

**English translation of “The Admirable Teaching” by Gregorio da Napoli;  
By Father Patrick Colbourne O.F.M. Cap.**

**Translator’s note.**

This translation is based on the introduction, text and footnotes which were published by P. Costanzo Cargnoni O.F.M. Cap. In I Frati Cappuccini: Documenti e testimonianze dell primo secolo, Edizioni Frate Indovino, Perugia, vol III/1, pp. 895-1085. The only additions to the notes made by the translator are references to Francis of Assisi: The Early Documents, edited by Regis Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., J. A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M. and William J. Short O.F.M. Conv., New York City Press, New York, London, Manila, for an English version of quotations from the Writings or Biographies of St Francis.

**Introduction by Castanzo Cargnoni O.F.M. Cap.**

**“The Admirable Teaching” by Gregorio da Napoli**

*The writings of Father Gregorio da Napoli that have come down to us are mainly concerned with juridical and moral matters. He was a Canon of the Church at the time that he joined the Capuchin Reform and he subsequently lived in great austerity and penance. People called him “lo scalzo” (the barefooted one), as he always walked in bare feet without sandals. A humble and very friendly man he loved seminarians and Priests and he wrote many tracts that were aimed at preparing them to carry out their ministry with competence and holiness. He must have also had great compassion for those who were suffering because he wrote short devout tracts for the sick and dying which ran to many editions.*

*It is a refreshing surprise to discover that this person was also a genuine source of mystical information and an original writer on mystical spirituality. In fact in the Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli there is an unpublished manuscript entitled Istruttione mistica (Mystical Instruction), or, better still, The Admirable Teaching of Father Gregorio da Napoli, Capuchin. The first record and description of this manuscript dates from the last century. This was written by Apollinare Dupoint da Valence in 1886 and is held in the Biblioteca Fratrum Capuccinorum Provinciae Neapolotanae. However the Capuchin librarians of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries did not know about it. The situation could hardly have been any different once we realise that we are dealing with letters that contain spiritual direction and therefore material that is personal or secret even though it was set down in the form of doctrinal instruction that had been composed to deliver a detailed exposition of the mystical life, in an autonomous “book”, a “work” which had been wanted and requested by someone who was being gradually enlightened and guided along this arduous spiritual path.*

Although he was of advanced age Gregorio da Napoli was in high demand among Priests and Religious because of his doctrinal competence. Like a “charismatic” soul he guided them to the mystical heights of faith and love. His pupil was a fellow Capuchin whose identity we do not know. Sometimes his spiritual direction was carried out in personal conversations, but it was conducted mostly through letters which were a response to problems, doubts, situations and spiritual practices. The two lived in different friaries which were far apart. A passing reference



in the manuscript suggests that these were at Naples and Nola. Perhaps the friar lived at Nola where he received the letters from Naples.

These letters were not preserved in their original setting. The disciple's letters are missing, whereas the disciple must have jealously preserved the letters which he received, as if they were a treasure, coming from his teacher and director and which had been composed and written to encompass a complete mystical treatise. Whoever reads the text will immediately notice this and it will also be clear that we are dealing with a special kind of correspondence. It does not seem possible that this is a literary fraud. The personal references are too frequent, as are references to the events of the day in the context of life in a friary.

However the manuscript is not written in the handwriting of Gregory of Naples. Also the authority of St Therese of the Infant Jesus is quoted in one chapter. However, St Therese died in 1582 and was canonised by Gregory XV in 1622, twenty years after the death of Gregory in Naples in 1601. This would indicate that when the copyist transcribed that passage later than 1622, he added the title of Saint to the name of St Therese, whose works were circulating in Italy already in the late 1500's. The possibility of another doubt also arises: is this the authentic work of Gregory of Naples? Is this someone with the same name as Gregory, or is it an attribution that was made in haste or at the convenience to the copyist or librarian? The codex belonged to the Capuchin library at the friary of Conception in Naples and the cover was marked n 116. However, on the back of paper which is glued to the inside of the cover we see that in 1683 it belonged to the library in the friary of Chiaravalle in Calabria. Perhaps this was the year in which it was transcribed? In any case it is known that the books in the library in the friary of Conception in Naples were placed in Calabrian friaries during the plague.

It would seem that the theory of a namesake can be disregarded. There was a Gregory of Naples, who died at the friary of the Conception in Naples on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1641, but he was an artist and an exemplary Master of Novices, and he was not a friar when "the barefooted one" died because he was professed ten years later. Thus we continue to maintain the traditional attribution and until the opposite is proven.

We are publishing the complete text of the mystical instruction of Gregory of Naples for the first time. We are dealing with three different writings. The first has the nature of a summary of "the teaching on love within which all perfection is encompassed" (n. 1). The second is a short, clear explanation of "certain very lofty points concerning intimate union" (n. 2). These include rapture, ecstasy, annihilation, union, deification, and transformation, "active and passive" openness to the work of the spirit which identifies the more significant moments and states of mystical experience by means of tangible discernment.

The third is a genuine treatise with the title *Divine Lights or Mystical Practices* (n. 3). This is the longest and most systematic work, which is set out in 67 long or short chapters where we can gain a better glimpse of the original epistolary style of the work. From this point of view the work is quite "modern" in its style and is set out as a work of letter writing. However the contents are of the highest spiritual nature and are amazing for the manner in which they describe the psychological states of the soul, the feelings of the heart, and the enlightenment of the mind when it listens to the word of God, the phenomena of mystical purification of the human will, the ardour of conformity to the crucified Christ, the progressive spiritual development of the whole human person in its interior and exterior faculties, the depth of annihilation by means of "divine enlightenment" which allows the soul to passively share in "seeing" God without seeing and thus to live while being dead. Paradoxes abound.



The author said that these tracts: “ought to be read only by “those who are blind” and “those who are dead.” God’s love grasps us in simple (naked) love. This is experiencing deification by means of the unique school of the Cross, by means of annihilation of the human will, by totally abandoning oneself and resting alone in the divine pleasure. There is a refrain that sets the tone for the treatise. It is this; “commit yourself totally to the divine pleasure and firmly and radically wish, desire and expect nothing else, except what pleases God, divesting yourself of what is created, even though this is holy and very divine,. Do this in everything whether spiritual or temporal because it is a gift from God, something that is most exalted, intimate and pure.”

At this point it might appear to be an abstruse teaching. However it is utterly practical. Because if the author knows how to quote authors such as Dionysius the Areopagite, St Bernard, St Jerome, Blessed Giles, St Francis, St Bonaventure, St Therese. Pico della Mirandola as well as many Biblical passages, which at times are interpreted in a surprising fashion that demonstrates great theological, ascetical and mystical knowledge, this is nothing in comparison with the fact that the person who is writing has taken what he is presenting mostly from actual personal spiritual experience. He often explains things using the first person, referring to what he has experienced personally. He is teaching what he is living personally in an exchange between a spiritual guide and his docile pupil who had decided to walk the highest road of pure, naked love of God.

We believe that this tract, which is very clear in its turn of phrase, very spontaneous, not based on the study of books, but bubbling out like a clear spring beside an heroic path of faith and which is offered as a personal experience similar to the experience of great mystics such as St Therese, St Bonaventure, Blessed Angela of Foligno, St Bernard, Dionysius the Areopagite and perhaps also John of the Cross, Benedict Canfield, Henry van Herp, may easily rank among the most original, most lively, classics of mystical literature that have been based on the experience of Saints. In this tract we can see how in a simple practical world, within the confined boundaries of the regular discipline of a friary, which are monotonous and hidden and humble, a soul which is animated by the unction and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, can bring about a mystical change in every quite imperceptible interior or exterior activity.

## 1. [THE DOCTRINE OF LOVE]

When the Lord passed over the mountain there was a great and strong wind, which overthrew the mountains and broke the rocks into pieces before the Lord. And a voice said: The Lord is not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake. But the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire the whistling of a gentle breeze and the Lord was there. (1 Kgs. 19, 11-13).

*To the authentic servant of my Jesus Christ.*

**4640** I greet you dear Jesus, O crucified one on the cross of our only means of salvation where I always desire to contemplate you. By God’s grace I have already



completed the work that you<sup>1</sup> wanted me to finish. The work contains the whole ocean of most high and sublime perfection, which the most elevated creature that God has made (except for Christ and his most holy Mother) has attained or could attain. This is a manifestation of infinite Wisdom, not of my merits; rather it is achieved through his absolute grace, for your sanctification.<sup>2</sup> I hope to lead you to this height in a short space of time if you agree to take this teaching to heart by carrying out what you ought to do each day as your duty and not simply as a way of passing time.

These are divine activities, not human undertakings in which you will always discover new enlightenment through which your spirit will be cleansed, sanctified, unified to with God becoming one with God's Spirit. You will become aware of how much you discover in this activity in which doctrine that is beyond what you could imagine will be revealed. When you do not understand something as you follow this teaching turn to prayer in tears so that God might console you so that you can safely cross this protected ocean, until you reach the happy harbour of eternal life.

Be careful not to read this work as if you were a living person, but only as one who has died. If you do otherwise you will offend the Spouse and offend me. You will cause damage to those who try to profit from it. You will be confused and have contempt for the activity.<sup>3</sup> Christ tells us; *Nolite eijecere margaritas vestras ante porcas* (*Do not throw your pearls before swine*).<sup>4</sup> Do not think that you can come with enlightenment that is acquired by human nature and intelligence to grasp the depth of the divine secrets in this beautiful ocean. I say nothing more. Set your sights high, if you want to arrive at perfection, which, I hope, the Lord will enable you to achieve swiftly by means of this activity and also grant you much more through his generosity. *Amen*.

*Anyone who wants to live and not die  
is trying to escape from my teaching.*

*To the well-disposed reader*

**4641** Since through Divine Kindness our soul desires nothing else than to be united with her only Spouse, dear Jesus, the soul must firstly to annihilate<sup>5</sup> the will which seeks objects which pertain to the senses, such as beauty, what is sweet, what gives pleasure (*gusti*), thoughts that are a waste of time spiritually, desires, emotions of love, feelings that only want to experience such passions. It does so by turning its back on sense objects by means of ejaculatory prayer and by ardently and continually aspiring and sighing for Jesus her Spouse.

When this desire for sensual objects has been annihilated warn your soul not to stop there with one foot in sweet things and pleasures because such things drag the

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<sup>1</sup> We do not know who Gregory of Naples meant to address. It appears from various statements that follow that it certainly was a soul to whom he was giving spiritual direction and who was one of his fellow friars whom he wished to greet and raise to a greater level of the life of perfection.

<sup>2</sup> Here the author wishes to indicate that he is dealing with instruction concerning high spirituality that raises a creature to the highest sanctity. By means of God's grace he has been enabled to come to know about it and to teach it as a spiritual director.

<sup>3</sup> The sentence describes a teaching that is almost esoteric, which is aimed at initiates who walk and indeed run through the spiritual life and are "dead" to themselves and their own will.

<sup>4</sup> Mt 7, 6.

<sup>5</sup> This verb is used frequently in these pages. Sometimes the author uses *annichilare* (*to annihilate*), but at other times he uses the form *annihilare*. In the Italian text the first form is always used.



soul towards the objects of the senses and take her away from regarding God as the one who is essential. When you have uprooted feelings for sensual things and acquired a taste for what is spiritual, you should have your soul soar immediately to her Spouse,<sup>6</sup> training her to desire only what God desires, not what is sweet or pleasurable or anything else, but the bare pleasure of the Spouse wishing to achieve<sup>7</sup> this alone with all the ardour of love. Accompany this with ejaculatory prayers, and pant and sigh until the longing for spiritual sweetness and the most exalted gifts such as there might be has been annihilated and what remains is only the desire for what the Spouse wants and nothing else. Some gifts may be useful as steps on the ladder towards such a union.

**4642** Once the desire for sensual and spiritual things has been annihilated, your soul must be aware not to halt, but to go on to a higher and more sublime level. This progress occurs when the soul, after she has annihilated doing what you want, does the naked will of the Spouse not by saying ejaculatory prayers but by panting and sighing to the Spouse with mystical prayers that are intimate, quiet, peaceful, contented until she is united to her Spouse and transformed into complete deification.

Do not think<sup>8</sup> that you can reach this state immediately. It is sufficient to know about it, and that it is a good indicator when God shows you this. A kind of pestiferous spiritual state will exist in your soul when it becomes clear that under the guise of virtue you desire to control place, time, persons and consolations as you wish, and say: “I wish to be in this to that place etc. to please God more than to seek consolation for myself because it will be quieter, more comfortable, uplifting, cheerful, spiritual”. Very few recognise that this is such nonsense and an illusion! Since the Devil cannot trick God’s servants through their personal desire for external sensual things as they have mortified their desire for such things, he attacks their will through spiritual things making them choose what feels pleasant and peaceful as if this were pleasing to God. (You must not be like these persons. Be patient when your condition is difficult but sublime, since I am inviting you to die in the Lord, in whom there is real sanctity and deification).<sup>9</sup>

**4643** Such people want to fulfil God’s will while experiencing consolation or delight and what pleases them. When they are deprived of pleasure and satisfaction they seek it in what they choose themselves as if that pleased God. They wish to depart from God’s will and choose something else and it seems to them that they are doing good and not offending God. (Oh what deception)! They do not recognise false sensuality because they would like to be able to flee from inner anxiety (which would be stepping into the unknown). Yet they fall into what is wrong without seeing<sup>10</sup> it. If

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<sup>6</sup> There is a note in the margin of the manuscript: *Whoever wishes to become sensitive to the Spouse must overcome what is sensual. This is how to achieve this. With respect to sensual will. Once sensual appetites have been conquered one must overcome the spirit. The true lover does not love the gift, but the giver. With respect to the spiritual will.*

<sup>7</sup> In the text *prevenire* appears instead of *pervenire*.

<sup>8</sup> *V'imaginate* in the text = *Non vi maginate*.

<sup>9</sup> Note self knowledge here and a profound experience of the spiritual journey. The content of these pages is summarised in a note in the margin of the manuscript in these words: *The true lover loves union not in itself, but for the beloved. Divine will. Enlightenment to recognise the hidden thoughts of many people who claim to be spiritual; to recognise whether the will is alive or dead. A truly spiritual person is not subject to place, time or to any creature. The Devil tricks many spiritual people under the guise of virtue.*

<sup>10</sup> In the text *avegono* = *avedono*.



they had been enlightened from within by the Divine will, they would not have dwelt upon sweetness, quiet etc., but upon the naked fulfilment of what was pleasing to God where alone they would have found real peace. Do not become one of these people. Never become preoccupied with time, place, your superior, or any person, or anything that pertains to your pleasure,<sup>11</sup> with your own will, but remain naked in the Spouse's naked pleasure, spending time and everything that comes from God's bare pleasure etc.

The servants of the Lord who act like this have great humility and never trust in what they want, but faithfully clothe themselves in God's sweet and eternal will and so are not upset with God if He takes away their father, relatives, belongings, spiritual director, amusements, consolation, including spiritual consolation. They do not become upset about the Devil, or creatures, knowing that it is God who achieves things and controls what happens to them. Oh if only your soul were like that! Oh if they had withdrawn their own will, oh what peace and tranquillity they would enjoy!

