free. In this state, in short, it is a slave. We must bear patiently with it as Jacob bore with Lia, for the Lord is showing us an exceeding great mercy if He allows us to enjoy Rachel. I say that it is a slave because, after all, however much it may try, it cannot attract to itself the other faculties; on the contrary, they often compel it to come to them and it does so without the smallest effort. Sometimes, seeing it so confused and restless because of its desire to be with the other faculties, God is pleased to have pity on it, and His Majesty allows it to burn in the fire of that Divine candle, which has already deprived the others of their natural form and reduced them to ashes: so great are the blessings they are enjoying that they have become almost supernatural.

In all these types of prayer which I have described in speaking of this last-mentioned kind of water, which comes from a spring, the glory and the repose of the soul are so great that the body shares in the soul's joy and delight, and this to a most marked extent, and the virtues are very highly developed in it, as I have said. It seems that the Lord has been pleased to describe these states in which the soul finds itself, and to do so as clearly, I believe, as in this life is possible. Your Reverence should discuss the matter with some spiritual person, who has himself reached this state and is a man of learning. If he tells you that it is all right, you may take his assurance as coming from God and be grateful for it to His Majesty. For, in due time, as I have said, you will rejoice greatly at having understood the nature of this, until He gives you grace to understand it fully, just as He is giving you grace to enjoy it. As His Majesty has granted you the first grace, you, with all your intellect and learning, will come to understand it as well. May He be praised for all things, for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER XVIII

Treats of the fourth degree of prayer. Begins to describe in an excellent way\textsuperscript{140} the great dignity conferred by the Lord upon the soul in this state. This chapter is meant for the great encouragement of those who practise prayer to the end that they may strive to reach this lofty state, which it is possible to attain on earth, though not through our merits but by the Lord's goodness. Let it be read with attention, for its exposition is most subtle and it contains most noteworthy things.\textsuperscript{141}

May the Lord teach me words in which to say something about the fourth water. His help is very necessary, even more so than it was for describing the last water, for in that state the soul still feels that it is not completely dead -- and we may use this word in speaking of it, since it is dead to the world. As I said, it retains sufficient sense to realize that it is in the world and to be conscious of its loneliness, and it

\textsuperscript{140}These four words were crossed out in the manuscript by the author.

\textsuperscript{141}This sentence was also crossed out by the author.
makes use of exterior things for the expression of its feelings, even if this is only possible by signs. In the whole of the prayer already described, and in each of its stages, the gardener is responsible for part of the labour; although in these later stages the labour is accompanied by such bliss and consolation that the soul's desire would be never to abandon it: the labour is felt to be, not labour at all, but bliss. In this state of prayer to which we have now come, there is no feeling, but only rejoicing, unaccompanied by any understanding of the thing in which the soul is rejoicing. It realizes that it is rejoicing in some good thing, in which are comprised all good things at once, but it cannot comprehend this good thing. In this rejoicing all the senses are occupied, so that none of them is free or able to act in any way, either outwardly or inwardly. Previously, as I have said, they were permitted to give some indication of the great joy that they feel; but in this state the soul's rejoicing is beyond comparison greater, and yet can be much less effectively expressed, because there is no power left in the body, neither has the soul any power, to communicate its rejoicing. At such a time everything would be a great hindrance and torment to it and a disturbance of its rest; so I assert that, if there is union of all the faculties, the soul cannot communicate the fact, even if it so desires (when actually experiencing it, I mean): if it can communicate it, then it is not union.

The way in which this that we call union comes, and the nature of it, I do not know how to explain. It is described in mystical theology, but I am unable to use the proper terms, and I cannot understand what is meant by "mind" or how this differs from "soul" or "spirit". They all seem the same to me, though the soul sometimes issues from itself, like a fire that is burning and has become wholly flame, and sometimes this fire increases with great force. This flame rises very high above the fire, but that does not make it a different thing: it is the same flame which is in the fire. This, with all your learning, Your Reverences will understand: there is nothing more that I can say of it.

What I do seek to explain is the feelings of the soul when it is in this Divine union. It is quite clear what union is -- two different things becoming one. O my Lord, how good Thou art! Blessed be Thou for ever! Let all things praise Thee, my God, Who hast so loved us that we can truly say that Thou hast communication with souls even in this exile: even if they are good, this is great bounty and magnanimity. In a word, my Lord, it is a bounty and a magnanimity which are all Thine own, for Thou givest according to Thine own nature. O infinite Bounty, how magnificent are Thy works! Even one whose understanding is not occupied with things of the earth is amazed at being unable to understand such truths. Dost Thou, then, grant these sovereign favours to souls who have so greatly offended Thee? Truly my own understanding is overwhelmed by this, and when I begin to think about it I can make no progress. What progress, indeed, is there to be made which is not a turning back? As for giving Thee thanks for such great favours, there is no way of doing it, though sometimes I find it a help to utter foolishness.

When I have just received these mercies, or when God is beginning to bestow them on me (for while actually receiving them, as I have said, a person has no power to do anything), I am often wont to exclaim "Lord, consider what Thou art doing; forget not so quickly the gravity of my evil deeds. Though Thou must have forgotten them before Thou couldst forgive me, I beseech Thee to remember them in order that Thou mayest set a limit to Thy favours. O my Creator, pour not such precious liquor into so broken a vessel, for again and again Thou hast seen how I have allowed it to run away. Put not such a treasure in a place where the yearning for the comforts of this life has not yet disappeared as it should, or it will be completely wasted. How canst Thou entrust this fortified city and the keys of its citadel to so cowardly a
defender, who at the enemy's first onslaught allows him to enter? Let not Thy love, eternal King, be so great as to imperil such precious jewels. For it seems, my Lord, that men have an excuse for despising them if Thou bestowest them upon a creature so wretched, so base, so weak, so miserable and so worthless, who, though she may strive not to lose them, by Thy help (of which I have no small need, being what I am), cannot make use of them to bring profit to any. I am, in short, a woman, and not even a good one, but wicked.

"When talents are placed in earth as vile as this they seem to be not only hidden but buried. It is not Thy wont, Lord, to do such great things for a soul and to bestow such favours upon it save that it may profit many others. Thou knowest, my God, that I beseech this of Thee with all my heart and will, and that I have oftentimes besought it of Thee, and that I count it a blessing to lose the greatest blessing which may be possessed upon earth, if Thou wilt bestow thy favours upon one who will derive greater profit from this blessing, to the increase of Thy glory." It has come to pass many times that I have said these things and others like them. And afterwards I have become conscious of my foolishness and want of humility; for the Lord well knows what is fitting for me and that my soul would have no power to attain salvation did not His Majesty bestow it on me with these great favours.

I propose also to speak of the graces and effects which remain in the soul, and of what it can do by itself, if it can do anything, towards reaching a state of such sublimity.

This elevation of the spirit, or union, is wont to come with heavenly love; but, as I understand it, the union itself is a different thing from the elevation which takes place in this same union. Anyone who has not had experience of the latter will think it is not so; but my own view is that, even though they may both be the same, the Lord works differently in them, so that the soul's growth in detachment from creatures is much greater in the flight of the spirit. It has become quite clear to me that this is a special grace, though, as I say, both may be, or may appear to be, the same; a small fire is as much fire as is a large one and yet the difference between the two is evident. In a small fire, a long time elapses before a small piece of iron can become red-hot; but if the fire be a large one, the piece of iron, though it may also be larger, seems to lose all its properties very quickly. So it is, I think, with these two kinds of favours from the Lord. Anyone who has attained to raptures will, I know, understand it well. If he has not experienced it, it will seem ridiculous to him, as well it may be: for a person like myself to speak of such a thing and to make any attempt to explain a matter which cannot even begin to be described in words may very well be ridiculous.

But I believe that the Lord will help me in this, since His Majesty knows that, next to doing what I am bidden, my chief aim is to cause souls to covet so sublime a blessing. I shall say nothing of which I have not myself had abundant experience. The fact is, when I began to write about this fourth water, it seemed to me more impossible to say anything about it than to talk Greek -- and indeed it is a most difficult matter. So I laid it aside and went to Communion. Blessed be the Lord, Who thus helps the ignorant! O virtue of obedience, that canst do all things! God enlightened my understanding, sometimes giving me words and sometimes showing me how I was to use them, for, as in dealing with the last kind of prayer, His Majesty seems to be pleased to say what I have neither the power nor the learning to express. What I am saying is the whole truth; and thus, if I say anything good, the teaching comes from Him, while what is bad, of course, comes from that sea of evil -- myself. And so I say, if there are any persons (and there must be many) who
have attained to the experiences in prayer which the Lord has granted to this miserable woman, and who think that they have strayed from the path and wish to discuss these matters with me, the Lord will help His servant to present His truth.