**4644** When they seek to do things their own way, and think that they know better than God concerning what they need, they will never have real peace, since they will only feel at peace when things give them pleasure and are what they want.<sup>12</sup>

You might say: "Perhaps I am frightened of committing an offense when I think that I am not committing a crime, and am not offending God, when I do not care about time, or about being filled with darkness, confusion, temptation, hesitation of heart over things that belong to God, or about being filled with the greatest enlightenment of peace, circumstances or anything else, although these might have been of the greatest spiritual assistance in assuring me that I was not offending the Spouse and I had done all that I could."<sup>13</sup>

I reply: "If you are so determined and resolute not to offend God, or to displease Him by sinning it is a sign that the offense has been remitted and nothing has happened to you. However let your positive determination always remain solid and have no doubt that grace is founded upon this rock".<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps you might say: "I do not appear to have such determination." I reply: "This is not so, because if you did not have it you would not be afraid of offending God. It is the devil that makes you think like this so that your soul may become confused and filled with inordinate sadness and having covered your soul with the pall of offending God your soul will be strongly tied down in looking for consolation, quiet, times, places and other things that comfort you." Discern well so that when you look for another place, time or person etc., you will be sure that you are seeking to plunge yourself into God's will and not into some consolation, even though to the human eye when it is deprived of the illumination of faith they appear to be holy and perfect to God and, indeed, full of merit and very beneficial.<sup>15</sup> No! No! Leave it to God to fill you with a generous heart and do what God wants. Heart, heart, soul, you need to be resolute!<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> There is a note in the margin: *True annihilation and deifying union is accompanied with true peace.*

<sup>12</sup> A note in the margin says: *Doing our own will is the cause of all our errors and of every evil thing.*

<sup>13</sup> Note in the margin: *Fear of offending God always accompanied spiritual attacks even when no offense has taken place. This is a comfort for those who suffer attacks.*

<sup>14</sup> Note in the margin: *Note well.*

<sup>15</sup> Note in the margin: *Every time the heart longs for something even if appears to be most divine, it is not seeking God but itself.*

<sup>16</sup> Note in margin: *Note well*



**4645** Beware not to be aligned only with the external objects of God's will by despising the world with all its vanities etc., while adhering to your own inner spiritual will veiled under the guise of virtue.<sup>17</sup> Try rather to deepen your soul, make it annihilated and transformed into doing what God wants, making yourself available for whatever God wants weather death or life, sickness or health, sufferings or relief, temptation or peace, tribulation or consolation, fullness of virtue or the lack of it, honour or disgrace, heaven or hell.

If you do this you will come out of darkness and enjoy real light etc. Admit that patience is tested by suffering and the cross. Patience reveals whether virtue is alive or dead in the soul as you see the fruit of patience increasing when you feel tied.<sup>18</sup> The deepest part of your own person will provide the evidence of whether your soul has died and the virtues are alive. However, if the fruits of impatience become evident, oh dear! The enemy is in the house! The root of your own will is something that is alive and thus it makes you feel, as someone who is<sup>19</sup> alive can feel in contrast to someone who is dead. Then the virtues are separated from the soul and since they are dead to what is around them Christ does not live in them and impatience reveals who are such servants of my Lord. All perfection begins from uprooting one's own will and making the will of God alive. Every tempest begins and every suffering, cross, tribulation, temptation and despair etc. proceeds from this harmful self-will which poisons everything that is good.<sup>20</sup>

**4646** If you have put your will to death by walking in the light of faith you will always feel delight. However until you have done this you will always live in a state of anxiety except when God does what you want Him to do. God will be aware of this and continues to cry out: *Fiat voluntas tua (May your will be done.)*<sup>21</sup>

You want to have peace, quite, happiness etc. Put your own will aside and follow the divine will which is sweet and eternal and in this way you will enjoy a taste of the sweetness of what is eternal while still on the journey, and you will be an angel on earth. Do not start anything. Whatever you undertake let it not be on your own initiative.<sup>22</sup> To express it more clearly, pray to God with a naked heart (so that there is nothing which is yours in the prayer) that you may be His completely and possess nothing else, nothing that is yours. Annihilate what is yours, *not just as a kind of gesture, but as annihilation* as it is described in Chapter 41.<sup>23</sup>

Think of nothing else, speak of nothing else and do nothing else other than uprooting what belongs to you and allowing God's kingdom to reign absolutely within you. Where there is something that belongs to you, some frailty, put it aside, even if it appears to be good, do not do the little that comes from you or it will make everything bad, for in God's eyes it is like the rag of a menstruating woman.<sup>24</sup> Put aside; put aside your will even if it appears to be inherently good. Uproot your being, you are nothing. Annihilate your being; you are nothing, nothing, and nothing. In comparison to perfect things you are nothing, God alone necessarily exists: *I am who*

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<sup>17</sup> Note in the margin: *An insight for distinguishing true union from false union.*

<sup>18</sup> Note in the margin: *When your own will is aroused all the virtues are in your soul.*

<sup>19</sup> Note in the margin: *ch'è*

<sup>20</sup> Note in the margin: *The cross reveals whoever is a real servant of the Lord.*

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Mt 6, 10. Note in the margin: *His will and gifts. Note well.*

<sup>22</sup> Note in the margin: *A way [modo here, mono in the text] to enjoy eternal life while on the journey.*

<sup>23</sup> Note in the margin: See further ahead in chapter 41 where "the state of annihilation" is treated specifically, *nn.* 4782-4783.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Is 64, 6. Note in the margin: *How the soul that is nothing becomes omnipotent.*



am.<sup>25</sup> If you are not in union with God you are nothing. Once you have become nothing, God is everything in you and you will become everything in God. The more you assert yourself the less you belong to God.<sup>26</sup> You lack what belongs to God in as much as you are human. You are nothing, nothing and cry out: *Adveniat regum tuum* (*May your kingdom come*).<sup>27</sup> In wishing to be like God you see how very far you are from God. Oh wicked existence, oh cruel existence, oh pitiless existence of being and of what exists on its own! Oh happy nothingness, oh most omnipotent nothingness, oh most happy absence of being, which leads to real being and to becoming God immediately!<sup>28</sup>

**4647** Oh my son, oh my mad son, who goes in search of perfection, of being all spirit! Where are you going? Why are you roaming around as much? Why are you turning to so many books? Why are you talking so much? To whom are you speaking? You do not need anything else other than to be who you really are, nothing. Uproot yourself, annihilate your own will, which is wretched poison, because the good actions that are happening within you will poison what you want to be and emit a stench in the sight of God. Annihilate yourself, you are nothing, nothing.<sup>29</sup> Think nothing, say nothing, do nothing, hold nothing in your memory, nothing in your intellect, nothing in your will, nothing within or without. When you have annihilated the will, when you are nothing, you will be always happy, rejoicing, quiet, peaceful, strong, intrepid, filled with faith, hope and charity, with heaven, without fear of hell, devils or anything else.<sup>30</sup>

Oh, sad and unhappy one! You will never possess the true spirit, or taste real spiritual calm. The reason for this is that you are always trying to be occupied with defects, indifferent things, and spiritual things and with God. Oh what a hoax! To have these things, to perform these things takes effort, and you, oh unhappy one, are not concerned with effort and becoming exhausted you go from bad to worse! Nothing, nothing, nothing my son, and you be holy, you will be completely divine and God.<sup>31</sup>

*How does it happen that God's servants commit voluntary venial sins and others even mortal sins?*

**4648** This all happens because in the spiritual life they want to live in God but not that God should live in them. They want to choose times, places, superiors, exercises and everything else as it suits them, and this way (in addition to all such works being poisoned with the whiff of their own spiritual will, even though they think that they have done so to please God) in a short time it happens that, whereas they thought to have made great spiritual progress, conquered enemies, and arrived at inner peace, at the slightest breeze they are seen to fall into voluntary venial sins. This is not

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<sup>25</sup> Exod. 3, 14.

<sup>26</sup> Note in the margin: *How the soul can become God.*

<sup>27</sup> Mt 6, 10; Lk 11, 2.

<sup>28</sup> Note in the margin: *From nothingness to deification.*

<sup>29</sup> Note in the margin: *When the soul has arrived at this point it would be well for her to read the chapter that is contained on folio 8 (cf. n. 4645ff).*

<sup>30</sup> Note in the margin: *Once our own will has been rejected spiritual happiness, God and every good thing will reign in us.*

<sup>31</sup> Note in the margin: *Concerning this state of soul read folio 29 (cf. n. 4670). The way to make yourself most perfect.*



surprising since their own will is alive within them, and while this is alive they will always be afflicted and commit similar sins.<sup>32</sup>

Do not be like these people, but instead die. Be like clay in the potter's hand, like someone who is ill and is in the hands of an expert physician who is at liberty to do what he likes with them. Do not be the one to act or choose either the place, or the time or anything else. Accept everything as if it came from loving divine hands for your good. However do not go away from such good by weighing it up. Simply cling to the experience and to God's will. In doing this you will discover that you have completed a long spiritual journey without realising it. Then in the midst of battles you will discover that you are a very strong warrior, having the same strength as God: you will be God.<sup>33</sup>

Do not scrutinise anything whether visible (or invisible) with your will until you have gazed on God to see if it is according to his will. In everything that you do, speak about or think about try to keep God in sight with simple, heavenly lack of knowledge etc. Do not act before you have discovered God.<sup>34</sup> If you have begun to act first discover God or cease to act, because if you have not discovered God with the joy of peace and a calm conscience, it is a sign that what you are doing is contrary to the will of God. (Use discretion so that you do not become scrupulous).<sup>35</sup> If you have already taken action, adjust your will so that the act may be perfect and divine, in line with the objective. It is from this source that seeing and not seeing, experiencing and not experiencing, speaking and not speaking flow. However be conscious of this that to gaze on the object without gazing on God within it gives rise to desire, from which comes disturbance,<sup>36</sup> from which comes separation from Jesus which produces becoming lost in the senses bringing about sin after sin.

**4649** Frequently enter into the depths of your own person (without ever again departing from this) and observe keenly what is preventing you from maintaining this divine union, and when the Lord reveals what is his will for you, try to put it into practice immediately, so that you will become worthy of more enlightenment, new discoveries and in a short while arrive at perfect poverty of spirit where there is true annihilation.<sup>37</sup> What is there to gain from knowing, understanding and experiencing? Divesting oneself is what is profitable, enter into the depths of your own self, and divest yourself of vulgar clothing. Do not put on the most delicate clothing. The more delicate it is the less you will be aware of this and consequently there will be less chance of rectifying this.<sup>38</sup>

It will not be very important to have cleansed your heart of the vanities of seeing and experiencing the things of the world, of useless conversation and unnecessary things if then you are bound to a spiritual or bodily trifle. You have to overcome yourself, cast off the desire for all created things and rush to immerse yourself in the peaceful ocean of the divine pleasure, which is the only place where you wish to discover the spiritual happiness for which you are searching. Do not ever be amazed by such immensity, and be patient, if I call you to spiritual and temporal death. With a large heart and always feeling happy, continue to hope because I can

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<sup>32</sup> Note in the margin: *Our own will is the source of all evil.*

<sup>33</sup> Note in the margin: *The soul that has no will is omnipotent.*

<sup>34</sup> Note in the margin: *This is a way to deify all our actions.*

<sup>35</sup> Note in the margin: *Note well.*

<sup>36</sup> Note in the margin: *There is great danger in gazing on the object but not on God within it.*

<sup>37</sup> Note in the margin: *This is the examination of conscience for entering into divine union.*

<sup>38</sup> Note in the margin: *Actions not words lead on to perfection.*



see already that the Lord is calling you and when we might enter heaven with the title of Prince why should we be satisfied with being a Duke? However, we do not aspire to such heights to experience death but to give pleasure to the Spouse.

**6450** Never be shocked at divine love,<sup>39</sup> even when it appears to take time to come, always have hope peacefully and with resignation with a heart filled with unspeakable joy. Be careful to never lose such indescribable happiness. All good comes from this and it disarms self love, melancholy and anxiety. Because our spirit is in an abyss in the unfathomable ocean of what pleases God (be aware) you will seem to be in heavenly bliss and when you later experience anxiety,<sup>40</sup> note well that you will find yourself out of this very deep but quiet ocean, immersed in a thousand unimportant things. Because they are not necessary they crucify you.

From the outset be careful, when you find that your heart is involved in some mishap,<sup>41</sup> draw it back to the peaceful harbour of what is pleasing to God without bothering about anything else. Do not neglect to do this. Therefore I repeat when you observe that you have been involved in a mishap (of any kind), do not even stop to think about what it entails.<sup>42</sup> Smother it immediately otherwise one thought will lead to another in your heart which will then become so anxious that it will require great strength and time to overcome. Dwell on this point.

Cancel secondary causes from your heart,<sup>43</sup> by dwelling on the first cause of the mishap. In everything have only one concern. Let the first cause be your only concern, Keep this exclusively in your heart, ponder on it, experience it, speak about it, love it, keep your eyes open for it while being blind to all else including thoughts, good things, indifferent things and any other mishap that divine wisdom places before you. Know that all has been ordained *ab eterno*.<sup>44</sup> When you succeed it will be nothing but a manifestation of the divine design in you that pleases him today and tomorrow.

**4651** If I lose an arm, an eye or a relative and so on,<sup>45</sup> I suffer a loss. I am disgraced, down cast, beaten and so on. I ought to rejoice (at a higher level, being careful about scruples) because this had been ordained *ab eterno* and I want nothing more than that the divine will should be fulfilled and that now what was ordained *ab eterno* is being fulfilled and I should not feel sad about it. I would rather go to hell. My Jesus, why should I feel sad since this is like regretting what you have done my dear Good. May I never do this for the life of my soul!

Oh my dearest one, blind your eye to secondary causes and open it to gaze on the first cause in everything so that thus you may enjoy the world and God and then when you die I promise you that not only will angels appear but the first cause who is God, in whom you have always lived. You will discover him with special glory and dwell with him to rejoice for all eternity.

In this state you will always be joyful, quite, stable, unmoved, and eternal. You will become like God. In God there are no mishaps, and while you dwell in him,

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<sup>39</sup> Note in the margin: *A spiritual person should never be schocked, and never lose spiritual joy.*

<sup>40</sup> Note in the margin: *Which is the gloom of self love.*

<sup>41</sup> Note in the margin: *The cause of spiritual joy and sadness.*

<sup>42</sup> Note in the margin: *Note well.*

<sup>43</sup> Note in the margin: *A spiritual person ought to be one-eyed and have that one eye exclusively focused on the first cause.*

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Pr 8, 23.

<sup>45</sup> Note in the margin: *A spiritual person should never be sad about anything, but be happy always. He should sigh like a lover.*



you will experience no mishaps. Oh state of blessed souls while on their journey!<sup>46</sup> Try to see what is pleasing to God in everything. Do not linger in suffering, in joy, in being lifted up, in anxiety, in heaven or even in God, but only simply in whatever is pleasing to God.<sup>47</sup> Try to leave things up to God and what God wants.