Speaking now of this rain which comes from Heaven to fill and saturate the whole of this garden with an abundance of water, we can see how much rest the gardener would be able to have if the Lord never ceased to send it whenever it was necessary. And if there were no winter, but eternal warm weather, there would never be a dearth of flowers and fruit and we can imagine how delighted he would be. But during this life, that is impossible, and, when one kind of water fails, we must always be thinking about obtaining another. This rain from Heaven often comes when the gardener is least expecting it. Yet it is true that at first it almost always comes after long mental prayer: as one degree of prayer succeeds another, the Lord takes this little bird and puts it into the nest where it may repose. Having watched it flying for a long time, striving with mind and will and all its strength to seek and please God, it becomes His pleasure, while it is still in this life, to give it its reward. And what a great reward that is! For even a moment of it suffices to recompense the soul for all the trials that it can possibly have endured.

While seeking God in this way, the soul becomes conscious that it is fainting almost completely away, in a kind of swoon with an exceeding great and sweet delight. It gradually ceases to breathe and all its bodily strength begins to fail it: it cannot even move its hands without great pain; its eyes involuntarily close, or, if they remain open, they can hardly see. If a person in this state attempts to read, he is unable to spell out a single letter: it is as much as he can do to recognize one. He sees that letters are there, but, as the understanding gives him no help, he cannot read them even if he so wishes. He can hear, but he cannot understand what he hears. He can apprehend nothing with the senses, which only hinder his soul's joy and thus harm rather than help him. It is futile for him to attempt to speak: his mind cannot manage to form a single word, nor, if it could, would he have the strength to pronounce it. For in this condition all outward strength vanishes, while the strength of the soul increases so that it may the better have fruition of its bliss. The outward joy experienced is great and most clearly recognized.

This prayer, for however long it may last, does no harm; at least, it has never done any to me, nor do I ever remember feeling any ill effects after the Lord has granted me this favour, however unwell I may have been: indeed, I am generally much the better for it. What harm can possibly be done by so great a blessing? The outward effects are so noteworthy that there can be no doubt some great thing has taken place: we experience a loss of strength but the experience is one of such delight that afterwards our strength grows greater.

It is true that at first this happens in such a short space of time -- so, at least, it was with me -- that because of its rapidity it can be detected neither by these outward signs nor by the failure of the senses. But the exceeding abundance of the favours granted to the soul clearly indicates how bright has been the sun that has shone upon it and has thus caused the soul to melt away. And let it be observed that, in my opinion, whatever may be the length of the period during which all the faculties of the soul are in this state of suspension, it is a very short one: if it were to last for half an hour, that would be a long time -- I do not think it has ever lasted so long as that with me. As the soul is not conscious of it, its duration is really very difficult to estimate, so I will merely say that it is never very long before one of the faculties
becomes active again. It is the will that maintains the contact with God but the other two faculties soon begin to importune it once more. The will, however, is calm, so they become suspended once again; but eventually, after another short period of suspension, they come back to life.

With all this happening, the time spent in prayer may last, and does last, for some hours; for, once the two faculties have begun to grow inebriated with the taste of this Divine wine, they are very ready to lose themselves in order to gain the more, and so they keep company with the will and all three rejoice together. But this state in which they are completely lost, and have no power of imagining anything -- for the imagination, I believe, is also completely lost -- is, as I say, of brief duration, although the faculties do not recover to such an extent as not to be for some hours, as it were, in disorder, God, from time to time, gathering them once more to Himself.

Let us now come to the most intimate part of what the soul experiences in this condition. The persons who must speak of it are those who know it, for it cannot be understood, still less described. As I was about to write of this (I had just communicated and had been experiencing this very prayer of which I am writing), I was wondering what it is the soul does during that time, when the Lord said these words to me: "It dies to itself wholly, daughter, in order that it may fix itself more and more upon Me; it is no longer itself that lives, but I. As it cannot comprehend what it understands, it is an understanding which understands not." One who has experienced this will understand something of it; it cannot be more clearly expressed, since all that comes to pass in this state is so obscure. I can only say that the soul feels close to God and that there abides within it such a certainty that it cannot possibly do other than believe. All the faculties now fail and are suspended in such a way that, as I have said, it is impossible to believe they are active. If the soul has been meditating upon any subject, this vanishes from its memory as if it had never thought of it. If it has been reading, it is unable to concentrate upon what it was reading or to remember it; and the same is true if it has been praying. So it is that this importunate little butterfly -- the memory -- is now burning its wings and can no longer fly. The will must be fully occupied in loving, but it cannot understand how it loves; the understanding, if it understands, does not understand how it understands, or at least can comprehend nothing of what it understands. It does not seem to me to be understanding, because, as I say, it does not understand itself. Nor can I myself understand this.

There was one thing of which at first I was ignorant: I did not know that God was in all things, and, when He seemed to me to be so very present, I thought it impossible. I could not cease believing that He was there, for it seemed almost certain that I had been conscious of His very presence. Unlearned persons would tell me that He was there only by grace; but I could not believe that, for, as I say, He seemed to me to be really present; and so I continued to be greatly distressed. From this doubt I

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142[Lit.: "Maintains the web." This curious phrase will be familiar to readers of St. John of the Cross ("Break the web of this sweet encounter": Living Flame of Love, Stanza I): cf. St. John of the Cross, III, 34-40, where the phrase is commented upon by its author. Here I think the reference as not to the web, or thread, of human life, but to that of Communion with God. Changing the metaphor, one might render: "It is the will that is the soul's stanchion." In the text, however, I have used a phrase which better suits the context.]

143[The Spanish is deshacerse: this verb, often used by St. Teresa, is the contrary of hacer, to do, and can generally be rendered "be consumed", "be destroyed", "be annihilated".]

144[Paso: incident, occurrence -- here, no doubt, referring to some scene in the Gospels.]
was freed by a very learned man of the Order of the glorious Saint Dominic\textsuperscript{145}: he told me that He was indeed present and described how He communicated Himself to us, which brought me very great comfort. It is to be noted and understood that this water from Heaven, this greatest of the Lord's favours, leaves the greatest benefits in the soul, as I shall now explain.

\section*{CHAPTER XIX}

Continues the same subject. Begins to describe the effects produced in the soul by this degree of prayer. Exhorts souls earnestly not to turn back, even if after receiving this favour they should fall, and not to give up prayer. Describes the harm that will ensue if they do not follow this counsel. This chapter is to be read very carefully and will be of great comfort to the weak and to sinners.

The soul that has experienced this prayer and this union is left with a very great tenderness, of such a kind that it would gladly become consumed,\textsuperscript{146} not with pain but in tears of joy. It finds itself bathed in these tears without having been conscious of them or knowing when or how it shed them. But it derives great joy from seeing the vehemence of the fire assuaged by water which makes it burn the more. This sounds like nonsense but none the less it is what happens. Sometimes, when I have reached the end of this prayer, I have been so completely beside myself that I have not known whether it has been a dream or whether the bliss that I have been experiencing has really come to me; and I have only known that it has not been a dream through finding myself bathed in tears, which have been flowing without causing me any distress and with such vehemence and rapidity that it has been as if they had fallen from a cloud in Heaven. This would happen to me in the early stages, when the condition soon passed away.

The soul is left so full of courage that it would be greatly comforted if at that moment, for God's sake, it could be hacked to pieces. It is then that it makes heroic resolutions and promises, that its desires become full of vigour, that it begins to abhor the world and that it develops the clearest realization of its own vanity. The benefits that it receives are more numerous and sublime than any which proceed from the previous states of prayer; and its humility is also greater, for it clearly sees how by no efforts of its own it could either gain or keep so exceeding and so great a favour. It also sees clearly how extremely unworthy it is -- for in a room bathed in sunlight not a cobweb can remain hidden. It sees its own wretchedness. So far is vainglory from it that it cannot believe it could ever be guilty of such a thing. For now it sees with its own eyes that of itself it can do little or nothing, and that it hardly even gave its consent to what has happened to it, but that, against its own will, the door seemed to be closed upon all the senses so that it might have the greater fruition of the Lord. It is alone with Him: what is there for it to do but to love Him? It can neither see nor hear save by making a great effort and it can take little credit for that. Then its past life comes up before it and all the truth of God's great mercy is revealed. The understanding has no need to go out hunting for its food is already prepared. The soul realizes that it has deserved to go to hell, yet its

\textsuperscript{145}Probably P. Báñez, though P. Gracián and María de San José say that P. Barrón is meant.

\textsuperscript{146}[Deshacerse. Cf. p. 179, n. 4.]
punishment is to taste glory. It becomes consumed\textsuperscript{147} in praises of God as I would fain become now. Blessed be Thou, my Lord, Who from such filthy slime as I dost draw water so pure as to be meet for Thy table! Praised be Thou, O Joy of the angels, Who art thus pleased to raise up a worm so vile!