Do not allow the slightest created thing to come between you and God, but always fix your mind very simply and very clearly in the very deep ocean of the will of God.<sup>48</sup> Try, I repeat, to always be (*practice, non speculative tantum – be concrete not merely speculative*) immersed in this beautiful ocean, so that you may say that everything that you do is a divine act rather than a human act. Always proceed with detachment of will that is determined and practical rather than speculative, because what is speculative worries the mind and makes the heart anxious.<sup>49</sup> Speculating will make you lose your head. It will lead you into spiritual pride and make it difficult to act. What I understand by practice will instead fortify the mind and maintain the heart in continual heavenly joy. It will produce acts most sweetly. It will lead to perfect annihilation and to union with him who exists alone.

**4652** When you realise that your will has been entangled in anything because it is acting superficially,<sup>50</sup> raise yourself immediately to a safer place by an internal act, without thinking about how you have fallen. From this position gaze on what you have fallen into, examine it and make a judgement as to whether it is a matter for Confession or not. However, do not make a great fuss over such falls. Do not become anxious in any way. In this way such defects will serve as ladders towards perfection, by means of this simple interior action, no matter how intense.<sup>51</sup>

However when you find yourself bound fast, you should take great care since this is a sign that you are not a true and faithful lover, and that you are not in the state of deification, something that you ought to consider strongly as not being of no consequence. Subsequently do not think ahead or think of anything else, but with a generous heart cast the devil, the passion, the snare, the diversion out of the house, as soon as you become aware of the most vile creature and that this is to live outside God's way.

Oh cursed existence that has no end! Read about it in folio 29.<sup>52</sup> Oh iniquitous death that can wipe out true life! Until you have cast out this chastisement you cannot forge ahead in the spiritual life and discover further enlightenment, possess other things, rather focus all your thoughts, all your prayers, all your sighs, tears and communions on this. Be aware that the entire method and essence of all our perfection exists here.

It is because of this that many (although learned, prayerful, performing bitter penances, living in solitude and mortification)<sup>53</sup> who find themselves filled with darkness,, illusion , entanglements and battles do not know how to behave and they develop scruples. They do not know what true union is, even though they are always

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<sup>46</sup> Note in the margin: *This should be the true state of rest of the soul.*

<sup>47</sup> Note in the margin: *A lover is one-eyed.*

<sup>48</sup> Note in the margin: *As actions dictate and are totally divine.*

<sup>49</sup> Note in the margin: *The damages which accompany speculation and the benefits that accompany practice.*

<sup>50</sup> Note in the margin: *Examination of involuntary actions with the method of how to deal with them, so that one may achieve greater perfection.*

<sup>51</sup> Note in the margin: *Examination for deliberate sins.*

<sup>52</sup> See ahead, n. 4670.

<sup>53</sup> Note in the margin: *Spiritual persons who have acquired enlightenment, but not infused enlightenment, never enjoy real peace.*



writing about it, reading about it and speaking about it and many have great falls. Dwell on this passage.

**4653** Know that the summit of all perfection<sup>54</sup> has been reached when a soul has become the property of the unknown and invisible Spouse whom she has chosen. This immediately places her in a state of enjoying true beatitude while on the journey which will reach fulfilment in full merging with God and his divine pleasure. If you go forward detached like this<sup>55</sup> you will control and govern everything that is created and never be dominated by anything and consequently never suffer anxiety and you will proceed feeling always happy and elated deriving greater profit for what is in your best interest. No thought or desire or anything else will be able to control your detached heart or upset it, rather everything will serve as a ladder for new enlightenment, new performance in that very dark, yet very bright divine haze.

Do not ever be preoccupied by mishaps because they will produce anxiety of heart according to their proportions with one adding to another and once you have become surrounded by them you will lose the grace of devotion and spiritual happiness and will not be able to perform any spiritual exercise and, what is worse, you will turn to exterior consolations and amusements in talk, discussion, conversation, amusement and useless things and when you return to enter into yourself by detaching your will to find peace you will find it caught up and agonised by thoughts and fantasies. It will take you days and nights, perhaps years, to recover your original peace. Never lose this detachment of will.<sup>56</sup>

God created this detached will which dominates everything, this devotion together with this happiness. You will never lose these two sisters if you have embraced intimate, annihilated resignation. Do not lose them, my dearest, because, like strongest impulses, they protect your soul from any sinister mishap. Maintain your soul in a happy state of mind.<sup>57</sup> Keep your will always completely detached because if you keep it bound even to something somewhat small, such as a flower or the like (note this well) know<sup>58</sup> that you are outside the state of deification. The will is not deified. It is not dead. Indeed it is alive but God is not in us. In all truth you cannot say: "My God, I am all yours!" They could have made your will omnipotent, infinite, but you have made it impotent and brought it to the end,<sup>59</sup> by drawing it away from what is divine.

**4654** Oh what an immense shame! What profit is it to the soul if after having overcome so many enemies, so many difficulties; you are brought down by being prevented from being in union with your lover? You had freed yourself from iron chains and then bound yourself with gold with no advance towards real freedom. To deprive yourself of great treasures, honours, positions of power and the vanities of the entire world and then to bind and subject yourself to the slightest thing yields little or no profit. Indeed you deserve greater blame!<sup>60</sup> When you have overcome great armed

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<sup>54</sup> Note in the margin: *A spiritual person who has detached himself from his will enjoys everything and enjoys the summit of perfection.*

<sup>55</sup> Note in the Margin: *A soul that remains outside the first cause is immediately attacked by passion.*

<sup>56</sup> Note in the margin: *The soul will enjoy these three gifts: beatific peace, fruitfulness with the blessed and merit with those who are virtuous.*

<sup>57</sup> Note in the margin: *This is the condition of the soul when it is enjoying the state of deification.*

<sup>58</sup> Note in the margin: *Note*

<sup>59</sup> Note in the margin: *True divine union excludes everything else.*

<sup>60</sup> Note in the margin: *To cast the world beneath your feet and then to enter religion as a joke is great wickedness and of no profit. It pays to give everything to God being free from all created things.*



forces will you surrender to the vilest of slaves? No! Play the warrior. But know that this is not bread that is to be eaten on the run. You have to apply yourself to this state. My dearest, deprive yourself, change yourself, because the will should be free of everything that is created both spiritual and temporal.

Imagine that there were two people one of whom gives himself to a master as his slave while taking a quantity of gold each day for himself. The other gives himself completely not keeping anything for himself. This situation shows really that the second has more generosity and love than the first.<sup>61</sup> The second person is dead to himself, and his new master lives in him totally. However, he cannot spend even a short space of time, take a step or do anything without it being the will of his new master. The first person is not like this. Although he lives and is not dead he has not been transformed, the Master does not live in him and he is alive only to the degree that he is of service to the master.

**4655** My dearest, image that there is a mirror in front of you. Look into it to see if you have given yourself completely to your Spouse, Jesus, or kept part of yourself for something else. See if Jesus alone has dominion over your heart and your will, or if part of it has gone to something else. See if you are alive or dead. If you are alive God is not living in you. If you are dead God is alive in you. You are deified.<sup>62</sup> You have become God and your works are no longer yours. They cannot be called human, but rather divine. Oh what a state! If you wish to enjoy this state of union of deification you need to ensure that your will is detached from anything that is created, whether spiritual or temporal, and that your whole self is given to your new Spouse entirely and completely so that nothing has been kept back for yourself and thus the Spouse has become the absolute Master of everything that is in you or outside of you. Then when you do what is good, when you think, when you speak, when you desire, when you love, when you wish etc, it is not your doing but God's, not human but divine,<sup>63</sup> because the Holy Spirit is living and reigning in you. You are nothing more than an instrument in the hands of the Master. Oh what a state!

When the above-mentioned slave (a slave of love) goes out walking, working, thinking speaking etc. it is not him who is doing this but the Master within him. The Master's will reigns, (his will is dead).<sup>64</sup> When the will is dead, a creature is like a dead body, in which, another will has been placed in as much as that body performs everything by means of the will of the one who is living in it. (I am referring to one who is a slave through and through not simply a body that has become that way because of the strength of love). Thus you are not yourself, but God is within you and so you should not contradict what I am saying. Do not entertain arguments and debates that are in any way contrary to this, even if they were revealed by an Angel from heaven. However, if you wish to understand me with enjoyment and divine fruit practice it and do not search with speculation etc.

**4656** Blessed are we if we embrace this state of deification (is this the state of the blessed or is it something greater etc? *qui potest capere capiat* (may he who is able to

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<sup>61</sup> Note in the margin: *This is a situation of real freedom of spirit, and of possessing the Spirit of God completely.*

<sup>62</sup> Note in the margin: *This is an examination to determine if you enjoy the state of deification.*

<sup>63</sup> Note in the margin: *The soul is activated by the Holy Spirit so that whatever happens within or outside it is divine.*

<sup>64</sup> Note in the margin: *The practice of the state of divine transformation.*



*understand, understand*)), which will develop into such a strong state<sup>65</sup> that neither the devil, sorrows, the loss of any created thing either spiritual or temporal or any creature will be able to weaken since you are united to the depths of vigour itself, which is God. Nobody can henceforth separate you from this vigour if you do not want to be separated from it. How could trials, conflicts, anxieties, temptations, the worries of this world, the flesh or the devil weaken your soul? Father no! Indeed you had better strengthen yourself so that this becomes the means through which you fly more cautiously to your armed fortress where you will become stronger and steadfast in enduring these persecutions, heart aches, episodes of insolence, improprieties, acts of ridicule, temptations, fits of misery, periods of confusion and this will have the further effect of creating a greater separation from all creatures and elevating the soul to the Creator. This will prevent consolations from snatching your heart from God to focus on creatures.

In Christ's blood I plead and exhort your heart to sail on this beautiful ocean,<sup>66</sup> which is unknown to many spiritual persons and which is experienced by very few. I exhort you my dearest to embrace this. Oh what an experience, when nothing trivial is in sight, where the ship is in intimate annihilated abandon, where an ardent divine desire is set aflame by fear, where the flame of divine love is enkindled by the pilot, where the sails are the will, the wind the Holy Spirit and the light is faith. This is where you sail on with ever new enlightenment, new desires, new thoughts, new discoveries down into an abyss that is beyond measuring and beyond any channel that could be desired, by means of which you will gradually lose your human affinity, thought, desire, perspective, appetite or love that pertains to the senses!

**4657** Let us cry,<sup>67</sup> cry with me, the one who is writing and crying. Oh how the wind of vane beauty tossed me about! Where did it take me? To hell! Oh how often did the wind of honours toss me about! Oh how often did the wind of the desire to be loved toss me about all over the place! Oh how often did the wind of not despising creatures toss me about! I turned my back on my Lord! Oh how many times, how many times did the wind of the love of the world and disordered affections toss me about!. Oh treacherous wind which found me out. Unhappy you! <sup>68</sup> Pray for me that the wind may change, so that my will may no longer be tossed about by such vanities, such passions but rather be guided by the wind of divine love, the wind that regards all visible things as despicable, by the desire to be with my Lord, with Mary, my dear Mistress.

You should examine<sup>69</sup> whether this will dominates everything both in practice and in theory. If when you experience a tribulation, or piercing anxiety or that something is a bother and goes against the senses, or something is repulsive and the like, if you react, cry out, complain about creatures, this is a sign that your heart has not been cleansed, your will is not detached, because if it were detached, if it were naked, you would be completely resigned and thanking God. If something offends your honour,<sup>70</sup> and you cry out, defend yourself and make excuses this is a sign that you are not naked. Why are you not sensitive to the dishonour that another person

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<sup>65</sup> Note in the margin: *Effects of tribulations on a soul that is in the state of divine annihilation.*

<sup>66</sup> Note in the margin: *A ship sailing on an uncharted ocean.*

<sup>67</sup> Note in the margin: *The cry of the soul over its past evil life.*

<sup>68</sup> Note in the margin: *Human will by which a person is dominated*

<sup>69</sup> Note in the margin: *This is a practical examination to determine if your will is in command of everything that is created or if it is subject to anything.*

<sup>70</sup> Note in the margin: *What is truly honourable for a lover is what the beloved wishes.*



endures when their reputation suffers and they are injured? You reacted because that affected your reputation. To conclude quickly I will give you an example that will serve to divest you of everything whether spiritual or temporal.

**4658** If you take note of a brother, a relative who is leading a bad life and this upsets you, makes you sad, disturbs you and makes you restless then you are not naked. You are moved by affection and not God's love. You might say: "Father, this is zeal about seeing my God offended". I reply: "If you were as single-minded as I want you to be, so that your gaze was fixed on the Creator not the creature, when you saw him offend you would not be upset just as you are not upset when you see other people offend. This is a sign that you are not single-minded and are moved by affection, not the love of God and thus you need to strip yourself."

In addition you ought to realise that as often as you experience disturbance and restlessness in your heart this is unconscious self-love, the more unconscious the worse. If you do not understand what I am revealing to you, do not judge it or seek guidance from someone else.<sup>71</sup> Be sure to put what I tell you into practice, because practice will give you the enlightenment to grasp the truth. Therefore strip yourself, cleanse yourself, detach yourself and do not desire, love or become fond of what is created. Desire nothing but what God, who loves you exclusively, wants, so that when you have thrown off wanting any created thing none such thing can disturb you. Whatever you use, use it as if it belonged to someone else so that if it is taken away you will have no regrets.

Throw off the will,<sup>72</sup> cleanse the heart, and strip your breast, so that you may be clothed by God. May the divine will and his divine word reign in you as it has been planted in your heart by me and it will bud forth in patience in every circumstance. In one of Our Lord Christ's parables in the Gospel it says that the seed of the knowledge of God falls on different types of soil, but one fell among thorns which represented the good things of this life and so on such as wealth, honours, beauty and the like. These were the reason why this seed did not advance to yield fruit in eternal life.<sup>73</sup> With the example of a beautiful story that happened to our Father General who is a Capuchin preacher I present a beautiful teaching that would make you cry.

**4659** When this Father was on a journey by sea he was captured by the Turks and sentenced to be beheaded.<sup>74</sup> One of the renegades said to him: "Sir, you have been .pardoned". Thus the judgement was not carried out. He became quite friendly with this great master and since he was an educated person he answered completely all the doubts that he raised concerning the faith. When he saw how the good Father accepted everything joyfully, and because he had become quite friendly with him, he told him that he had already sowed the seed of the knowledge of our God through the sweet arguments he had expounded concerning the faith. "Sir, why do you not receive Baptism?" He replied: "I know that what you say is true, indeed the very truth. However I cannot be baptised at present. I have to be careful as I have four children and I cannot abandon them as they are my children (Oh my God!). However I hope to God that I shall not die in this condition."

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<sup>71</sup> Note in the margin: *Human discourse cannot capture divine secrets; therefore you should not make a judgement, but adore in silence.*

<sup>72</sup> Note in the margin: *That is free will that attempts to disturb you.*

<sup>73</sup> Cf Mt 13, 7, 22.