The benefits thus achieved remain in the soul for some time; having now a clear realization that the fruits of this prayer are not its own, it can start to share them and yet have no lack of them itself. It begins to show signs of being a soul that is guarding the treasures of Heaven and to be desirous of sharing them with others and to beseech God that it may not be alone in its riches. Almost without knowing it, and doing nothing consciously to that end, it begins to benefit its neighbours, and they become aware of this benefit because the flowers have now so powerful a fragrance as to make them desire to approach them. They realize that the soul has virtues, and, seeing how desirable the fruit is, would fain help it to partake of it. If the ground is well dug over by trials, persecutions, backbitings and infirmities (for few can attain such a state without these), and if it is broken up by detachment from self-interest, the water will sink in so far that it will hardly ever grow dry again. But if it is just earth in the virgin state and as full of thorns as I was at first; if it is not yet free from occasions of sin and not so grateful as it should be after receiving such great favours: then it will once again become dry. If the gardener becomes careless, and the Lord is not pleased, out of His sheer goodness, to send rain upon it afresh, then you can set down the garden as ruined. This happened to me several times and I am really amazed at it: if I had not had personal experience of it, I could not believe it. I write this for the consolation of weak souls like myself, so that they may never despair or cease to trust in God's greatness. Even if, after reaching so high a point as this to which the Lord has brought them, they should fall, they must not be discouraged if they would not be utterly lost. For tears achieve everything: one kind of water attracts another.

This is one of the reasons why, though being what I am, I was encouraged to obey my superiors by writing this and giving an account of my wretched life and of the favours which the Lord has granted me, albeit I have not served Him but offended Him. I only wish I were a person of great authority so that my words might be believed: I beseech the Lord that His Majesty may be pleased to grant me this. I repeat that no one who has begun to practise prayer should be discouraged and say: "If I am going to fall again, it will be better for me not to go on practising prayer." I think it will be if such a person gives up prayer and does not amend his evil life; but, if he does not give it up, he may have confidence that prayer will bring him into the haven of light. This was a matter about which the devil kept plaguing me, and I suffered so much through thinking myself lacking in humility for continuing prayer, when I was so wicked, that, as I have said, for a year and a half I gave it up -- or at any rate for a year: I am not quite sure about the six months. This would have been nothing less than plunging into hell -- nor was it: there was no need for any devils to send me there. Oh, God help me, how terribly blind I was! How well the devil succeeds in his purpose when he pursues us like this! The deceiver knows that if a soul perseveres in practising prayer it will be lost to him, and that, by the goodness of God, all the relapses into which he can lead it will only help it to make greater strides onward in His service. And this is a matter of some concern to the devil.

O my Jesus! What a sight it is to see a soul which has attained as far as this, and has fallen into sin, when Thou of Thy mercy stretchest forth Thy hand to it again

\textsuperscript{147}[Deshacerse.]
and raisest it up! How conscious it becomes of the multitude of Thy wonders and mercies, and of its own wretchedness! Now indeed is it consumed with shame when it acknowledges Thy wonders. Now it dares not raise its eyes. Now it raises them only to acknowledge what it owes Thee. Now it devoutly beseeches the Queen of Heaven to propitiate Thee. Now it invokes the saints, who likewise fell after Thou hadst called them, that they may aid it. Now it feels all Thou givest it to be bounty indeed, for it knows itself to be unworthy even of the ground it treads upon. It has recourse to the Sacraments and a lively faith is implanted in it when it sees what virtues God has placed in them; it praises Thee for having left us such medicine and such ointment for our wounds, which, far from healing them superficially, eradicate them altogether. At this it is amazed -- and who, Lord of my soul, can be other than amazed at mercy so great and favour so immense, at treason so foul and abominable? I cannot think why my heart does not break when I write this, wicked that I am.

With these few tears that I am here shedding, which are Thy gift (water, in so far as it comes from me, drawn from a well so impure), I seem to be making Thee payment for all my acts of treachery -- for the evil that I have so continually wrought and for the attempts that I have made to blot out the favours Thou hast granted me. Do Thou, my Lord, make my tears of some efficacy. Purify this turbid stream, if only that I may not lead others to be tempted to judge me, as I have been tempted to judge others myself. For I used to wonder, Lord, why Thou didst pass by persons who were most holy, who had been piously brought up, who had always served Thee and laboured for Thee and who were truly religious and not, like myself, religious only in name: I could not see why Thou didst not show them the same favours as Thou showestd to me. And then, O my Good, it became clear to me that Thou art keeping their reward to give them all at once -- that my weakness needs the help Thou bestowest on me, whereas they, being strong, can serve Thee without it, and that therefore Thou dost treat them as brave souls and as souls devoid of self-seeking.

But nevertheless Thou knowest, my Lord, that I would often cry out unto Thee, and make excuses for those who spoke ill of me, for I thought they had ample reason for doing so. This, Lord, was after Thou of Thy goodness hadst kept me from so greatly offending Thee and when I was turning aside from everything which I thought could cause Thee displeasure; and as I did this, Lord, Thou didst begin to open Thy treasures for Thy servant. It seemed that Thou wert waiting for nothing else than that I should be willing and ready to receive them, and so, after a short time, Thou didst begin, not only to give them, but to be pleased that others should know Thou wert giving them, to me.

When this became known, people began to have a good opinion of one of whose great wickedness all were not fully aware, though much of it was clearly perceptible. Then suddenly began evil-speaking and persecution, and I think with great justification, so I conceived enmity for none, but besought Thee to consider how far they were justified. They said that I wanted to become a saint, and that I was inventing newfangled practices, though in many respects I had not even achieved the full observance of my Rule, nor had I attained to the goodness and sanctity of nuns in my own house, and indeed I do not believe that I ever shall unless God brings this about of His own goodness. On the contrary, I was well on the way to giving up things that were good and adopting habits that were not so: at least I was adopting them to the best of my ability and I had a great deal of ability for doing wrong. So these people were not to blame when they blamed me. I do not mean only the nuns,
but other people: they revealed things about me that were true because Thou didst permit it.

Once when, after having been tempted in this way for some time, I was reciting the Hours, I came to the verse which says: "Justus es, Domine, and Thy judgments..."¹⁴⁸ I began to think how very true this was; for the devil was never powerful enough to tempt me sufficiently to make me doubt that Thou, my Lord, hast all good things, or any other truth of the Faith; indeed, it seemed to me that the less of a natural foundation these truths had, the more firmly I held them and the greater was the devotion they inspired in me. Since Thou art almighty, I accepted all the wondrous works which Thou hadst done as most certain; and in this respect, as I say, I never harboured a doubt. While I was wondering how in Thy justice Thou couldst ordain that so many of Thy faithful handmaidens, as I have said, should not be given the graces and favours which Thou didst bestow on me, being such as I was, Thou didst answer me, Lord, saying "Serve thou Me, and meddle not with this". This was the first word which I ever heard Thee speak to me and so it made me very much afraid; but, as I shall describe this method of hearing later, together with certain other things, I will say nothing about it here, for that would be to digress from my purpose and I think I have digressed quite sufficiently as it is. I hardly know what I have said. It cannot be otherwise, and Your Reverence must suffer these lapses; for, when I consider what God has borne with from me, and find myself in my present state, it is not surprising if I lose the thread of what I am saying and of what I still have to say. May it please the Lord that any foolishness I talk shall be of this kind and may His Majesty never allow me to have the power to resist Him in the smallest degree; rather than that, let Him consume me, just as I am, at this very moment.

It suffices as an illustration of His great mercies that He should have forgiven such ingratitude as mine, and this not once but many times. He forgave Saint Peter once; but me He has forgiven often. Good reason had the devil for tempting me, telling me not to aspire to a close friendship with One for Whom I was so publicly showing my enmity. How terribly blind I was! Where, my Lord, did I think I could find help save in Thee? What foolishness to flee from the light and to walk on all the time stumbling! What a proud humility did the devil find in me when I ceased to make use of the pillar and the staff whose support I so greatly need lest I should suffer a great fall! As I write I make the sign of the Cross: I do not believe I have ever passed through so grave a peril as when the devil put this idea into my head under the guise of humility. How, he asked me, could one who, after receiving such great favours, was still as wicked as I, approach God in prayer? It was enough for me, he would go on, to recite the prayers enjoined upon me, as all the nuns did, but I did not even do this properly: why, then, should I want to do more? It was showing small respect and indeed contempt for the favours of God. I was right to think about this and to try to realize it, but extremely wrong to put my thoughts into practice. Blessed be Thou, Lord, Who didst thus succour me!

This seems to me to be the principle on which the devil tempted Judas, except that he dared not tempt me so openly: none the less, he would gradually have brought me to the same fate. For the love of God, let all who practise prayer consider this.

¹⁴⁸Psalm cxviii, 137 [A.V., cxx, 137]. The Latin text is: "Justus es, Domine, et rectum judicium tuum." The remainder of the verse no doubt escaped the Saint's memory. [The Latin opening she would remember, because it comes at the beginning of one of the divisions of the psalm. This is an interesting illustration of her indifference to precision in her work. Even a hasty revision would have revealed the omission of the latter part of the verse: it is strange that P. Báñez did not supply it.]
Let them be told that by far the worst life I ever led was when I abandoned prayer. Let them consider with what a fine remedy the devil provided me and with what a pretty humility he inspired me. It caused me a great deal of inward unrest. And how could my soul find any rest? Miserable creature that it was, it went farther and farther away from its rest. I was very conscious of the favours and graces I had received from Thee; for the pleasures of earth I felt a loathing; I am amazed that I was able to endure it all. Only hope enabled me to do so, for, as far as I can remember (and it must have been more than twenty-one years ago), I never swerved from my resolution to return to prayers -- I was only waiting until I should be quite free from sins. Oh how far this hope led me astray!

The devil would have encouraged me in it until the Day of Judgment, so that he might then carry me off to hell. But, though I had recourse to prayer and reading, and these revealed truths to me and showed me along what a disastrous road I was walking, and though I importuned the Lord, often with tears, I was so wicked that all this could avail me nothing. When I abandoned these practices, and gave myself up to pastimes which led me into many occasions of sin and helped me but little -- I will even venture to say that the only thing they helped me to do was to fall -- what could I expect but what I have already mentioned? I think much credit in the sight of God is due to a friar of the Order of Saint Dominic, a very learned man, for it was he who awakened me from this sleep; it was he who, as I think I said, made me communicate once a fortnight, and do less that was wrong. I began to return to my senses, though I did not cease to offend the Lord, but, as I had not lost my way, I continued upon it, first falling and then rising again, and making very little progress; still, he who never ceases walking, and advances all the time, may reach his goal late, but does reach it all the same. To lose one's way seems to be the same thing as giving up prayer. May God, for His name's sake, deliver us from doing so.

From this it is evident (and for the love of the Lord let it be carefully noted) that, even if a soul should attain the point of receiving great favours from God in prayer, it must put no trust in itself, since it is prone to fall, nor must it expose itself to occasions of sin in any way whatsoever. This should be carefully considered, for it is most important: even though a favour may undoubtedly have come from God, the devil will later be able to practise a deception upon us by treacherously making such use as he can of that very favour against persons who are not strong in the virtues, or detached, or mortified; for such persons, as I shall explain later, are not sufficiently strengthened to expose themselves to occasions of sin and other perils, however sincere may be their desires and resolutions. This is excellent doctrine, and it is not mine, but has been taught me by God, and so I should like people as ignorant as I am to know it. Even if a soul should be in this state, it must not trust itself so far as to sally forth to battle: it will have quite enough to do to defend itself. Arms are needed here for defence against devils: the soul is not yet strong enough to fight against them and to trample them under its feet as do those in the state which I shall describe later.

This is the deception by which the devil wins his prey. When a soul finds itself very near to God and sees what a difference there is between the good things of Heaven and those of earth, and what love the Lord is showing it, there is born of this love a confidence and security that there will be no falling away from what it is now enjoying. It seems to have a clear vision of the reward and believes that it cannot now possibly leave something which even in this life is so sweet and delectable for

149P. Barrón.
anything as base and soiled as earthly pleasure. Because it has this confidence, the devil is able to deprive it of the misgivings which it ought to have about itself; and, as I say, it runs into many dangers, and in its zeal begins to give away its fruit without stint, thinking that it has now nothing to fear. This condition is not a concomitant of pride, for the soul clearly understands that of itself it can do nothing; it is the result of its extreme confidence in God, which knows no discretion. The soul does not realize that it is like a bird still unfledged. It is able to come out of the nest, and God is taking it out, but it is not yet ready to fly, for its virtues are not yet strong and it has no experience which will warn it of dangers, nor is it aware of the harm done by self-confidence.

It was this that ruined me; and, both because of this and for other reasons, the soul has great need of a director and of intercourse with spiritual people. I fully believe that, unless a soul brought to this state by God completely abandons Him, His Majesty will not cease to help it nor will He allow it to be lost. But when, as I have said, the soul falls, let it look to it -- for the love of the Lord, let it look to it -- lest the devil trick it into abandoning prayer, in the way he tricked me, by inspiring it with a false humility, as I have said, and as I should like to repeat often. Let it trust in the goodness of God, which is greater than all the evil we can do. When, with full knowledge of ourselves, we desire to return to friendship with Him, He remembers neither our ingratitude nor our misuse of the favours that He has granted us. He might well chastise us for these sins, but in fact He makes use of them only to forgive us the more readily, just as He would forgive those who have been members of His household, and who, as they say, have eaten of His bread. Let them remember His words and consider what He has done to me, who wearied of offending His Majesty before He ceased forgiving me. Never does He weary of giving and never can His mercies be exhausted: let us, then, not grow weary of receiving. May He be blessed for ever, Amen, and may all things praise Him.

CHAPTER XX

Treats of the difference between union and rapture. Describes the nature of rapture and says something of the blessing that comes to the soul which the Lord, of His goodness, brings to it. Describes the effects which it produces. This chapter is particularly admirable.

I should like, with the help of God, to be able to describe the difference between union and rapture, or elevation, or what they call flight of the spirit, or transport -- it is all one. I mean that these different names all refer to the same thing, which is also called ecstasy. It is much more beneficial than union: the effects it produces are far more important and it has a great many more operations, for union gives the impression of being just the same at the beginning, in the middle and at the end, and it all happens interiorly. But the ends of these raptures are of a higher degree, and the effects they produce are both interior and exterior. May the Lord explain this, as He has explained everything else, for I should certainly know nothing of it if His Majesty had not shown me the ways and manners in which it can to some extent be described.

Let us now reflect that this last water which we have described is so abundant that, were it not that the ground is incapable of receiving it, we might believe this cloud of great Majesty to be with us here on this earth. But as we are giving Him thanks
for this great blessing, and doing our utmost to draw near to Him in a practical way, the Lord gathers up the soul, just (we might say) as the clouds gather up the vapours from the earth, and raises it up till it is right out of itself (I have heard that it is in this way that the clouds or the sun gather up the vapours) and the cloud rises to Heaven and takes the soul with it, and begins to reveal to it things concerning the Kingdom that He has prepared for it. I do not know if the comparison is an exact one, but that is the way it actually happens.

In these raptures the soul seems no longer to animate the body, and thus the natural heat of the body is felt to be very sensibly diminished: it gradually becomes colder, though conscious of the greatest sweetness and delight. No means of resistance is possible, whereas in union, where we are on our own ground, such a means exists: resistance may be painful and violent but it can almost always be effected. But with rapture, as a rule, there is no such possibility: often it comes like a strong, swift impulse, before your thought can forewarn you of it or you can do anything to help yourself; you see and feel this cloud, or this powerful eagle, rising and bearing you up with it on its wings.

You realize, I repeat, and indeed see, that you are being carried away, you know not whither. For, though rapture brings us delight, the weakness of our nature at first makes us afraid of it, and we need to be resolute and courageous in soul, much more so than for what has been described. For, happen what may, we must risk everything, and resign ourselves into the hands of God and go willingly wherever we are carried away, for we are in fact being carried away, whether we like it or no. In such straits do I find myself at such a time that very often I should be glad to resist, and I exert all my strength to do so, in particular at times when it happens in public and at many other times in private, when I am afraid that I may be suffering deception. Occasionally I have been able to make some resistance, but at the cost of great exhaustion, for I would feel as weary afterwards as though I had been fighting with a powerful giant. At other times, resistance has been impossible: my soul has been borne away, and indeed as a rule my head also, without my being able to prevent it: sometimes my whole body has been affected, to the point of being raised up from the ground.

This has happened only rarely; but once, when we were together in choir, and I was on my knees and about to communicate, it caused me the greatest distress. It seemed to me a most extraordinary thing and I thought there would be a great deal of talk about it; so I ordered the nuns (for it happened after I was appointed Prioress) not to speak of it. On other occasions, when I have felt that the Lord was going to enrapture me (once it happened during a sermon, on our patronal festival, when some great ladies were present), I have lain on the ground and the sisters have come and held me down, but none the less the rapture has been observed. I besought the Lord earnestly not to grant me any more favours which had visible and exterior signs; for I was exhausted by having to endure such worries and after all (I said) His Majesty could grant me that favour without its becoming known. He seems to have been pleased of His goodness to hear me, for since making that prayer I have never again received any such favours: it is true, however, that this happened not long since.

150The bracketed sentence is found in the margin of the autograph in St. Teresa's hand.
151[P. Silverio says that this happened at St. Joseph's, Ávila, "about the year 1565". But, as this book was only completed in 1565, and the incident is referred to in a phrase which suggests some lapse of
When I tried to resist these raptures, it seemed that I was being lifted up by a force beneath my feet so powerful that I know nothing to which I can compare it, for it came with a much greater vehemence than any other spiritual experience and I felt as if I were being ground to powder. It is a terrible struggle, and to continue it against the Lord's will avails very little, for no power can do anything against His. At other times His Majesty is graciously satisfied with our seeing that He desires to show us this favour, and that, if we do not receive it, it is not due to Himself. Then, if we resist it out of humility, the same effects follow as if we had given it our entire consent.