<sup>74</sup> Note in the margin: *It is fitting that a Capuchin Father should cry over this event following his capture by the Turks.*



Let us return to what concerns us.<sup>75</sup> Thus the love of children was the reason why the knowledge of God that had already taken root in the heart of this person did not yield the fruit of paradise. Oh iniquitous love of such a good! Of false and effective traitors! However, I can say today: What fruits of paradise do we yield? Some are impeded by the love for children, some by attachment to wealth, some by beauty, and some by being well dressed. However the worst thing that holds people back these days, what impedes almost everyone is ambition and I believe that this is impossible to remedy.<sup>76</sup> I repeat, it is impossible because *omne caput languidum* (the whole heart is sick) and so on.<sup>77</sup>

Today I am held back by business, tomorrow by some thought, this year by an activity, *et tempus sine fructu labitur* (time slips passed without fruit). Amend; divest yourself of those visible things, which you must put aside! Set your will free, subject it to what is divine! Do not allow clothes, health, honours, wealth, beauty, affections stop you from producing fruit for eternal life.<sup>78</sup> Do not be concerned about clothes or anything or any visible creature. Think like those who do not have books, images, honours, friends, relatives or anything else, but about everything that will endure in paradise for which you should aspire exclusively, being free from all these visible things. This is real and solid divine union. Remain, o most desolate one, with our unique desolate Spouse Christ crucified.

**4660** When various thoughts arise within you about making negative judgements concerning what your neighbour is doing and you think: “He is complaining about me; he is indignant towards me; he cannot bear the sight of me; he likes me; his is good; he is sad; he does some particular thing” and so on. When there are many similar thoughts. Do not cast the sad ones out or consent to the good ones. If you act in this manner you will destroy the peace of paradise in this vale of tears. Whatever thoughts come, whether good or bad, do not react to them as such, but simply gaze on the Spouse and say: “Let what you will be done, my God”. If you add to this” “Is this what you want?” Reply to your Spouse (it would be insulting to turn your back on God who is your Spouse.) “I believe that such persons<sup>79</sup> are doing your will, my Jesus, whether they are doing good or evil deeds. I do not know that they are doing, saying or thinking anything but your will. It may be good or it may be bad. I know nothing except that it is your will, my dear life.” Keep gazing on the Creator,<sup>80</sup> instead of what is created. Do not be preoccupied with such thoughts but treat them as a father would treat children by turning his back on them while keeping your face fixed on God.

Subject your intellect<sup>81</sup> to these high, divine exercises and little by little you will succeed. Never abandon this divine exercise. When you are seeing, thinking experiencing and so on, immediately raise your mind above what is incidental and sail on to the safe harbour of the divine pleasure. When such thoughts come always say: “This one or that one thinks and speaks what you will, O my God and all my good. I

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<sup>75</sup> Note in the margin: *How evil are the effects of such earthly concerns.*

<sup>76</sup> Note in the margin: *In these days there are few hearts which are not dominated by ambition.*

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Is 1, 5 (*the whole heart is sick*).

<sup>78</sup> Note in the margin: *The soul should be focused on the good things that are in heaven, non on those things which are false and treacherous and that fill the soul with infernal hopelessness.*

<sup>79</sup> Note in the margin: *The soul should never consider created things, or faults or lament, but fix its gaze on the beloved who is the basis of everything.*

<sup>80</sup> Note in the margin: *Note well.*

<sup>81</sup> Note in the margin: *Even though the intellect is one of the divine attributes it is only effective until the will takes over.*



do not know or wish to know anything more.” When someone complains or commits a fault he is an instrument. This is advice for those who are blind.<sup>82</sup> They always react to what is evil. This is advice for those who are blind. If God does not will this, it is advice for those who are blind. However, be careful not to attend to what is created. If you do attend to that, even though you carry out this exercise, you will always fall into error (that is why I say that this is advice for those who are blind. Let those who can see not read this, I am writing for those who are blind). Raise yourself always to what is the divine pleasure, if you want to have real peace.<sup>83</sup> This is the true path; *non declinetis neque ad dextram, neque ad sinistram* (do not turn to the left or to the right)..<sup>84</sup>

Here ends the doctrine of love, which contains all perfection. It promises many more different thoughts to a soul who accepts it as her guide.

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<sup>82</sup> Note in the margin: *A scholastic theologian who does not enter where the mystic tastes the marrow and rejoices.*

<sup>83</sup> Note in the margin: *The path of real peace.*

<sup>84</sup> Cf Pr 4, 27.



## 2. MYSTICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHICH DEAL WITH THE SUBLIMEST POINTS OF INTIMATE UNION.

*Rapture, Ecstasy, Annihilation, Union, Deification, Transformation as such even though they may have different meanings and specific effects.*

**4661** Rapture takes place when the soul is stolen away by the sweetest violence and becomes self-absorbed as was the case with Father Giles.<sup>85</sup>

Ecstasy is said to occur when God gradually gently reveals Himself to a soul in everything, plunging it into Himself by means of mystical experiences which are beyond the intellect, something that Blessed Bernard experienced continually when he saw but did not behold and heard but did not perceive sound. His soul did not exist in itself but in his beloved God. He was in ecstasy that is outside his own being.<sup>86</sup>

Annihilation<sup>87</sup> takes place when God infuses a divine light into our soul as He did to Blessed Catherine, concerning whom St Bonaventure said: *She who was instructed in her heart by a gift from Christ, being taught by unction not by a master, since the light that enlightened her did not need to be enlightened. (Quam praeodocebat unction, sine magistro, medio cor Christo dare gratum; nam lux, quae lucem influit claram clarere noluit).*<sup>88</sup>

Unction takes place when, by raising the soul from things that are transitory, whether they are visible or invisible, God unites it to Himself by annihilating from it what is created so that it may be united to Him, by means of giving it grace which He bestows according to the measure<sup>89</sup> which He wills. This union has different stages, some people enjoy it most sublimely because they have banished every little fault from their will and are most securely bound to the divine will by love.<sup>90</sup>

**4662** Deification takes place when God brightening up the soul by means of one of His divine visitations and bringing it into uncreated light, purifies it, deifies it and transforms it into Himself. Our Seraphic Father enjoyed this so liberally that at the first beam or touch he responded immediately by braking into action along the sure, short path to the loving transformation being worked by his Beloved.<sup>91</sup>

Transformation takes place when God transforms the soul into His very self with most passionate love and submerges it into His own abyss. In this state of perfect union the human will is so united to the divine will that in this condition of transformation what is human is plunged into what is divine so that it can no longer act of its own will because what was human has been changed into what is divine and has lost its faculties and its nature and has been dressed in the divine nature and characteristics. Now there are no longer two entities but one and what is human is no longer called human but divine. This is a gift by means of which the vessel of election can say: *I live now not I, but Christ lives in me.*<sup>92</sup>

In real ecstasy there is no possibility of deceit since it consists in being transformed heart and soul into what is the divine will and this completely fills all our faculties and makes them experience the peace and serenity of the divine essence.

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<sup>85</sup> Note in the margin: *Ratto che cosa sia*. Regarding Blessed Giles of Assisi and his ecstasies see Chron. XXIV Gen., in AF III, 74-114 and Fioretti ch 1 (FA:ED III, pp. 566-567).

<sup>86</sup> Note in the margin: *Estasi che si dice*. – Regarding the ecstasy of Bernard of Quintavalle a companion of St Francis see Fioretti, ch 2 near the end (FA:ED III p. 569) and especially ch 28 (FA:ED, III, pp. 616-617).

<sup>87</sup> Note in the margin: *This is what annihilation means*.

<sup>88</sup> The verses are taken from a hymn to St Catherine of Alexandria, virgin and martyr. This hymn has been attributed to St Bonaventure, but it is difficult to identify it.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 7, 7; Rom 12, 3; Eh 4, 7.

<sup>90</sup> This is a description of *union*.

<sup>91</sup> Note in the margin: *This is deification*. The reference is to the period of the conversion of St Francis. Cf. 1 Cel 6 and 21; 2 Cel 6-7; L Maj 1, 3-6; L3S, 7-10. (FA:ED I pp. 192-194; pp. 234-236; II p. 536; pp. 77-89).

<sup>92</sup> Gal 2, 20. Note in the margin: *This is transformation*.



Thus we can truly say that our will is no longer human but divine so that what a creature performs is not his doing alone, but God is at work within him, fulfilling the divine will which is its only nourishment.

**4663** Many false illusions can arise during mental and exploratory ecstasy when natural inspiration takes over. This was the case when gentile philosophers speculated about the circuit of the stars, the movements of the heavens and the like. They were not thinking or worrying about controlling such speculations since they were carried beyond themselves wherever their mind took them.

Once the soul has reached such a level of transformation into God it becomes passionate and even if it fails in something or commits an imperfection, it does not lose divine transformation because of that, nor does it leave the state of deification. Nevertheless it should be on guard that because of one action today and another tomorrow God does not turn His back on it and thus it falls into following its own opinion which is the root of all evil.

Let no one say: "Although I have performed an act of imperfection, I have no doubt that I can turn back my will because I am strong and this is within the power of my will which is strong". *Absit, absit hoc (Away, away with this!)* Such a thought would be diabolical. Cast it away, my dearest. Be on guard and indebted to grace, clinging to what is completely the work of grace within us, all being a matter of divine mercy. Be on guard, being aware of the slightest movement of your own will so that divine mercy may generate within you impulses that are pleasing to your God and surrender to them totally.

When it is in this state of loving transformation the soul can say, as it pines with love, that it is not she who commits the fault, as it did not consent to it because it was concentrating on following the will and good pleasure of God whom it loved and this is what motivated it. Who then committed the fault? Was it perhaps God? Only a loving soul could be allowed to pronounce such a loving sigh to its beloved God. Listen to what St Augustine has to say: "*Abbe charitatem e fac quod vis; ama e dic quod vis*; have charity and do what you want, love and say what you want".<sup>93</sup> Listen to what David said when he spoke with God's heart: *Ab alienis pace servo tuo. (And from those (the faults of others) spare your servant.*<sup>94</sup> Such faults are the faults of others and not mine, my dear love.

**4664** Oh soul that has been transformed into God mystically, be aware that the divine will brings about such transformation. Oh soul who is involved in speculation, be aware that you should not concentrate on what is imperfect, but on what the divine goodness has to offer. The soul should not occupy itself with feeling sorry for itself or on anything else no matter how holy this might be. It should dwell most lovingly on its Spouse where, once it has entered this abyss, it will generate acts that are no longer human but divine and where it will be further transformed in love and into the eternal good and see its true God in everything and where it will no longer be possible for it not to see Him. This is like when I stare at something with my bodily eyes I cannot miss seeing it. When the soul that has been transformed and deified into God it cannot miss seeing Him, but sees His divine will in everything that he had created.

Our annihilation proceeds from this divine transformation and we experience it at the same level. Such annihilation reveals whether the transformation is true, reasonable and genuine or merely speculative, imaginary and false. This is accomplished by the operation of the external and internal senses. Thus we recognise *utrum ex Deo sit (whether it comes from God)*. If the soul tries to see how it sees God it will lose the beatific and very secret vision, and will turn the supernatural and mystical vision into something that is intellectual and imaginary, and by the loss of the God that it possessed by divine action (Oh happy freedom!) it will become bent

<sup>93</sup> Cf. St Augustine, *In Ioan. Ep. Tr.* 7, 8; tr. 10,7; *Expositio ep. Ad Gal.* 5,57 (PL 35, 2033, 2159, 2144).

<sup>94</sup> Ps 18, 4 (*Vulg.*)



over and enter into itself becoming (what a cursed existence which separates from the vision of the true God!) and making itself into a slave to idols and imaginary things. What is worse, it will believe that it is in control and the master, while it fabricates a God in its imagination, seeing Him how and when it likes. Its gaze is far from what is mystical, and it sees nothing. It is obsessed and loses all transformation. It looks at God without seeing anything no matter how very spiritual this appears to be.

**4665** The eye of the spirit always sees something and no matter how divine this may be it is not God. Given that this is not God what is created is never enough. If the soul does not appear to be dead because it is active and feels that it is living, it does not know how to find God and it becomes more unclear and does not know that this is happening. It happens because the will has not accepted what is mystical and beyond what is intelligible as this is as it beatifies the soul and absorbs all the faculties and senses withdrawing all their human activity enabling them to generate divine heroic virtues and all that they can see is God who is beyond what is visible. If they did see something they would lose God and as a consequence the faculties and the senses would be carrying on a human activity. What is wrong is that this is adopting a speculative point of view, even though it is subtle and very spiritual and therefore *exitus acta probat (the proof is in the outcome)*. When the sack is emptied dust not flower comes out.

Holy God shows Himself to the soul by infusing certain divine enlightenment into the depths of the soul and by giving it certain divine promptings in the depths of the soul which the soul should cultivate, (or at least desire intellectually), while travelling the path of nothingness (a path that retains divine enlightenment in the soul so that it is totally consumed by it and gradually becomes deified), *qui postest capere capiat (let he who is able to accept it, accept it)*,<sup>95</sup> so that by surrendering possession of himself, he allows another to take over all his faculties. It is a fact that the divine enlightenment will both strip us and fit us out. So that nature may not deceive us or submerge<sup>96</sup> us in negligence. The creature needs to be on guard, divesting himself and practising annihilation as much as possible and travel the path of nothingness.

**4666** The deification of the will consists in uniting the human will to the divine will, so that in everything it wishes nothing else than what God wants. If one is not steeped in this and disposed to carry it out even in the smallest things one will not enjoy total deification despite the fact that the acts which are performed in accord with the divine will are deifying. In this case the will has not been deified since it remains outside the state of deification. I know how important this is and what has been lost. Whoever recognises that his heart has not been deified (and is lacking the state of divine annihilation because it is acting in a contrary manner) needs to sweat in order to be completely divested and offer up all his prayers, communions, disciplines as well as all his thoughts, tears and sighs.

Who can stride like this or travel confidently in such a short and snappy, precise and divine manner! How profoundly he will find God! How profoundly! How profoundly! It is impossible for a true lover to perform an act that is in opposition to his beloved who is the eternal good otherwise he does not deserve to be known as a true lover. A true lover performs acts that are pleasing to his beloved. Thus *anima magis animat ubi amat; quam ubi abitat (the soul's love is stronger where it loves than where it livess)*.<sup>97</sup> Ideally for real mystics the slightest act of separation from the object of their love is worse than fornication (this in line with Cassian says in his sermons on the Saintly Fathers,<sup>98</sup> who proclaim nothing less than such divine union)

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<sup>95</sup> Mt 19, 12.

<sup>96</sup> *Somergga* in the text = *sommerga*.

<sup>97</sup> For this philosophical adage see S. Bernardo, *Liber de precepto et dispensatione*, c. 20, n. 60 (PL, 182, 829).