These effects are very striking. One of them is the manifestation of the Lord's mighty power: as we are unable to resist His Majesty's will, either in soul or in body, and are not our own masters, we realize that, however irksome this truth may be, there is One stronger than ourselves, and that these favours are bestowed by Him, and that we, of ourselves, can do absolutely nothing. This imprints in us great humility. Indeed, I confess that in me it produced great fear -- at first a terrible fear. One sees one's body being lifted up from the ground; and although the spirit draws it after itself, and if no resistance is offered does so very gently, one does not lose consciousness -- at least, I myself have had sufficient to enable me to realize that I was being lifted up. The majesty of Him Who can do this is manifested in such a way that the hair stands on end, and there is produced a great fear of offending so great a God, but a fear overpowered by the deepest love, newly enkindled, for One Who, as we see, has so deep a love for so loathsome a worm that He seems not to be satisfied by literally drawing the soul to Himself, but will also have the body, mortal though it is, and befouled as is its clay by all the offenses it has committed.

This favour also leaves a strange detachment, the nature of which I cannot possibly describe, but I think I can say it is somewhat different -- from that produced by these purely spiritual favours, I mean; for, although these produce a complete detachment of spirit, in this favour the Lord is pleased that it should be shared by the very body and it will thus experience a new estrangement from things of earth, which makes life much more distressing. Afterwards it produces a distress which we cannot ourselves bring about or remove once it has come. I should like very much to explain this great distress, but I am afraid I cannot possibly do so; still, I will say something about it if I can.

It is to be observed that these are my most recent experiences, more recent than all the visions and revelations of which I shall write and than the period during which I practised prayer and the Lord granted me such great consolations and favours. Though these have not ceased, it is this distress which I shall now describe that I more frequently and habitually experience at present. Sometimes it is more severe and sometimes less so. It is of its maximum severity that I will now speak; for although I shall later describe those violent impulses which I used to experience when the Lord was pleased to grant me raptures, these, in my view, have no more connection with this distress than has an entirely physical experience with an entirely spiritual one, and in saying that I do not think I am greatly exaggerating. For, although the distress I refer to is felt by the soul, it is also felt by the body. Both seem to share in it, and it does not cause the same extreme sense of abandonment as does this. In producing the latter, as I have said, we can take no
part, though very often a desire unexpectedly arises, in a way which I cannot explain. And this desire, which in a single moment penetrates to the very depths of the soul, begins to weary it so much that the soul soars upwards, far above itself and above all created things, and God causes it to be so completely bereft of everything that, however hard it may strive to do so, it can find nothing on earth to bear it company. Nor does it desire company; it would rather die in its solitude. Others may speak to it, and it may itself make every possible effort to speak, but all to no avail; do what it may, its spirit cannot escape from that solitude. God seems very far from the soul then, yet sometimes He reveals His greatness in the strangest way imaginable; this cannot be described -- nor, I think, believed or understood -- save by those who have experienced it. For it is a communication intended, not to comfort the soul but to show it the reason why it is wearied -- namely, that it is so far away from the Good which contains all that is good within Itself.

In this communication the desire grows, and with it the extremity of loneliness experienced by the soul with a distress so subtle and yet so piercing that, set as it is in that desert, it can, I think, say literally, as the Royal Prophet said, when he was in the same state of loneliness (except that, being a saint, he may have been granted that experience by the Lord in a higher degree): Vigilavi, et factus sum sicut passer solitarius in tecto.153 That verse comes to my mind at these times in such a way that I feel it is fulfilled in myself; and it is a comfort to me to know that others, especially such a prophet as this, have experienced that great extremity of loneliness. The soul, then, seems to be, not in itself at all, but on the house top, or the roof, of its own house, and raised above all created things; I think it is far above even its own very highest part.

On other occasions the soul seems to be going about in a state of the greatest need, and asking itself: "Where is thy God?"154 I should point out here that I did not know the meaning of this verse in the vernacular, and that later, when I had learned it, it was a comfort to me to think that the Lord had brought it to my mind without any effort of my own. At other times I used to remember some words of Saint Paul, about his being crucified to the world.155 I do not say that this is true of me -- indeed, I know it is not -- but I think it is true of the soul when no comfort comes to it from Heaven, and it is not in Heaven, and when it desires no earthly comfort, and is not on earth either, but is, as it were, crucified between Heaven and earth; and it suffers greatly, for no help comes to it either from the one hand or from the other. For the help which comes to it from Heaven is, as I have said, a knowledge of God so wonderful, and so far above all that we can desire, that it brings with it greater torment; for its desire grows in such a way that I believe its great distress sometimes robs it of consciousness, though such a state as that lasts only for a short time. It seems as though it were on the threshold of death, save that this suffering brings with it such great happiness that I know of nothing with which it may be compared. It is a martyrdom, severe but also delectable; for the soul will accept nothing earthly that may be offered it, even though it were the thing which it had been accustomed to enjoy most: it seems to fling it away immediately. It realizes clearly that it wants nothing save its God; but its love is not centred upon any

153Psalm ci, 8. [A.V., cii, 7]: "I have watched, and am become as a sparrow all alone on the housetop." [St. Teresa's spelling of Latin is largely phonetic and always quaint. It will suffice to reproduce this one example of it: Vigilavi ed fatus sun sicut passer solitarius yn tecto. The orthography given in the text is here, and will normally be elsewhere, that of the Vulgate.]

154Psalm xli, 4 [A.V., xlii, 3].

155Galatians vi, 14: "... by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world."
particular attribute of Him: its desire is for the whole of God and it has no
knowledge of what it desires. By "no knowledge", I mean that no picture is formed
in the imagination; and, in my opinion, for a great part of the time during which it
is in that state, the faculties are inactive: they are suspended by their distress, just
as in union and rapture they are suspended by joy.

O Jesus! I wish I could give Your Reverence a clear explanation of this, if only so
that you might tell me what it is, for this is the state in which my soul now
continually finds itself. As a rule, when not occupied, it is plunged into these death-
like yearnings, and, when I am conscious that they are beginning, I become afraid,
because they do not mean death. But when I am actually in that condition, I should
like to spend the rest of my life suffering in that way, although the pain is so
excessive that one can hardly bear it, and occasionally, according to those of my
sisters who sometimes see me like this, and so now understand it better, my pulses
almost cease to beat, my bones are all disjointed, and my hands are so stiff that
sometimes I cannot clasp them together. Until the next day I have pains in the
wrists, and in the entire body, as though my bones had been wrenched asunder.

Occasionally I really think that, if things are to go on like this, it must be the Lord's
will to end them by putting an end to my life; for the distress I am in is severe
enough to kill me, only I do not deserve that it should do so. All my yearning at such
a time is to die; I do not think of purgatory, or of the great sins I have committed,
for which I have deserved to go to hell. Such is my yearning to see God that I forget
everything and the deserted and solitary state I am in seems better than all the
world's companionship. If anything could comfort a person in this condition, it
would be to speak with another who has passed through the same torment, for she
finds that, despite her complaints of it, no one seems to believe her.

The soul in this state is also tormented because its distress has so greatly increased
that it no longer desires solitude, as it did before, and the only companionship it
seeks is with one to whom it can voice its complaint. It is like a person who has a
rope around his neck, is being strangled and is trying to breathe. It seems to me,
then, that this desire for companionship proceeds from human weakness; for, since
this distress imperils our life, which it most certainly does (as I have said, I have
several times found my own life imperilled by serious dangers and illnesses, and I
think I might say that this particular peril is as grave as any), the desire that body
and soul shall not be parted is like a voice crying out for help to breathe; and by
speaking of it and complaining and distracting itself, the soul seeks a way to live
quite contrarily to the will of the spirit, or of its own higher part, which would prefer
not to escape from this distress.

I do not know if I am correct in what I say, or if I am expressing it properly, but to
the best of my belief that is what happens. I ask Your Reverence, what rest can I
have in this life, since the rest which I used to enjoy, and which consisted in prayer
and solitude, wherein the Lord would comfort me, is habitually turned into this
torment; and yet it is so delectable, and the soul is so conscious of its worth, that it
desires it more than all the favours which it had been accustomed to enjoy. It
believes it, too, to be a safer state, because it is the way of the Cross; and in my view
it comprises a delight of exceeding worth, because the body gets nothing from it but
distress, whereas the soul, even while suffering, rejoices alone in the joy and
happiness which this suffering brings. I do not know how this can be, but so it is;
and I believe I would not change this favour which the Lord is bestowing upon me
(for it is certainly entirely supernatural and comes from His hand, and, as I have
said, is in no way acquired by me) for any of the favours which I shall describe later:
I do not say for all of them at once, but for any one of them taken by itself. And it
must not be forgotten that this state, in which the Lord is now keeping me, has
followed all the others described in this book: I mean that these violent impulses
have followed the favours described here as having been bestowed upon me by the
Lord.

At first I was afraid, as I almost always am when the Lord bestows a favour upon
me, though His Majesty reassures me as I go on. He told me not to fear but to set
greater store by this favour than by any other which He had granted me; for by this
distress the soul was purified, worked upon and refined like gold in the crucible, so
that He might the better set in it the enamel of His gifts: it was being cleansed now
of the impurities of which it would need to be cleansed in purgatory. I had already
quite clearly realized that it was a great favour, but this made me much more
certain of the fact, and my confessor tells me that all is well. And although I was
afraid, because I was so wicked, I could never believe that it was wrong; it was
rather the sublimity of the blessing that made me afraid, when I remembered how
ill I had deserved it. Blessed be the Lord, Who is so good! Amen.

I seem to have wandered from my subject, for I began by speaking of raptures, but
what I have been describing is something even greater than a rapture and thus it
leaves behind it the effects I have referred to.

Let us now return to raptures, and to their most usual characteristics. I can testify
that after a rapture my body often seemed as light as if all weight had left it:
sometimes this was so noticeable that I could hardly tell when my feet were
touching the ground. For, while the rapture lasts, the body often remains as if dead
and unable of itself to do anything: it continues all the time as it was when the
rapture came upon it -- in a sitting position, for example, or with the hands open or
shut. The subject rarely loses consciousness: I have sometimes lost it altogether, but
only seldom and for but a short time. As a rule the consciousness is disturbed; and,
though incapable of action with respect to outward things, the subject can still hear
and understand, but only dimly, as though from a long way off. I do not say that he
can hear and understand when the rapture is at its highest point -- by "highest
point" I mean when the faculties are lost through being closely united with God. At
that point, in my opinion, he will neither see, nor hear, nor perceive; but, as I said in
describing the preceding prayer of union, this complete transformation of the soul in
God lasts but a short time, and it is only while it lasts that none of the soul's
faculties is able to perceive or know what is taking place. We cannot be meant to
understand it while we are on earth -- God, in fact, does not wish us to understand
it because we have not the capacity for doing so. I have observed this myself.

Your Reverence will ask me how it is that the rapture sometimes lasts for so many
hours. What often happens to me is that, as I said of the preceding state of prayer, it
makes itself felt intermittently. The soul is often engulfed -- or, to put it better, the
Lord engulfs it in Himself -- and, when He has kept it in this state for a short time,
He retains the will alone. The movements of the other two faculties seem to me like
the movement of the pointer on a sundial, which is never motionless; though if it
pleases the Sun of Justice\textsuperscript{156} to do so, He can make it stand still. What I am
describing lasts only a short time; but, as the impulse and the uplifting of the spirit
have been violent, the will is still engulfed even when the other two faculties begin
to move again and produces that operation in the body as though it were its
absolute mistress. For, although the two restless faculties try to disturb it, the will,

\textsuperscript{156}[Malachias iv, 2. A.V.: “Sun of Righteousness.”]
thinking that the fewer enemies it has, the better, prevents the senses from doing so, and thus causes their suspension, which is the Lord's will. For the most part the eyes are closed, though we may not wish to close them; if, as I have already said, they are occasionally open, the subject neither perceives nor pays attention to what he sees.

There is very little, then, that a person in this condition can do, and this means that there will be little for him to do when the faculties come together again. Anyone, therefore, to whom the Lord grants this favour must not be discouraged at finding himself in this state, with the body unable to move for hours on end and the understanding and the memory sometimes wandering. True, they are generally absorbed in the praises of God or in an attempt to comprehend and realize what has happened to them. But even so they are not wide awake: they are like a person who has been asleep for a long time and has been dreaming and has not yet fully awakened.

The reason I am expounding this at such great length is that I know that there are persons now, in this very place, to whom the Lord is granting these favours; and if those who are directing such persons have not themselves experienced them -- especially if they have no learning -- they may think that, when enraptured, they ought to be as if dead. It is a shame that such suffering should be caused by confessors who do not understand this, as I shall say later. Perhaps I do not know what I am saying; but, if my words are at all to the point, Your Reverence will understand it, for the Lord has already given you experience of it, though, as this happened only recently, you may not have considered the matter as fully as I. The position, then, is that, however hard I try, my body, for considerable periods, has not the strength to make it capable of movement: all its strength has been taken away by the soul. Often a person who was previously quite ill and troubled with severe pain finds himself in good health again, and even stronger than before, for what the soul receives in rapture is a great gift, and sometimes, as I say, the Lord is pleased that the body should have a share in it because of its obedience to the will of the soul. After the recovery of consciousness, if the rapture has been deep, the faculties may remain absorbed for a day or two, or even for as long as three days, and be as if in a state of stupor, so that they seem to be no longer themselves.

And now comes the distress of having to return to this life. Now the soul has grown new wings and has learned to fly. Now the little bird has lost its unformed feathers. Now in Christ's name the standard is raised on high; it would seem that what has happened is nothing less than that the captain of the fortress has mounted, or has been led up, to the highest of its towers, and has reared the standard aloft there in the name of God. From his position of security he looks down on those below. No longer does he fear perils; rather he desires them, for through them, as it were, he receives the assurance of victory. This becomes very evident in the little weight now given by the soul to earthly matters, which it treats as the worthless things that they are. He who is raised on high attains many things. The soul has no desire to seek or possess any free will, even if it so wished, and it is for this that it prays to the Lord, giving Him the keys of its will. Behold, our gardener has become the captain of a fortress! He wants nothing save the will of the Lord; he wants to be

\[Quien está de lo alto \ldots\]

I give the most obvious translation of this rather unusual phrase (lit.: "he who is from the height"), but I suspect the omission of mirando: "He who is looking (down) from on high \ldots" the reference being to the soul's attitude to the world.

\[P. Báñez altered this phrase to: "It has no desire to seek or possess any will save that of Our Lord," and the change was followed in the editio princeps.\]
neither his own master nor anybody else's; he wants not so much as an apple from this orchard. If there is anything of value in it, let His Majesty distribute it; henceforth, for himself, he wants nothing, and desires only that everything should be done to God's glory and in conformity with His will.

It is in this way, then, that these things actually happen, if the raptures are genuine, in which case there will remain in the soul the effects and advantages aforementioned. If they do not, I should doubt very much if they are from God; indeed, I should fear that they might be the frenzies described by Saint Vincent.\textsuperscript{159} I know, for I have observed it in my own experience, that the soul, while enraptured, is mistress of everything, and in a single hour, or in less, acquires such freedom that it cannot recognize itself. It sees clearly that this state is in no way due to itself, nor does it know who has given it so great a blessing, but it distinctly recognizes the very great benefit which each of these raptures brings it. Nobody will believe this without having had experience of it; and so nobody believes the poor soul, knowing it to have been so wicked and seeing it now aspiring to such heroic acts; for it is no longer content with serving the Lord a little but must do so to the greatest extent in its power. They think this is a temptation and a ridiculous thing. If they knew that it arises, not from the soul, but from the Lord, to Whom the soul has given the keys of its will, they would not be so astounded.

I believe myself that a soul which attains to this state neither speaks nor does anything of itself, but that this sovereign King takes care of all that it has to do. Oh, my God, how clear is the meaning of that verse about asking for the wings of a dove\textsuperscript{160} and how right the author was -- and how right we shall all be! -- to ask for them! It is evident that he is referring to the flight taken by the spirit when it soars high above all created things, and above itself first of all; but it is a gentle and a joyful flight and also a silent one.

What power is that of a soul brought hither by the Lord, which can look upon everything without being ensnared by it! How ashamed it is of the time when it was attached to everything! How amazed it is at its blindness! How it pities those who are still blind, above all if they are persons of prayer to whom God is still granting favours! It would like to cry aloud to them and show them how mistaken they are, and sometimes it does in fact do so and brings down a thousand persecutions upon its head. Men think it lacking in humility and suppose that it is trying to teach those from whom it should learn, especially if the person in question is a woman. For this they condemn it, and rightly so, since they know nothing of the force by which it is impelled. Sometimes it cannot help itself nor endure failing to undeceive those whom it loves and desires to see set free from the prison of this life; for it is in a prison, nothing less -- and it realizes that it is nothing less -- that the soul has itself been living.

It is weary of the time when it paid heed to niceties concerning its own honour, and of the mistaken belief which it had that what the world calls honour is really so. It now knows that to be a sheer lie and a lie in which we are all living. It realizes that genuine honour is not deceptive, but true; that it values what has worth and

\textsuperscript{159}St. Vincent Ferrer: De Via spirituali, Chap. XIV: "Si dicerent tibi aliquod quod sit contra fidem, et contra Scripturam sacram, aut contra bonos mores, abhorreas eorum visionem et judicia, tanquam stultas dementias, et earum raptus, sicut rabiamenta." St. Teresa could have read this book in a Spanish version published at Toledo in 1510, and reprinted five years later, in a volume containing also the life of Blessed Angela de Foligno and the Rule of St. Clare.

\textsuperscript{160}Psalm liv, 7 [A.V., lv, 6].
despises what has none; for what passes away, and is not pleasing to God, is worth nothing and less than nothing. It laughs at itself and at the time when it set any store by money and coveted it; though I do not believe I ever had to confess to being covetous of money -- it was quite bad enough that I should have set any store by it at all. If the blessing of which I now see myself in possession could be purchased with money I should set tremendous store by it, but it is clear that this blessing is gained by abandoning everything.