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Ioannis Cassiani, *Collatio XIV*, 11 (PL 49, 973s).



and who cry over it as something which has been committed against God and not against anyone else. See folio 28.<sup>99</sup>

**4667** Genuine mystical enlightenment is more than intimate. The faithful soul finds God in the midst of disruption, impatience, loss or alienation. The faithful soul would discover God in the midst of hell itself. Even when God has withdrawn his loving mercy, the faithful soul enjoys him more. Banishment is replaced by a deeper vision of the divine essence which appears more clearly. Oh words so full of contradiction,<sup>100</sup> but which portray a soul which has been deified and transformed in loving her beloved God!

When the person who loves God immerses his soul in God with his gaze fixed on His infinite goodness he finds himself in a condition of indescribable peace as he lays aside the weapons of the different kinds of sacred considerations and spiritual exercises which he employed in the battles against the assaults of the enemy. This is something truly wonderful. *Posuit prodigia super terram (He has done wonders on earth) arcum etc. et confringet arma et scuta comburet igni (broken weapons and burnt the shield with fire). Vacate et vedeta (try this and you will see).*<sup>101</sup> Beware, I say, spiritual soldier that at times your great One (motivated by the infinite flame of His divine love) will slow you down after you have been bound by grace alone, through passions that are stronger than what you have experienced up to now. They will be so strong that it might seem that you have been brought to the edge of a cliff and that your higher faculties have risen in spectacular revolt (I will not speak about the lower faculties which you can look investigate). This will be so strong that you will not be able to find a way out because you have lost all peace and contentment in deed and word. I say this because the poor little ship of the soul will not know where the storm will take it. Do not be upset about this, simply endure it and do not worry if you are unable to make acts of love. Simply endure it. Leave everything to the Spouse and do nothing more, *etiam si occideris, in te sperabo (although you should kill me, I should trust in you)*<sup>102</sup> I shall always hope in You, my only Good. Tests me as You wish.

**4668** When the battle is over, the spiritual soldier will see clearly how the depth of his soul was protected and could not fall and how he did not comprehend that he was being crucified because of love. I say that this took place in the depths of his soul and that each attack came from the burning motion of a volcanic eruption of love. He sees all the above clearly, but even so the poor soul is engulfed in thick cloud and thinks that God has abandoned him in spite of the fact that he now enjoys and experiences God very clearly although in an obscure manner. All that remains for the soul who has been enwrapped in such bitterness is a small breath of the most gentle, epigrammatic and very spirited hope in her God that contains indescribable strength. The soul does not experience this *speculative (in a speculative manner) but prattice (in a practical manner); qui potest capere capiat (let whoever can understand, understand).*

Moved by His eternal goodness, the eternal Good delights in revealing Himself to the soul when it is experiencing such blindness so that the soul sees uncreated love in everything and in nothing and this consumes the soul and deifies it continually. Oh what a happy consummation! When a soul who is in this state commits some defect (I do not say that it does this deliberately since it has given up its will) it is doing nothing more than placing an obstacle between itself and God

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<sup>99</sup> See below, number 4669.

<sup>100</sup> This is characteristic of mystical language which employs rhetorical figures of speech such as paradox, oxymoron and chiasmus. Cf. M. Baldini, *Il linguaggio dei mistici*, Brescia 1986; C. Ossola, *Apoteosi ed ossimoro, La retorica della "traslazione" e retorica dell "unione" nel viaggio mistico a Dio: teati italiani dei secoli XVI-XVII*, in *Mistica e retorica*. Studi raccolti a cura di Franco Bolgiani, Firenze 1977, 47-103.

<sup>101</sup> Cf Ps 45, 9-11.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Job 13, 15.



which smears the beautiful vision. However, the lover who is drawing the beloved to Himself, draws him closer to Himself and all the darkness and obscurity that has been caused by delinquency, negligence or perturbation is immediately consumed and annihilated. Oh love without end! When in this state the soul should not conduct itself *active, sed passive*.

#### *Important point*

**4669** A soul conducts itself *active* when it deliberately concentrates on an involuntary fault, groans over it, sobs and sighs while thinking that this will please the spouse. Melancholy has distorted his vision and as a consequence he could not generate more disgust as he dashes his spouses feelings to the ground since the spouse only desires to be united with the soul which, not so much because of the involuntary failing, but because it is deliberately moaning over it has ruptured union: *qui potest capere capiat*.

A soul conducts itself *passive* when having committed an involuntary fault it is happy and at peace about it and rejoices in the arms of her beloved God. Having become frantic over the Beloved, it tries even more to devour Him and by means of mystical resources it is transformed beyond the most spiritual and loving sentiments where it burns with love, groaning, weeping and sighing. Such groans, tears and sighs are no longer human but divine. *Beatus homo, quem tu erudieris, Domine; et de lege tua docueris eum* etc.<sup>103</sup> (*Blessed is the man whom you instruct, O Lord, and whom you teach your law.*)

There are two processes and each in its own way combines to achieve something, that is completely pleasing to God and so I say: Blessed is the soul whom you instruct, O Lord. Enlightenment and action have to travel together in order to produce genuine mystical progress,<sup>104</sup> otherwise etc. Enlightenment produces action by illuminating and deifying the faculties which once they have been enlightened are stimulated and produce effects that are in line with what pleases God and are completely divine. Actions demonstrate whether the enlightenment was genuine or false. *Utrum ex Deo sit? Ex fructibus cognoscetis eum*. (*Is it from God? By their fruit you shall know.*) A good tree produces good fruit.<sup>105</sup> A bad tree is not like this. Firstly you should prune a tree removing its beautiful branches, flowers foliage and fruit and then graft onto it divine enlightenment. It cannot do anything with its original properties but with those with which it is grafted *dabit fructum centesimum*.<sup>106</sup> (*it will produce a hundredfold*). This will all be the work of divine enlightenment, *dividens singulis prout vult*<sup>107</sup> (*giving to each one as He wishes*).

**4670** Both beginners and those who are proficient still need to perform acts of fervent love, the more fervent the more they will purify and deify the soul by taking away passions. This is the work and strength of divine enlightenment by means of which God reveals Himself to the soul transforming it. This is genuine divine consummation if the acts are not so much ardent and produced by the senses but more intense, more all-embracing, more pure, more transformative in the lover and no longer human but divine, no longer ours but God's, *qui habitat in nobis*<sup>108</sup> (*who is living within us*). This is when I say all created things, both external and internal are reduced to nothing and God and the soul become intensely united, where desire is enkindled and what is desired is the Human Word. When He prayed to His eternal

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<sup>103</sup> Ps 93, 12 (Vulg.).

<sup>104</sup> Note in the margin: *Un occhio fisso in Dio quanto ferisce Dio non l'opers*. (*An eye fixed on God strikes God more than works.*)

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Mt 7, 16-19.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Mt 13, 8.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. note 5. Cf. 1 Cor 7, 7; Rom 12, 3; Eph 4, 7.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. 2 Tim 1, 14..



Father He said: *Pater, rogo pro eis, ut sint unum, sicut nos unum sumus, ut sicut tu Pater in me, et ego in te, ita ipsi in nobis unum sint, consummate in unum.*<sup>109</sup> (Father I pray for them, that they may be one, as we also are one, as you Father in me, and I in you; that they also may be one in us, united as one). Oh what a happy union!

I have already said that when a soul commits such faults it puts something that has been created between itself and God so that you will understand the damage that occurs when you do not know how to guide yourself and, the way in which you ought to act so as to find God in these faults and separation, as I said above in folio 36,<sup>110</sup> This occurrence is something that shows a little lack of experience and which causes darkness through a lack of enlightenment. The sun has set and night has fallen. Something else catches the eye. It just happens. When the soul was annihilated it continually enjoyed God in everything. In these circumstances it loses sight of God, because it is a fact that *annihilatione manifestatur Deus, annihilatione videtur divina essential.*<sup>111</sup> (God is manifest during annihilation, during annihilation the divine essence is perceived). Oh what a harsh and distressful existence, cursed be such an existence, you bring to an end all that I feel is good and are the source of all that is bad for me. This is of little account because you bring to an end God's immense divinity. Admit, Brother N, admit in sincerity that when you are far from what seems good to you that you exist no longer but only the Lord exists in you. What a tyrannical existence that having cast aside infinite divine existence, my soul has brought such evil upon me. To what depths have you reduced me? Oh my dearest one, live and sigh for redemption and grace. Move on and I repeat what I said in folio 23 that the soul who loves can truly say that such faults are not his own. The Holy Spirit says *alieni sunt, non tui anima sponsa mea, (they belong to someone else, not to your soul, my spouse)*<sup>112</sup>

**4671** *Ingredietur et egredietur, et pasqua inveniet. Benedictus sit exitus, multo magis talis introitus. (He shall go in and go out, and shall find pastures. Blessed shall this going out be, more bless such coming in).*<sup>113</sup> Blessed is such going out! Oh how much greater and better is such entering in which comes about from such blessed going out! Entry and exit! At the moment of entry there is exit and pasture. Oh what a happy and blessed state! By producing enlightenment in the depths of the soul, the Uncreated Light immediately begins to take over a human being (not by means of philosophy, but by means of divine operation), infusing it with a divine quality, and to the extent to which is it taken over it becomes deified, transformed, moved beyond itself, its passions, feelings, created vision, desires, wishes and its whole being. This enlightenment or divine touch takes over all the weapons of spiritual meditation and exercises with which it had been assisted in opposing the enemy etc. This is what I said in folio 26. To conclude, it divests its whole being, transforming it into God, whose essence, life and properties it assumes. *Haec mutatio est dextrae excelsi, (this transformation is the right hand of the Most High)*<sup>114</sup> and not ours. Thus is will remain without spiritual strength. The soul has gone beyond itself and is even devoid of holy considerations. Do not listen to me now, but to the Holy Spirit: *In exitu Israel d'Egitto facta est potestas eius. (when Israel went out of Egypt it achieved dominion)*<sup>115</sup> When the soul went out etc. it was immediately clothed with the very *omnipotence*

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<sup>109</sup> Jn 17, 19a. 11b; 21. 23..

<sup>110</sup> See ahead n. 4676, and above n. 4652 and 4660.

<sup>111</sup> That is: God manifests himself during annihilation. God's essence is seen during annihilation. This concept is common among mystics. As representative of this see John of the Cross who explains that during the state of union God's stark and pure essence is shared through love with the pure and stark essence of the soul. Cf. *Opere*, edite by p. Ferdinando di S. Maria, Roma, 1963, 1183s, 1231 (= analytical index under annichilamento or annientamento; Essenza divina).

<sup>112</sup> This expression is not a Biblical quotation. It refers to what has been said above. Cf. n. 4663.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Jn 10, 9; Dt 28, 6.

<sup>114</sup> Ps 76, 11 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>115</sup> An adaptation of Ps 113, 1 (*Vulg.*).



of God. *Scuto circumdabit eam divina Unitas, Deus.* (God, the only God encompassed you with a shield) <sup>116</sup> God Himself will be the shield, shelter and fortress of a soul like this.

When the soul has placed God at its centre, *ipse praecingat se, faciet illam discumbere, et transiens ministrabit ei* (he will gird himself and make them sit down and passing will minister to them). <sup>117</sup> What will he feed them? *Pascua!* Ah my dearest, what nourishment! In this state while the soul is reclining and enjoying, lost in her God, she will drop all disputing about incidental matters (I call them incidental as far as they are related to the soul) and persecution and contradiction etc. will arise. When the soul is absorbed in her God, in the divine abyss and reclining blind to whatever is created and can see nothing else, it become totally absorbed by her uncreated eternal Good. The faculties cannot produce their acts and although the lower faculties endure the most atrocious anxiety and devastating attacks, the soul clearly sees that its deep regions are possessed by her God *beyond* what is intellectual. She can desire nothing else than this persecution, not as persecution (which while she sees it does not see it: *qui capere capiat*) but as giving gratification and pleasure to her beloved. If it seemed to be persecution the senses would have to react in their usual manner and this would mean ruin. Thus it sees and does not see. I know well that you understand this way of speaking. <sup>118</sup> Thus I say no more than: *qui potest capere capiat.* <sup>119</sup>

**4672** Why is it that even in mature persons these faculties that have been absorbed and are filled with considerations of what is eternal can do nothing else and cannot go on seeking, *et transiens ministrabat illi* (moving around he will serve them). What will he serve them? He will serve them *Pascua*, divine nourishment, heavenly food, that is sweet, exceedingly spiritual, manifestations that are beyond the intellect, profoundest clarity and the most hidden exalted secrets, mystical proclamations, divine secrets: *vacate et videte* (be still and see). <sup>120</sup> However this will be *transiens*, in passing, not continuous, not in the open, not face to face, but *transiens* etc.

In this state the soul sees God in everything. All is quiet, peace, consolation, love, desire, but which is not filled by creatures, although they may be very spiritual and divine. It is divested and brilliant in its God. To love what is good in creatures is good, but when mystical transformation has occurred this is defacement. The genuine mystic should base his love (since where love abides there will the heart, peace and every good abide) on a stable foundation, that cannot fall, so that he may abide with the beloved forever. Although good abides in what has been created, the truth is that whatever is good comes down from the uncreated, eternal divine good. Even this can be lost sight of since the object is created and exists as a visible, mortal creature. In the end when this has fallen out of sight one's heart, peace and what was good will be lost. <sup>121</sup> There are few who can love a creature in the abstract, moving beyond it being a mere creature. I dare say that these few can see a little of what belongs to a creature while acknowledging the presence of God which makes it appear to be not so distasteful but truly sweet and smooth and this makes the heart seek it ardently.

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<sup>116</sup> An adaptation of Ps 90, 5 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>117</sup> Lk 12, 37.

<sup>118</sup> These are the antitheses and contradictions of mystical language concerning which see above in note 16.

<sup>119</sup> This expression which has been taken from Mt 19, 12, which, as we have seen, is continually repeated in order to explain that it will be difficult for anyone who has not had this experience to grasp this supernatural logic.

<sup>120</sup> Ps 54, 11 (*Vulg.*)

<sup>121</sup> At this point in the manuscript there is a repetition which is a mistake and then there appears the sentence that had appeared a few lines above : *ma pure* etc up to *a situate in creatura*.



**4673** . I say to the person who is the spiritual guide<sup>122</sup> to watch that the loving that has been mentioned is not carried to extremes as the subject is still on a journey and it is not the responsibility of the one who is being guided to be watchful. The one who is being guided remains lifeless, lost and annihilated, blind. All his judgement and reasoning is suppressed as is all healthy and holy discourse. He subjects himself to the will of his guide, isolated from himself, his body and his soul. His thought is no longer his but that of his guide. Whoever experiences this, and does not act in the manner that we have described above, and still intends to be vigilant and awake concerning the smallest thing however holy and divine, will have abandoned the state of deification. He will live without being spiritually dead, exist without being spiritually annihilated. This frame of mind (even though it is due to a fear of losing contact with God) will take away the genuine vision of God. (This is the accursed fear, the accursed consciousness that burst out in the Apostle Peter when he walked on the deep when God reached out to him).<sup>123</sup> Happy the one who relishes this divine state! It is a special gift of God. He will understand the situation well. Oh Eve what a lot of evil you unleashed when you gazed on the apple. It would have been better if you had never seen it!

Now I will offer another piece of advice for those who are spiritual directors so that when they have been more enlightened, and when the strength of the enemy has abated and the traps sprung, victory will be achieved and God will be glorified. Whoever gives direction should be very vigilant, and when he observes that one of his spiritual children become weak, having turned him towards God (in a gentle manner, that is by means of suggestion) he should make him speak the most loving, peaceful and self-abasing aspirations: "Oh my God, my composure comes from you; you are my peacefulness. You are my respite, delight, joy, longing and my all. Should the heavens fall or everything be lost, my serenity would not be lost because it exists in you. You, my dear one, are my good". I do not wish to give more advice at this point, but I will offer what is most important for your spiritual wellbeing.

My dearest I now invite you to make time for most leisurely and divine silence (where the soul becomes involved in genuine mystical conversation with her spouse). I do this all the more because I know that following immediately upon each little word or ray of enlightenment you will grasp what I am saying (being instructed by that which possesses you from within). However, be aware that you desire this consciously.

**4674** The Holy Spirit says to the soul: "*I will allure her into the wilderness and I will speak to her heart.*"<sup>124</sup> I shall lead her off into solitude and I shall speak to her there in the depths of her heart, permitting her to hear divine secrets.<sup>125</sup> My dearest in Christ, let us speak about spiritual solitude and mystical divine leisure for a while. When the uncreated and inaccessible light infuses enlightenment into the secret recesses of the soul it immediately divests it of what is humanly created, of all images and representations of both created and uncreated objects. In fact it divests it of all holy dialogue and divine considerations; no matter how exalted they may be, including considerations about the Holy Trinity.

This illumination performs two operations in the soul. It purifies and enlightens it. It purifies the soul of all that was mentioned above to the point of rendering it naked and simple so that without the aid of any representation or image it enjoys the Eternal and Uncreated Good which is beyond all consideration, thought or existence by means of contemplation. It enlightens the soul because it renders the soul capable of seeing God in a manner that is beyond intellectual possibility without the

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<sup>122</sup> That is the spiritual director.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Mt 14, 28-31.

<sup>124</sup> Hosea 2, 14.

<sup>125</sup> A note in the left margin runs the full length of the folio. *Discussion concerning genuine solitude. Read it attentively.*



assistance of any appearances or images, however divine these might be. Then when the human spirit has been divested of all that was mentioned above, it is raised in the most spiritual solitude, in this delightful leisure, in this most divine darkness, most splendid mist, in this mystical union, to beholding her God in everything, within and without and above everything etc.<sup>126</sup>

**4675** This divine process is so personal and effective that it brings about purification and enlightenment, and although it is not experienced, it produces heroic and divine actions, which are not perceived, *qui potest capere capiat* etc. O divine contact, how you bring about a transformation! Oh inaccessible light, how magnetic you are! Oh you, who are charming beyond what the intellect can grasp, how genuine and childlike you are! Oh touch of love, how fervent you are! How sweetly you consume the soul changing everything that you touch into yourself!

This divine enlightenment imparts very great gifts on the soul by deifying it and transforming it so that it makes the soul one with the enlightenment. Once the soul has been steeped in this all its impurities and imperfections are submerged and annihilated and at the same time hidden divine mysteries are revealed and joy in God is aroused by means of contemplating Him without the veil of any imagery, as if He were abiding within, not as some object, but beyond everything, every consolation, joy, or desire, not arising from the soul itself, but with the soul being allured by her dear God, whose savour and good pleasure nourishes her and satisfies her. What remains is the annihilation of everything that is created.

Oh how many are deceived by this holy leisure! Not having this divine action and attraction, they remain in a state of abstraction focused on themselves, and in such false leisure they think they are in union with God, not realising that the soul is not capable of producing this withdrawal, since what is required is a special act of the Holy Spirit so that when its faculties have been raised and steeped in it, all natural activity will cease and supernatural and divine activity will be brought forth. If the soul wishes to arrive at the state of perfect annihilation, divine solitude and withdrawal by means of actions it should recognise that the more acts it produces the further it will be from the divine mystical union, which excludes all human activity, no matter how spiritual. This cannot be achieved by means of human activity. Divine activity divests the soul of all that is created however holy and divine this may be. In this state the soul should conduct itself *passively* not *actively*. So that *annihilatione manifestatur Deus* (God may be manifested by means of annihilation), not by means of acts. The soul comes to see by means of the path of nothingness, because while there is human activity it is still human activity and then there will be no annihilation and the soul will be far from the intimate union which is achieved by means of divine leisure.

**4676** Therefore devout souls (I am not referring to you who, by the grace of God, have already been divested of memory, intellect, will and everything human) should never stop meditating under the pretext of taking cultivating this state. I have already demonstrated that in this state of divine solitude it is the Spirit of God who must produce such admirable and divine actions. This takes place when the soul makes room for enlightenment by setting aside all impediments by walking the path of nothingness (*qui potest capere capiat*) so that this enlightenment can do its work which to purify, illumine and bring about union. It will generate each of these effects to the same degree and extent. The more a soul is purified, the more it is enlightened. The more the soul participates in union, the more enlightenment it receives, which

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<sup>126</sup> This principle of mystical life is emphasised strongly in all spiritual literature, for example, in the works of Dionysius the Areopagite and at greater depth in the works of John of the Cross who explains how the soul, after it has been divested of all appearances and images, is transformed into the pure and simple light of the state of perfection. Cf. *Salita del monte Carmelo*, lib. II, cap. 15, n. 4 (S. Giovanni della Croce, *Opera* cit., 128s).



causes it to be more purified and illumined by means of uncreated, divine, inaccessible light etc. This truth came from Christ's lips: *Father I pray that they may be in me as I am in you.*<sup>127</sup>

So that you will not be mistaken regarding divine leisure<sup>128</sup> I point out that leisure comes from nature when, being asleep within itself and musing, as if dreaming, the soul's eye is fixed on being at peace and on consolations, and to put it bluntly, the focus is completely on the self. When trials come the faculties feel repugnance and the soul experiences nothing but what is negative. Leisure comes from grace when the soul is absorbed in her God, transformed by love, blind to peacefulness and consolation, to itself and all it might gain, no matter how very spiritual, and to all created things, no matter how divine, and she is unmistakably fixed on God, in whom she enjoys one thing above all else, not just reposing in the silence but lying there as if on a footrest, *in Deo suo*. When trials arise the faculties rush into action, but once they instinctively recognise the uncreated object which fills and satisfies them, they seek no further, nor could they do so. When the soul is absorbed it enjoys divine pastures. *In loco pascuae, ibi me collocavit. Ibi requiescet in herbis virentibus; et in pascuis pingtibus.* Eze. *Quia ibi inveniet pascuas uberez et valde bonas; et terram latissimam et quietem et fertilem.* Chronicles: Oh way a most happy place of peace, *et factus est in pace locus eius.*<sup>129</sup>

**4677** Now I ask: If it does not feel anything does the soul acquire any merit? There is no doubt that it does not acquire merit when the cause of not feeling anything is situated within nature. When the lack of feeling is caused by grace (with the soul creating the opportunity for grace to gradually transform and empower it, grace unites and transforms the soul into her eternal Good) the soul acquires merit continually to an indescribable degree which surpasses the capacity of the human intellect. When the soul is absorbed in her most delightful beloved and the will is transformed in loving, all the other faculties are overruled, dominated by love, which the more intense this is, the greater are the indescribable merits that the soul receives. It is not activity which causes difficulty or resistance in the will, the fact is that the will puts up resistance because it does not want something to happen but wants something else. Wherever love is everything is sweet. If the will was not putting up resistance there would be no difficulty.

Worldly lovers have proved this to me. Their will is not focused on themselves but on the one whom they love. What they want depends on what their beloved wants. They do not experience the slightest difficulty in enduring whatever pain to give the beloved what he wishes, even to giving up their life. I shall speak on their behalf even though experience *quae est rerum magistra* (which is life's tutor) blasts this out, and I note that such things either do not appear to be painful or strike one as being that painful, but appear to be rather quite tasty morsels and because they flood the soul with love they are, I think, coated with sugar and are nuts which taste like honey. Read the life of St Ignatius the Martyr or that of my Seraphic Father who was an authentic imitator of the Crucified which illustrate what I have been speaking about.<sup>130</sup> Let us return to our topic.

I have stated that no act would be difficult. Being flogged naked through the whole of Naples in shame and dishonour would be difficult for worldly people. However, this would be nothing for a soul who is absorbed with the love of her eternal Good and as a consequence her body would not resist this or anything else. All

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<sup>127</sup> Jn 17, 21.

<sup>128</sup> Note in the margin: *Note. How one can distinguish false from true contemplation.*

<sup>129</sup> Cf. respectively Ps 22, 2 (*Vulg.*) He has set me in a place of pasture; Eze 34, 14 I will feed them in the most fruitful pastures ... there they shall rest on the green grass. (Cf. also Is 40, 11; 1 Pt 2, 29); 1 Cr 4; 40; Ps 75, 3 (*Vulg.*)

<sup>130</sup> For St Ignatius the Martyr refers to his letters especially those which were written to the Romans (cf. *PG* 5, 685-696). For St Francis, remember his famous saying: "the good that I desire is so great, that all suffering seems delightful to me".



this depends on the will not the activity. Once the will has been transformed into what the beloved wishes, in loving her God she will be deified, invested with and become one with the will of God, who lives and reigns in her. Bless the soul who can truly say: *Qui creavit me, requievit in tabernaculo meo. (He that made me, rested in my tabernacle).*<sup>131</sup>

**4678** Rejoice; rejoice again, o blessed soul, that you have reason to be in such peace and real indescribable and immeasurable merit having overcome and defeated all difficulties. I say that you have conquered because by being deified you have been transformed. How happy you are in loving continuously and conquering. You have overcome by the power of love which made it impossible for all the possible fearful difficulties in the world to disturb you, *quia quamque corpore intra sustinet, corde tamen fixus in coelo est. (although you endured much in body, your heart was attached to heaven).* At times some very dangerous events and the like occasionally influenced you to be steadier and to discover more strength as if you were a very strong person who when he has to struggle with someone who is young does not consider the possibilities but throws him to the ground immediately and overcomes him. When a brave person advances with a strong heart he will overcome the other and conquer him. I say that this will take place even though he be imperfect if his heart is ever alert and united with grace, where, once it has been made strong it will overcome all the difficulties in the world, which *non conturbabit iustum, quidquid ei acciderit.*<sup>132</sup> Thus he can say with the Apostle: Quis me separabit a caritate Christi? Tribulatio etc. (What can separate me from the love of Christ? Tribulation ...). What could ever separate me from the love of my Christ? Perhaps tribulation! Anxiety! I can overcome anxiety or whatever its consequences are by means of the love of Him who loves me so much since I do everything in God who strengthens me.<sup>133</sup>

**4679** My dearest take a moment to dwell on the strength which the Apostle says comes from God. He follows this by saying: I am certain. This is an expression that only a lover would say. I am certain. *Certus sum enim, quia neque mors, neque vita, neque angeli, necque etc.* can separate me from the love of my God.<sup>134</sup> St John Chrysostom says that in this passage the Apostle challenges every creature visible and invisible, those who have been created and those who are still to be created as well as all those who could have been created but were never created that is every creature under God.<sup>135</sup> Mr dearest in Christ, why is Paul so bold? Ah, he says it himself: *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat. (I can do all things in him who strengthens me).*<sup>136</sup> Note that Paul does not say that everything is possible to creaturely faculties but to the omnipotence of the Creator. Ah, what love could be so strong that no force could be its equal: *Omnia vincit amor,*<sup>137</sup> *vincit invisibilem (it conquers what is invisible).* It conquers God Himself, when by transforming the soul which is in love, it gives her a share in all the Divine properties, making it one with God. Oh the strength of love and what it can achieve! What the Apostle said is true: "I can do everything, not by relying on myself, but relying on Him who gives me strength, on my God who is all-powerful, once divine love has transformed me." Oh my dearest, why do we not love?

If the soul is not distracted and is not experiencing difficulties when it is under pressure the soul will act out of love and not on impulse. It is rewarded by the beloved with continual and inestimable rewards. Love motivates combat, love urges, love

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Sir 24, 12.

<sup>132</sup> Pro 12, 21. *Whatever shall befall the just man, shall not make him sad.*

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Rom 8, 35-37; Phil 4, 13.

<sup>134</sup> Rom 8, 37-39.

<sup>135</sup> S. ioan. Chrysost., *In ep. Ad Rom.*, hom.. XV, 5 (PL) 60, 346.

<sup>136</sup> Phil 4, 13.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 13, 7. (Love conquers everything).



fight, love conquers. We are the ones who are rewarded. Oh the properties of all-powerful love! Blessed is the soul who possesses them! How sweet it is for those who are in love! Oh how they see nothing but love, love, love! *Dominus possedit me in initio viarum suarum, in initio operum suorum.*<sup>138</sup> (The soul says to her Spouse) you have taken possession of me from the beginning of all your ways, of all your works and what a beginning that was. Ah my dearest, what else can there be but love? Love made up of everything good. Love that does not plunge the soul into emotions, but into the ocean of the emotion of her dear and loving God. What remains of unhappiness in the emotions is subjected and at the service of infinite events.

**4680** Oh the independence of a person who has control of everything both what is visible and invisible, with these being restrained and like slaves and overcoming such vile things which are the result of the first sin that brought him down to the point where his peace, joy and quiet was attached to and directed towards things that are vile, fragile and mortal! If a storm came, it would ruin the harvest and I would be destroyed. If it was a good season I would be happy. If I had a little ornament or halo and it was taken away so too would be my peace and joy. If I were about to win a quarrel I would be happy. If I were about to lose I would be apprehensive. If I heard that my brother had been made a cardinal, oh what a joy! If I heard that he had fallen into disgrace, oh what heartbreak! Oh what great misery. To what depths have you been brought down! Oh the exalted liberty of such a man who has come to the point where we were, O my dearest in Christ. Although we have now been set free by the immense goodness of Him who loved and loves us, let us bless him, my dearest, and return to our resolve and say: Whoever is set completely, not on the emotions, but being blind to them, on the ocean of the inner emotions of the divine heart, will hold the heavens in contempt and if the earth should shake, and the fury of hell frighten him, *non conturbavit iustum quidquid ei acciderit* (the just person shall not be disturbed by anything that happens to him), because he has become united with the divine will. When David had turned to this he said: *Non accedat ad tem alium* (no evil shall befall him). Using the image of the tabernacle to represent the dwelling place of the well-to-do God he continues *et flagellum non appropinquabit tabernaculo tuo* (nor shall the plague come near your dwelling),<sup>139</sup> nor can it possibly approach you, since *quamvis corpore multa in terra sustinet, corde tamen fixus in caelo est* (although the body endures much on earth, the heart is focused on heaven).