What is there that can be bought with this money which people desire? Is there anything valuable? Is there anything lasting? If not, why do we desire it? It is but a miserable ease with which it provides us and one that costs us very dear. Very often it provides hell for us; it buys us eternal fire and endless affliction. Oh, if all would agree to consider it as useless dross, how well the world would get on, and how little trafficking there would be! How friendly we should all be with one another if nobody were interested in money and honour! I really believe this would be a remedy for everything.

The soul sees what blindness there is in the world where pleasures are concerned and how even in this life they purchase only trials and unrest. What disquiet! What discontent! What useless labour! Not only does the soul perceive the cobwebs which disfigure it and its own great faults, but so bright is the sunlight that it sees every little speck of dust, however small; and so, however hard a soul may have laboured to perfect itself, once this Sun really strikes it, it sees that it is wholly unclean. Just so the water in a vessel seems quite clear when the sun is not shining upon it; but the sun shows it to be full of specks. This comparison is literally exact. Before the soul had experienced that state of ecstasy, it thought it was being careful not to offend God and doing all that it could so far as its strength permitted. But once it reaches this stage, the Sun of Justice strikes it and forces it to open its eyes, whereupon it sees so many of these specks that it would fain close them again. For it is not yet so completely the child of that mighty eagle that it can look this Sun full in the face; nevertheless, during the short time that it can keep them open, it sees that it is wholly unclean. It remembers the verse which says: "Who shall be just in Thy presence?"

When it looks upon this Divine Sun, the brightness dazzles it; when it looks at itself, its eyes are blinded by clay. The little dove is blind. And very often it remains completely blind, absorbed, amazed, and dazzled by all the wonders it sees. From this it acquires true humility, which will never allow it to say anything good of itself nor will permit others to do so. It is the Lord of the garden, and not the soul, that distributes the fruit of the garden, and so nothing remains in its hands, but all the good that is in it is directed towards God; if it says anything about itself, it is for His glory. It knows that it possesses nothing here; and, even if it so

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161[Cf. St. John of the Cross, I, 25: "All the creatures are nothing; and their affections, we may say, are less than nothing. . . . The soul that sets its affections upon the being of creation is likewise nothing in the eyes of God, and less than nothing." (Ascent of Mount Carmel, I, iv.)]

162[P. Silverio supposes this to refer to Psalm cxlii, 2 (A.V., cxliii, 2): "In thy sight no man living shall be justified." But the interrogative form suggests rather Job xxv, 4 ("Can man be justified compared with God?") or of Job iv, 17 ("Shall man be justified in comparison of God?").]

163[Barro: mud, clay. Often used in Spanish as a symbol of the earthly and material.]

164[Cf. St. John of the Cross, I, 62, sect. 9]

165[This second "it" must refer to the soul (alma), which is feminine in Spanish. P. Silverio, however, has the masculine pronoun el; I follow earlier texts, which amend this to ella.]
Spiritual Testimonies
Introduction
Teresa’s spiritual testimonies are a collection of her writings made at the request of spiritual authorities in her life. The content deals with the written reports left by Teresa about her spiritual experiences and central teachings. The first testimony was composed by Teresa for her confessors a year before she completed her autobiography. Scholars of Theresa have compared the testimonies to X-rays of Teresa’s soul and thus a helpful complement to her autobiography.

J. Dawson Jarrell

First Spiritual Testimony (Avila, 1560)

Her spiritual state and manner of prayer

1. My present procedure in prayer is as follows: I am seldom able while in prayer to use my intellect in a discursive way, for my soul immediately begins to grow recollected; and it remains in quiet or rapture to the extent that I cannot make any use of the senses. This recollection reaches such a point that if it were not for hearing -- and this hearing does not include understanding -- none of the senses would be of any avail.

2. It often happens to me that this recollection and elevation of the spirit comes upon me so suddenly I cannot resist; and in a moment I receive the effects and benefits that it carries in its wake. This recollection occurs without my desiring to reflect on the things of God and while I am dealing with other things and thinking that even if I tried to practice prayer I wouldn't be able to because of great dryness, intensified by bodily pains. It happens without my having a vision, or understanding anything, or knowing where I am. But while it seems to me that my soul is getting lost, I see what it gains, so that should I have desired to obtain these blessings myself in the course of a year I don't think it would have been possible to have acquired them.

3. At other times I receive a very intense, consuming impulse for God that I cannot resist. It seems my life is coming to an end, and so this impulse makes me cry out and call to God; and it comes with great frenzy. Sometimes I'm unable to remain seated because of the vomitings from which I suffer; and this pain comes upon me without my seeking it. It is of such a kind that the soul would never want to be relieved of it as long as it lives. I have longings not to live this apparent life any more. I cannot find any remedy for these longings, since the cure for the desire to see God is death; and I cannot take this cure. Along with this, it seems to my soul that everyone has the greatest consolation except itself and that all find a cure for their trials except itself. This causes such affliction that if the Lord didn't provide a remedy by means of a certain rapture, in which everything is made peaceful and the soul remains in deep quiet and satisfaction -- now beholding something of what it desires, now understanding other things it would be impossible to get free from that pain.

4. At other times, some desires to serve God come upon me with impulses so strong I don't know how to exaggerate them, and there is also pain in seeing of what little use I am. It seems to me, then, that no trial, neither death, nor martyrdom, nor anything could be offered to me that I wouldn't easily undergo. This, too, occurs without reflection; but in an instant it changes me completely, and I don't know where I get so much strength. It seems to me I would want to cry out and make everyone understand what is gained by not being satisfied with a few things and how much good there is that God will give us if we dispose ourselves for it. I say these desires are of a kind that consume me, for I want what I am unable to procure. It seems to me this body and this state bind me, for they are no
good at all for serving God. If I wasn't so bound, I would do very noble deeds insofar as my strength would allow. But I feel such pain in seeing I have no power to serve Him that I cannot exaggerate it. I end up with delight and recollection and consolations from God.

5. At other times, when these anxious longings to serve Him come upon me, I feel I want to do penance; but I am unable. Penance would bring me great relief, and it does bring me relief and joy, although the penances amount to almost nothing on account of the weakness of my body; yet were these desires to remain, I think I would do too much.

6. Sometimes it gives me great pain to have to have dealings with others; it afflicts me so much that it causes me to weep profusely, because all my longing is to be alone. And even though sometimes I do not pray or read, solitude consoles me. Conversation, especially with relatives, seems to me burdensome. I feel as though I am among strangers, except when I am with those to whom I speak about prayer and the soul, for with these persons I am happy and consoled, although sometimes I have enough of them and do not want to see them but want to go where I can be alone; but this latter happens seldom, especially in the case of those to whom I manifest my conscience, for they are always a consolation to me.

7. At other times it gives me great pain to have to eat and sleep and to see that I more than anyone cannot give up these actions. I perform them to serve God, and so I offer them to Him. It seems to me that all time is short and that I don't have enough for prayer, for I never tire of being alone. I always want to have time to read because I have been very fond of reading. I read very little, for in picking up a book I become recollected in my contentment, and so the time for reading passes in prayer. This time amounts to little, for I have many duties; and though they are good, they do not provide me with the satisfaction reading does. So I go about always wanting time, and the awareness that what I want and desire is not granted is that which, I think, makes everything insipid to me.

8. All these desires and those, too, for virtue were given me by our Lord after He gave me this quiet prayer with these raptures; and I found I was so improved that it seems to me I was previously a total loss. These raptures and visions leave in me the benefits I shall here describe. And I say that if I have anything good, it has come from these.

9. There has come upon me a very strong determination not to offend God, not even venially; for I would die a thousand deaths rather than offend Him knowingly. There is the determination not to omit anything I think is more perfect or will render greater service to our Lord when the one who has care for me and directs me says this is so; and even though I may perform such action reluctantly, I wouldn't for any treasure fail to do it. And if I should do the contrary, I don't think I would dare ask our Lord God for anything, or practice prayer, although in all these matters I commit many faults and imperfections.

I obey my confessor, although imperfectly. Yet, once I have understood that he wants something or has given me a command, insofar as I know I wouldn't fail to carry it out; and were I to fail, I would think I was being very much mistaken. I desire poverty, although imperfectly. Yet, I think that even were I to possess many treasures, I wouldn't keep any special income or any money for myself alone, nor would this matter to me. I would only want to have what's necessary. Still, I feel I'm very much lacking in this virtue. For although I don't desire any money for myself, I should like to have it so as to give it away, though I don't desire any income or anything for myself.
10. From almost all the visions I’ve experienced, I’ve received some benefit, except in those cases where there is deception from the devil. In this I submit to my confessors.

11. When I see something beautiful or rich, like water, fields, flowers, fragrances, music, and so on, it seems to me that I wouldn’t want to see or hear these things, so great is the difference between them and what I am accustomed to seeing; thus all desire for such things is taken from me. And as a result I have come to care so little for them that, save for the first stirrings, they make no impression on me and seem like dung.