Oh the happiness of such a soul! Oh the extreme freedom of one who is blameless! Once he has become united with God he is no longer influenced by just anything that happens, not by law, but by the one who made the law. Listen to the Apostle Paul who is my instructor: *Spiritualis omnia iudicat* (he who is spiritual judges all things).<sup>140</sup> A spiritual person is able to judge everything and is not subject to any judge. In another place the Apostle Paul says that law is not made for a righteous person.<sup>141</sup> In another place he says: those who are blind to secondary causes progress according to the primary cause and are led by the Spirit of God. They are not subject to any law.<sup>142</sup> *Ubi spiritual Domini, ibi libertas* (where the spirit of the lord is, there is liberty).<sup>143</sup> Oh what happy freedom such souls possess!

**4681** Whenever the soul experiences pain, it never sins. Whenever the soul experiences pain, it possesses self love. You experience the former and then the later. I am only speaking about a soul who is in love, not about any other. A soul possessed

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<sup>138</sup> Prov. 8, 22. The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made anything in the beginning.

<sup>139</sup> Ps 90, 10 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>140</sup> 1 Cor. 2, 15.

<sup>141</sup> 1 Tim. 1, 9; Gal. 5, 23.

<sup>142</sup> Gal. 5, 18

<sup>143</sup> 2 Cor. 3, 17.



by desire never wants anything but her God. It relishes nothing but her God. When she feels like this I say that she does not fall since she does not want anything. If it appears to fall into an involuntary fault, she sighs, feels regretful and sobs. While she experiences a feeling of sadness between herself and her God this is not sinful. This is the situation with every kind of temptation. The greater the feeling of sorrow the less sinfulness and the greater the reward. Therefore, let the soul rejoice and neither be downcast nor think that it has ceased loving.

Listen to the master of those who are mystical lovers, and vessels of election: *Non quod volo bonum hoc facio; sed quod nolo malum hoc ago.* (For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice). List to what Paul says concerning himself: O the great unhappiness of feeling contradictions within myself, because I do not carry out the good things that I want to, but perform the bad things that I do not want to do.<sup>144</sup> Oh what a consolation are these words! Who has said them? On folio 23 I indicated how while one ought to consider this one needs to be careful not to become separated or distanced from God, but to become more closely transformed into God where the weeping, sobs and sighs are divine. I said the same on folio 28 with regard to intense mystical divine love.<sup>145</sup>

**4682** Whenever love is painful there is self-love even if it appears to be very spiritual. A soul that loves God exclusively cannot enjoy anything else, (I say cannot as long as it deserves the title of guiltless lover), than performing what is pleasing to God, on which it has fixed its gaze entirely, no matter how divine anything else may seem to be. If a soul has very clear and subtle sight it cannot ever suffer pain or affliction because (as it is blind to created things) it regards what is pleasing to God as its sole delight and pleasure, (*Diligentibus Deum, omnia cooperantur in bonum, etiam peccata. All things work together for good to those who love God, even sin.*).<sup>146</sup> more than the acquisition of virtue, more than union with God in itself, no matter how holy this may be, even more than the practice of spiritual exercises to an heroic degree. It pays no attention to activities but is totally focused on giving pleasure to its beloved God, who is doing everything for it in a divine manner. It recognises this most clearly in everything. It is nourished, satisfied, lives and flourishes on this thought alone and this affords it rest and repose. *In omnibus requiem quesivi,*<sup>147</sup> in everything I sought true rest. What is true rest? Listen to St Augustine who discovered it: *Inquietum est cor meum, Domine Jesu, donec requiescat in te.*<sup>148</sup> (*My soul was wrestles, Lord Jesus, until it found rest in you*). My heart was always wrestles, O my Jesus, until I discovered true rest, which could only be in you, me dear God. Only this gave true rest to my afflicted and troubled heart.

Now listen to a soul who is in love when it realises that it has been deprived of this unique and beatific vision: *Abscondisti facem tuam a me, et factus sum conturbatus.* (You hid your face and I was troubled)<sup>149</sup> *Convertere igitur anima mea in requiem tuam, quia Dominus benefecit tibi.* (Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.)<sup>150</sup> *Haec requies mea in saeculum saeculi, hic habitabo quoniam elegi eam.* (This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it.)<sup>151</sup> *Hic sedebo in pulcritudine pacis in tabernaculis fiduciae, et in requie opulenta.* (I shall dwell in a peaceful dwelling, in a secure dwelling, in luxurious repose.)<sup>152</sup> *O felicissima session, quando, quando sedebo? Quando levabo me super me, quod nobis concedere dignetur, qui vivit et regnat in saecula*

<sup>144</sup> Cf. Rom. 7, 19. 24.

<sup>145</sup> See above, n. 4663 and n. 4669.

<sup>146</sup> Rom. 8, 28.

<sup>147</sup> Sir. 24, 11.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. S. Augus. *Confes.* Lib. 1, c. 1 (PL. 32, 661).

<sup>149</sup> Ps 29, 8 (Vulg.)

<sup>150</sup> Ps 114, 7 (Vulg.)

<sup>151</sup> Ps 131, 14 (Vulg.).

<sup>152</sup> Is 32, 18.



*saeculorum. Amen. (When, when shall I rest in such happy repose? When you who live and reign forever and ever deign to raise me above myself, Amen.)*



### 3. DIVINE ENLIGHTENMENT, MYSRICAL PRACTICES, GIVEN TO A SOUL BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

*How a soul ought to take control of everything by trampling vanity.*

**4683** I greet you, away from our innumerable struggles, disturbances, imperfection and numerous frustrated desires, my dear one, where all your contentment and mine is to be found, because it is not possible to find our peace, quiet or perfection to our complete satisfaction anywhere else.<sup>153</sup>

I derived much consolation from some the words of Solomon that were contained in the midnight office.<sup>154</sup> After observing everything under the sun he said: "Everything is vanity and spiritual vexation."<sup>155</sup> My dearest one, let us live beyond the sun where no annoyance can reach us or any accident occur. We are not in control, but let us take control. You are in control of everything that has been created and not its slave. To be dominated is a serious disgrace, to dominate everything very noble. Be masters and not slaves. Let us worry about nothing but aspiring towards heaven where our consolation lies. My dearest in heaven everything that we can see is beneath our feet. In this exile our consolation is that we shall leave it behind forever. *Et haec sit consolation mea ut affligens me dolore non parcat. (This may be my comfort that afflicting me with sorrow, he spared me not).*<sup>156</sup>

Whatever comes up to disturb your beautiful peace (which is the only place where God is alive) cast it aside no matter how good, holy or necessary it appears to be. Take no notice of anything. God will not allow anything to take away your peace. If heaven, earth or hell shake, let nothing separate you from what lies deep within you, which you enjoy with great clarity, and rest there, and love it and simply remain there. Then what can frighten you? Like Magdalene<sup>157</sup> rejoice in peace about everything, doubts, fears, scruples and in everything else place yourself at the disposal of the divine pleasure and firmly and resolutely wish for nothing else than to desire and hope for what is pleasing to God, stripped of whatever is created, however holy or divine. Act thus is whatever is spiritual or temporal or a gift from God no matter how exalted, intimate or pure it might be so that this bright sun<sup>158</sup> may disperse all the clouds of temptation and enable you to instantly spit in the face of anything else. Let us love with simple faith believing that we shall enjoy face to face that which we now hope for, which is always present to us.

*How the soul can enjoy eternal peace while on the journey. Chapter Two.*

**4684** Oh my dearest if you want to penetrate incomprehensible divine pronouncements this is the situation in which you will find yourself. Where will that leave us? Let us not be worried, O my God. The spirit is able to penetrate the depths of the divine abyss.<sup>159</sup> We were created naked to be absorbed by what is divine.<sup>160</sup> Observe how in everything the spirit relishes beatific peace. Why is this? Because once it has been absorbed in the first cause it enjoys the depth of divine wisdom (which is recognised only by those who are blind). The spirit enjoys this in silence and apart from anything that is created or a part of intellectual discussion without knowing why. It savours this in a state of peace that is beyond understanding. It has

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<sup>153</sup> Note in the margin: *Deus meus et omnia*

<sup>154</sup> That is during the midnight office of Readings that was celebrated in the friaries. Note in the margin: *Note.*

<sup>155</sup> Qo. (Ecclesiastes) 1, 2. 14; 12, 8.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Job 6, 10.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Lk 10, 19.

<sup>158</sup> Note in the margin: *The spiritual person should distance himself from visions.*

<sup>159</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 2, 10. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, and the deep things of God.

<sup>160</sup> Note in the margin: *The way of being absorbed in the depths of what is divine.*



no regard for war, plague, wind, heat, storm, calm, sin or any evil but delights alone in God (obeying His every wish). It never draws back from this. Thus it always remains in peace and therefore it is blessed.<sup>161</sup> O my God, this is how it is. My dearest it is far removed from creatures.

Whoever is wrapped in the divine will no longer questions why has this happen, why that happened, why it is so because he can see nothing but what is pleasing to God. Why would one want to understand the reason for something when to carry out the will of God is his only sustenance and satisfaction? He does not care if it rains, if it snows or if it is calm. He admires what God wants and while he feels like this he sees everything in this way.<sup>162</sup>

**4685** Thinking about why<sup>163</sup> is the preoccupation of a person who is interested in what is not essential and is concerned with secondary causes. Such a person is like those who concentrate on such things and who rejoice at what seems happy, and are sad at what seems heart-rending and are tossed about by every wind. Woe to those who join them! All their upset comes about because things are not going as they wish. Believe me, this is important. Think about it.

Be dead to all desires and discussion letting nothing but what is pleasing to God control you always paying attention to this.<sup>164</sup> Who can disturb you then? Nobody: thus you will enjoy eternal peace. You will be blessed while still alive. How very happy we would be if we were divested of everything and at rest in what is pleasing to God. Who could hurt us then? Let us then divest ourselves<sup>165</sup> so that being blessed, we will immediately become wrapped in God and even if we wanted to look at something else we would not be able to do it. Those who delight in creatures cannot have such an outlook. My dearest I challenge you with this, and I urge you to progress towards it. Let us plunge ourselves into it. The more we do, the more blessed shall we be.

I beg of you to make every effort to fulfil my wish of aspiring towards complete perfection, for what I desire conforms to the yearning, the hunger and the pleasure of our beloved Lover who sees the heart and rewards untainted desires. Let all visible creatures be vexatious to us if we want to experience that peace which is a blessing on the soul while it is on the journey. This is what we shall enjoy in our homeland where the soul will be absorbed in the divine will which will accompany us forever. Amen.

*The soul is exhorted to begin. Chapter three.*

**4686** I greet you within what is pleasing to God which is the happiest dwelling for our hearts,<sup>166</sup> and the blessed souls' strongest protection against the waves of the stormy sea. Suffering ought to be our consolation,<sup>167</sup> against the rebellion that exists in fallen nature. We are journeying towards Christ in whom we shall enjoy the blessed

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<sup>161</sup> Note in the Margin *A spiritual person can be blessed while on the journey and be saintly.*

<sup>162</sup> Note in the margin on the right of the manuscript. There is a line at the end of which there is a small hand to indicate the importance of this passage.

<sup>162</sup> Note in the margin: *He who concentrates on secondary causes cannot be steadfast.*

<sup>162</sup> Note in the margin: *This state is a blessing to the soul while it is on its journey.*

<sup>162</sup> Note in the margin: *Note well.*

<sup>162</sup> Note in the margin: *A safe place for the soul.*

<sup>162</sup> Note in the margin: *Suffering ought to be consoling to a spiritual person.*



God. This is easy to say but hut difficult to put into practice. *Hic punctus est, hic labor* (This is the sharp point, this is the toil)<sup>168</sup> Therefore let us raise our eyes to the glory that we shall enjoy forever for suffering a little. We shall thus enjoy what is greater casting aside what is lesser. The more painful what is lesser is, the more beautiful the crown shall be. The smaller suffering appears to be, the brighter it will appear when we come to die.<sup>169</sup>

*The happiness of the soul who considers nothing but her God.*  
Chapter 4.

**4687** The Queen of Saba said to King Solomon: “Blessed are those servants and the ones who are in your presence always”<sup>170</sup> How much more truly could I say to God: Oh beauty which is the source of all beauty<sup>171</sup> and goodness! Oh my only dear Lord! Your servants are blessed a thousand times when they actually stand in your presence! Blessed are your servants who want nothing more than to always fulfil your loving will while living as if dead to all that is created,<sup>172</sup> no matter how very spiritual or divine it may be! Blessed are your servants who are always ready to do your pleasure and are dead to everything else! Blessed are your servants, who always walk in your sight,<sup>173</sup> putting your divine inspirations into practise, subduing their own inclinations, even though they might be spiritual, and subduing the world with all its foolish values! Blessed are your servants who, being blind to what is created are wrapped in only gazing on what is eternal! Oh what a life, in which the soul is satisfied both within and without!<sup>174</sup> Oh dearest soul why are you filled with passions and iniquitous tendencies! Oh what vision the more you focus within the more secure and fruitful you shall be! Oh, that can satisfy the greatest thirst! Oh vision that ignites the whole of the soul, even though so ungrateful, within and without with desire! (To conclude), Oh vision that beatifies the soul! (I conclude), Oh vision which, while being hidden from the world, resides in a secret place in the shadow of the Cross,<sup>175</sup> that was prepared for those who are being carried along by the breath of the Holy Spirit on paths that are beyond the intellect, along which our spirit will be devoured by the gifts of God’s grace which will stay with us always. *Amen.*

*What is the genuine vision of the soul in which, while on the journey, it beholds God in everything?*  
Chapter 5.

**4688** My most Beloved, our eye ought not to be fixed on material objects,<sup>176</sup> or anything like that, so that our heart will not dwell on creatures regarding them as if they were the Creator. Rather remaining blind to created things, it should see within it the One whom it loves. There is no need for us to speculate about things in order to discover God. (This would be an intellectual approach, which might easily lead to falsehood and error often mistaking one reality for the other). When God manifests Himself to the soul it is immediately beatified at depth. Thus all its faculties are engrossed at the same time and are captivated by this higher object. Because the faculties are not preoccupied with their own operations, without difficulty and indeed

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<sup>168</sup> This expression is taken from the Latin poet Virgil to signify the difficulty of a task. Cf. *Eneide*, VI, 129.

<sup>169</sup> This is a paraphrase of the famous saying of St Francis.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. 1 Kgs. 10, 8.

<sup>171</sup> Note in the margin: *All beauty originates in God.*

<sup>172</sup> Note in the margin: *Note well.*

<sup>173</sup> Note in the margin: *A spiritual person ought to keep one eye fixed on God alone.*

<sup>174</sup> Note in the margin: *The vision of God satisfies the soul and increases its thirst which becomes more sure of it the more it is hidden.*

<sup>175</sup> Note in the margin: *The vision of God rejoices in the cross.*

<sup>176</sup> Note in the margin: *A dangerous intellectual vision.*



with indescribable and intimate delight, the soul will relish its loving God within created things and beyond them all and in none of them. Note well that this activity does not produce an image, or any type of representation in the soul, because when it attempts to look for God by speculating it does not proceed in the way in which the intellect would proceed. But while not visualising an object it enjoys its formless Lover by means of a unique, intimate, very profound and mystical glance that is beyond the intellect, being wild with love of Him. It never ceases, nor could it cease, going beyond the various limits of different kinds of beauty, grandeur or attractiveness to steal our heart away from what can be visualised. Why would genuine love attempt this? So that it may enjoy its beloved in everything and in nothing.<sup>177</sup> When the soul sees him, it sees him and does not see him. This is because it actually sees him, while not seeing him. It sees its God without seeing any image except God alone.