12. If I speak or have dealings with some secular persons because matters can’t be otherwise, and even though the subject may concern prayer, I find that if the conversation is prolonged, just a diversion and unnecessary, I am forcing myself to continue, because such conversation is a severe hardship for me. Amusements that I used to like and things of the world, all annoy me; and I cannot look at them.

13. These desires for loving and serving God and seeing Him, which I mentioned that I have, are not fostered by reflections as they were previously when it seemed to me I was very devout and when I shed many tears. But they come with so excessive an enkindling and fervor that I repeat that if God did not cure me by means of some rapture, in which it seems to me my soul is satisfied, I think my life would soon come to an end.

14. I greatly love those who I see are more advanced and who are determined, detached, and courageous; and they are the ones with whom I would want to converse; it seems they help me. Persons who I see are timid, who I think proceed with great circumspection so that things can be done here below in conformity with reason are oppressive to me and make me cry to God and to His saints, who undertook those things that now frighten us. I feel this, not because I think I am worth anything but because I think God helps those who set out to do much for Him and that He never fails anyone who trusts in Him alone. I should like to find someone who would help me believe this, and not have to worry about what I must eat and wear, but be able to abandon that to God. It shouldn’t be thought that this abandonment to God in necessities means I don't try to procure them, but I mean I don't do so with a concern that makes me worry. Since He has given me this freedom, such abandonment does me good, and I strive to forget myself as much as I can. It doesn't seem a year has yet passed since our Lord has given me this freedom.

15. Insofar as I know, glory to God, there is no reason for me to experience vainglory. For I observe clearly in these things God grants that I don't do anything myself; rather, God gives me a feeling of my miseries. No matter how much thinking I might do, I would never be able to see all the truths I come to know in a moment.

16. For a few days now, it seems to me as if I am speaking of another person when I speak of these things. Before, I was ashamed sometimes that my experiences were known, but now I think I'm no better on account of so many favors but worse, since I profit so little from them. Indeed, I think there hasn’t been anyone worse than I in any part of the world. So it seems to me that the virtues of others have much more merit, that I don't do anything but receive favors, and that God will give others all at once what He desires to give me here. I beseech Him not to want to pay me in this life, and so I believe that because I am weak and wretched the Lord has led me by this path.

17. While in prayer, and almost whenever I’m able to reflect a little, I’m unable to ask for rest or to desire it from God, even if I try. For I see that He didn't live but with trials; and I beg Him to give me these, granting me me first the grace to suffer them.
18. All these kinds of things that have to do with very sublime perfection it seems are impressed upon me in prayer, so much so that I am amazed to see so many truths and so clearly, for the things of the world appear to me to be nonsense. So I need to be careful by reflecting on what my attitude was previously toward the things of the world, for it seems to me that to grieve over its deaths and trials is foolish, at least if the sorrow or the love of relatives, friends, and so on, lasts a long while. I say that I proceed carefully, reflecting on what I was and what I used to feel.

19. If in some persons I see things that clearly seem to be sins, I cannot come to the conclusion they have offended God. And if I stop somewhat to consider them -- which happens hardly or not at all -- I never reach that conclusion, although I may have seen the things clearly. It seems to me the care I have about serving God is had by all. In this matter He has granted me a great favor, for I never pause to consider anything evil; because when I afterward recall it, and if I recall it, I always see another virtue in that person. Thus these things never distress me; because when I recall it, and if I recall it, I always see another virtue in that person. Thus these things never distress me, unless in the case of something that is common, or of heresies which often cause me affliction. And almost as often as I think about them it seems to be that this trial alone is the one that must be felt. I also grieve if I see some persons who used to practice prayer turn back. This grieves me, but not a lot, since I strive not to pause to think about it.

20. I also find improvement in regard to my former vanities but it is not complete; for I'm not always mortified in this regard, although sometimes, yes.

21. All of this I have said is what ordinarily takes place in my soul insofar as I can understand. I very habitually keep my mind fixed on God; and when I am dealing with other things, without desire on my part -- as I say -- I am made attentive by I don't know who. I am not always made attentive but only when I'm dealing with some important matter; and this attentiveness to these matters lasts for only a short while and, glory to God, is not continuous.

22. It happens to me on some days -- although not often, and the experience lasts about three, four, or five days -- that it seems to me that all the good things, fervor, and visions have been taken away; and even taken from my memory, for I don't know, although I may want to, what good there has been in me. Everything seems to have been a dream, at least I'm not able to remember anything. All my bodily ills together afflict me. My intellect disturbs me because I cannot think anything about God, nor do I know what state I'm in. If I read, I don't understand. It seems to me I am full of faults, without any courage for virtue, and that that great courage I usually have dwindles to this: that I'd be unable to resist the least temptation or criticism from the world. It occurs to me then that I'm good for nothing, that no one could force me to do more than what is ordinary; I feel sad; I feel I've deceived all those who have given me some credit. I should like to hide some place where no one would see me; not solitude for virtue's sake, but out of pusillanimity. It seems to me I'd want to quarrel with everyone who contradicts me. I carry about with me this battle, except that God grants me the favor of not offending Him more than I usually do. Nor do I ask Him to take away this state, but that if it is His will it might remain always, that He keep me in His hands that I might not offend Him; and I conform myself to Him with all my heart. I believe it is an extraordinary favor He grants me that I am not always in this condition.

23. One thing amazes me, that, while I'm in this state, with one word alone of those I'm accustomed to hearing, or one vision, or a little recollection that lasts for the space of a Hail Mary, or in approaching to receive Communion, my soul and body will become very quiet, and my intellect very sound and clear, and I will feel all the fortitude and desires I usually have. I have experienced for more than a half year that at least when I am receiving Communion I noticeably and clearly feel bodily health.
Sometimes I feel this by means of raptures, which occasionally last more than three hours. At other times I am greatly improved throughout the whole day. In my opinion this is not a matter of fancy, because I have observed and taken note of it. As a result, when I have this recollection I don't fear any illness. It is true that when I experience the prayer I did before, I do not feel this improvement.

24. All these things I mentioned make me believe these favors are from God. For since I know who I was, that I was walking on the road of perdition, it is certain that in a short while through these experiences my soul became amazed, not knowing where these virtues came from. I didn't know myself; I saw they were something given and not gained through toil. I understand in all clarity and truthfulness, and know I am not deceived, that this has been a means by which God not only brought me to His service but freed me from hell. All of this my confessors to whom I’ve made my general confessions know.

25. Also, when I meet any person who knows something about me, I want to explain my life to him. For I think it is an honor to me that our Lord be praised, and I don't care anything about the rest. He knows this well, or I am very blind; for there is no honor or life or glory of any good of body or soul that holds me back, nor would I want or desire my own gain, but only His glory. I cannot believe the devil sought out so many blessings to win my soul in order that he might afterward lead it astray, for I don't consider him to be that stupid. Nor can I believe, though on account of my sins I deserve to be deceived, that God would fail to hear so many prayers offered up over a period of two years by so many good people -- for I don't do anything else but ask everyone for prayers -- in order that He would either let me know if this is for His glory or lead me by another path. I don't believe His divine Majesty would permit these experiences always to continue if they were not from Him.

26. Since I am so wretched, these things and the teachings of so many saints give me assurance when I have these fears about whether or not my experiences are from God. But if when I’m in prayer or on the days in which I am quiet and my thoughts are on God, all the learned men and saints in the world were to join together and torture me with all the torments imaginable, and I wanted to believe them, I wouldn't be able to make myself believe that these things come from the devil; for I cannot. When they wanted to force me to believe that the devil was the cause, I feared, upon seeing who said this, and I thought they must be saying the truth and that I, being what I was, was being deceived. But at the first locution, or experience of recollection, or vision, all they had told me was blotted out; I couldn't do anything but believe God was the cause.

27. Although I can realize the devil could sometimes meddle -- and this is so, as I have seen and said -- the effects he causes are different. And whoever has experience will not be deceived, in my opinion. Still, I say that even were I to believe an experience is certainly from God, I wouldn't do anything for any reason if it didn't seem to the one who has the charge over me that it would be for the service of our Lord. I have never thought but that I should obey and not be silent about anything, because this is good for me.

28. I am ordinarily reprimanded for my faults, and in such a way that it touches me to the very core. And when there is or can be some danger in what I am dealing with, I receive counsels which are very profitable to me. Often my past sins are brought to memory and cause me much grief.

29. I have gone on at great length, but it is certainly true that in regard to the blessings I see in myself when I come out of prayer I have been brief. Afterward I find that I have many imperfections and that I'm useless and very wretched. Perhaps I don't understand the good things, but am deceived; yet, the
difference in my life is well-known and makes me reflect on what I have said. In all I've said, I've told what it seems to me I have truly experienced.

These are the perfect qualities I feel the Lord has wrought in me who am so wretched and imperfect. I submit everything to the judgment of your Reverence since you know my entire soul.