**4689** Avoid the word image, and do not linger on it since what is involved is beyond what is in an image in the intellect, or what is in the imagination and beyond the most spiritual, mystical and secret of things.<sup>178</sup>

Ordinarily speaking when the soul sees something, no matter how mysterious and beautiful, it does not see the mystery and beauty of the God whom it loves, except when God himself decides to reveal himself more clearly in that object by raising the soul to something higher in that instant, imparting clear and deep recognition. The lover simply recognises, not to say experiences, stronger emotions for the one he loves stirring within him. He is consumed by means of these (Oh happy consummation) and divested of passions, desires and of his very self. He is clothed in virtue and in his God. At the same time all the faculties flow on without understanding, since they cannot understand, I say, they cannot produce such things themselves and consequently the soul enjoys its God in everything, and in nothing, with such peace that if all creatures had tongues they would not be able to taste the tiniest morsel.

Note the expression ‘clear recognition’ in the fourth line of the previous paragraph. In the words of what is mystical the clearer something is said to be the more obscure it is. The clearer something is to the intellect the less clear it is.<sup>179</sup> I used the expression (clear and deep recognition) to portray clarity in the depth of the soul, while there is a depth beyond what can be investigated by the intellect. You who enjoying this plunge yourself into it and I will remain silent. *Et Deus tecum (God be with you)*.

*How the soul should abide in her God and not in herself in all things.*  
Chapter 6.

**4690** My dearest, I want you to be immersed exclusively in God,<sup>180</sup> since to be anywhere else means woe, disturbance and anxiety. I shall not mention this. Everyone ought to act like this, crushing all else underfoot. My longing and your longing ought to be where there lies the fullness of what we desire and this is not outside God who is the fulfilment of all our desires and aspirations. We already possess everything in him who fills everything. He is in everything and above everything.<sup>181</sup> Because he is in all things and in every place and time we can be with him and in him as long as we do not want to be involved with things. Thus being totally perfect and consumed consists

<sup>177</sup> Note in the margin: *How the soul enjoys him without seeing him.*

<sup>178</sup> Note in the margin: *This is an image that places God in the soul and which is beyond what is of the intellect.*

<sup>179</sup> Note in the margin: *Mystical insight is beyond all intellectual insight.*

<sup>180</sup> Note in the margin: *To have an eye outside God implies many attacks.*

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Eph. 4, 6. Note in the margin: *In the state of deification nothing prevents the soul from seeing God in everything.*



in being in nothing but God alone.<sup>182</sup> We shall thus possess everything in everything, and nothing in everything but God alone. Here we see ourselves always and never in each thing and in no thing. Pray for me.

*How the soul achieves a share in the tranquil eternal peace of God himself.*  
*Chaptr 7.*

**4691** To console<sup>183</sup> rather than confuse you I want you to hear a saying of the wise and learned philosopher Aristotle who said: “the life of a wise person becomes the same as the life of the First Principle, who is God, who has always been”.<sup>184</sup> By this he meant that sometimes we reach something similar to the peace, tranquillity and happiness in which God abides forever. Now if this philosopher, who knew nothing about grace, could utter such lofty and divine words, what would those who are gifted with divine grace, and who experience grace and not merely speculate about it<sup>185</sup> have to say about its very deep effects and the wonderful workings of the Holy Spirit? I say that like these are dead to created things, absorbed in what is uncreated, blind to secondary causes, concentrating on the primary cause, where nothing happens by chance, probability or good fortune, but where everything takes place *ab aeterno* as decreed by God’s infinite wisdom, and where everything is disposed for our welfare, and benefit, where there is nothing suspicious and where all is prosperity, happiness and beatitude.<sup>186</sup> Here there is no scourge or tribulation or anything like that, rather all is peaceful, jubilant, serene and eternal consolation. There is no kind of evil there but all is fine. To such souls as these, who are absorbed in divine grace through the simple goodness of God, what is sweet is the same as what is bitter; indeed they do not recognise tribulation. And what is good is the same as what is evil. Indeed they do not recognise or see anything as evil. They do not discover anything to be evil, but enjoy the supreme good. Therefore to do what is good is the same as to do what is evil, such as sin. Indeed they do not know what sin is because their will does not stray because it is possessed by someone else, even though it is frail. I dare say that in some lovers there is no frailty.

There is no frailty in genuine lovers,<sup>187</sup> only love’s incessant flames, with one of the lovers being transformed into the other. When the loving God is alive in the transformed beloved and, as a consequence, the beloved is transformed into the lover equal to the strength of that love,<sup>188</sup> what can prevent the human will becoming lost in God and God’s will coming to life in man? Let love give the answer, listen to love. Is it possible for frailty to be there? This cannot even be mentioned because there is no room for frailty in God who is living in the beloved. Is this the will of God? Listen to love speaking about love.

**4692** The Apostle says to those who are lovers: *To them that love God all things work together unto good*,<sup>189</sup> all things come together and turn out for what is good. The holy Doctors add, *even sin* and that includes sinners.<sup>190</sup> (Oh infinite fire of love, how strong you are!) You have rendered the soul set and absorbed in the primary cause, blind to all else, not certainly by means of speculation but by means of

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<sup>182</sup> Note in the margin: *The final state of the soul.*

<sup>183</sup> Note in the margin: *Note.*

<sup>184</sup> With regard to this saying of Aristotle cf. some opinions expressed by J. Hamesse, *Les auctoritates Aristotlis. Un florilège medieval. Étude bibliorique et édition critique*, Louvain – Paris. 1974, 247 (210-211), 298 (8).

<sup>185</sup> Note in the margin: *God’s secrets are revealed to them.*

<sup>186</sup> Note in the margin: *The life which God will provide.*

<sup>187</sup> Note in the margin: *The effects of genuine love.*

<sup>188</sup> Note in the margin: *This is mystical transformation.*

<sup>189</sup> Rom. 8, 28.

<sup>190</sup> Note in the margin: *God allows us to fall so that we may come to know ourselves better. The experience strengthens us and increases our capacity to approach Him.*



experience. This turns the world upside down. This will move such souls but not upset them, because they will see what is beyond what is visible or intellectual what is completely God's will.<sup>191</sup> This is where all that they relish, desire or want lies and not in what is non essential. In all matters they recognise the source of what is beneficial for them as it issues from a lover and gushes like a volcano which can throw out nothing but incessant flames of love. This is in contrast to the scorn which those who occupy themselves with secondary causes display by their agitated conversation and human reasoning. Let us speak about souls who love, who because they do not live imprisoned in themselves, live in what is enjoyable and pleasing to God. What could disturb them? Neither the creature nor the Creator! Thus the Apostle says accurately, a person's life can attain (and does attain) being the same as the life of God himself. I assure you that it has been proven in many ways that if you are annihilated in God you will be divested and without a care about yourself, living in simple faith, but faith in God.<sup>192</sup>

Oh what a state, in which all the faculties are blessed, while still living you are enjoying the invisible peace of heaven! Oh state, in which whoever possesses it cannot let his mind stray outside the First Cause because he sees heaven wherever he gazes. When he thinks about a beautiful spring of water, he experiences being immediately wrapped in the fountain of all good. When he thinks of delightful beaches, he becomes immediately wrapped in the shores of the divine essence. When he thinks of beautiful things he is immediately wrapped in the graceful countenance on which all beauty is based. When he thinks of what is sweet, he is plunged immediately into what he can see but cannot express in words. To conclude, once God has placed a soul in communion with the First Cause and the source of all else, that soul is made blessed and steadfast immovable and omnipotent. What could ever disturb such a soul? Who could ever control it, and be its mistress and queen of all?<sup>193</sup> You may torture the body, but the heart and mind remains fixed on God the First Cause, He arranges, He commands any torment.

**4693** St Agnes went to be tortured<sup>194</sup> as happy and joyful as if she had been going to a banquet of delicious food, (oh how a loves wishes to give pleasure to the beloved one!), because she was not concerned about secondary causes but about the primary cause. This is why she rejoiced about fulfilling what had been ordained *ab eterno* by the will of her loving Spouse. St Laurence said to the one who was carrying out the will of God: "I have been sufficiently burnt on one side, turn me over."<sup>195</sup> This was how he fulfilled God's word completely and although he was suffering in the flesh he relished what pleased God and what had been laid down. Christ endured neither more or less suffering than the Eternal Father decreed. When Pilate boasted that he had the power to set him free, Christ replied: "You would have no power over me unless it had been given to you by my Father."<sup>196</sup> It is not the medicine that kills, not the storm or the tempest which destroys, not the sun that shines and burns, not the fire that consumes, not the tyrant that tyrannises, not the judge that condemns the innocent while setting free those who are guilty, not the prelate who appoints superiors who are sinful, angry persons, who by their rage trod down those who are good and those who promote the good conduct of subjects and universal peace.

*O altitudo divitiarum sapientiae et scientiae Dei, quam incompraehensibilia sunt iudicia eius et investigabiles suae viae (O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgements and how*

<sup>191</sup> Note in the margin: *A person who is one-eyed will see nothing but love.* Some words are missing because the edge of the page is torn.

<sup>192</sup> Note in the margin: *This is how to achieve eternal peace while still alive.*

<sup>193</sup> Note in the margin: *A lover suffers for the beloved; to experience pain is not to suffer.*

<sup>194</sup> Note in the margin: *The holy martyrs rejoiced in suffering.*

<sup>195</sup> Cf. *Bibl. Sanctorum* VIII, Roma 1967, 109s.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. Jn 19, 11. Note in the margin: *The tormented soul finds her peace here and nowhere else.*



*unsearchable his ways*)! <sup>197</sup> My dearest listen to the eternal truth rather than to me: *Ego veni, ut qui non vident, videant, et qui vident ceci fiant* (I have come into the world) that they who see not may see, and they who see may become blind. <sup>198</sup>

The first cause activates the second causes, <sup>199</sup> as it seems good and pleasing to him. Everyone says: not a leaf moves unless God wants it to move. <sup>200</sup> Those who are blind know this. Do you want me to end here? God causes everything.

**4694** There was a time when I would not have spoken like this because, as you had no enlightenment, you would have been confused by the fact that every saying is obscured if there is no enlightenment. The vessel of election Paul the Apostle says; “the letter kills, but the spirit gives life.” <sup>201</sup> It is true that God does not produce an act directly, but makes use of secondary causes. <sup>202</sup> It is also true that the secondary cause cannot move an inch without being set in motion by the primary cause. If God takes power away from the medicine or insight from the doctor death follows. He produces blustery weather, a storm and it ruins the vineyard or it kills a person, raises a castle to the ground, sinks a boat, something is burnt by the sun or a fire, a tyrant does whatever he likes, a judge becomes blind and does what he ought not to do, false witnesses arise, the innocent suffer and lose their reputation.

God arranges that a certain person is not elected as a superior, <sup>203</sup> although if he had been elected he would have brought about the salvation of others, enabled many to reach greater perfection, and a deeper knowledge of God, which is far away from many today. It says as much in chapter three of Isaiah: “I shall remove from you the wise man, who is valiant in war and who is strong, who is knowledgeable and discreet concerning what has been said about me mystically and in secret. I will give you princes and Superiors who are childish and effeminate.” <sup>204</sup> And so on. <sup>205</sup>

**4695** When a holy hermit observed that people were afflicted because they had a very wicked superior, he begged of God the reason why He had given them such a sorry man. He heard a voice that said: “*Non inveni peiorem*” (I could not find anyone who was worse). I went through the entire world and I could not find anyone who was worse than this who one could have been elected”. <sup>206</sup> Oh how truthfully could the Apostle who was immersed in the depths of what is divine say: “Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgements, and how unsearchable are his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord? <sup>207</sup> Who has been his counsellor?” Those who are blind to what is secondary and concentrate on the primary cause are the ones who are sensitive to what is incomprehensible.

Those who are blind to the primary cause, <sup>208</sup> and who concentrate on secondary causes ask why immediately. This never does nor could seem to be the proper thing to genuine lovers. What is the wish of the beloved is enough for them. The reason for this is that a genuine lover would never say to his beloved: “Why are you doing this or that?” This is because, as we have said above, everything comes out of love. Thus being blind to all else, he is completely attached to the very lively

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<sup>197</sup> Rom. 11, 33.

<sup>198</sup> Jn 9, 39.

<sup>199</sup> Note in the margin: *A spiritual person speaks with his hands?* [At the edge of the page the note is damaged.] *The learned person cracks his skull, while the simple drinks the essence of the marrow.*

<sup>200</sup> This is the well-known popular proverb: Not a leaf falls without God knowing.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 36.

<sup>202</sup> Note in the margin: *This explains how the product as a whole comes from the primary cause.*

<sup>203</sup> Note in the margin: *Note.*

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Is. 3, 1-4.

<sup>205</sup> Note in the margin: *God's anger is greater.*

<sup>206</sup> We could not find the source of this quotation.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. Rom. 11, 33-34. Note in the margin: *Those who are blind intuit such incomprehensible things.*

<sup>208</sup> Note in the Margin: *A genuine lover never asks the reason why. He plunges himself into the lover's brest.*



twinkling of the love of his beloved. He is on fire with and relishes that love, being dead to any other thought, since perfect love does not allow the lover to think of anyone else except the one whom he loves about whom he can think of nothing but love. He can think of nothing but love, neither wind, fire nor disgrace, only love, love.<sup>209</sup> Because of this a lover who is well steeped in love enjoys complete peace.

I am speaking about a genuine lover concerning whom St Augustine says that he lives more for the beloved than for himself. If he has no great concern for himself, how much less will he worry about what is of no consequence? When a person is totally obsessed by a love such as this, if the lover chases him, it is love; if the lover embraces him it is love; if despises him, this binds him; if the lover caresses him, this binds him. Finally, love leaves no room for the lover to move beyond the beloved.<sup>210</sup>

**4696** Now if finite love is that strong, what can be said of infinite love, which is the source of all love, all beauty, all grandeur, of everything? I have just been speaking to you about how everything arises out of the first cause, who is God, and of how the rational creature is associated to God by means of grace, by becoming annihilated and transformed into the supreme Good himself. Although, like a pure dove, you have been flying around for quite some time in search of clearer sky, you should now take to lower skies, never becoming engrossed in something created, no matter how spiritual, but taking hold of everything with naked faith in God, becoming intrepid and having no fear (the Apostle said that genuine faith banishes fear)<sup>211</sup> becoming the master of everything, subject to no creature, dead to everything within and without, performing all that God wants, bravely adhering to what the Apostle says: *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat.* (*I can do all things in him who strengthens me*)<sup>212</sup> Therefore say: “Make my loving soul, who has been most generously transformed into the supreme Good and king of all things, love you completely, my God. As I am dead to myself I fear nothing and can accomplish anything, since I am steady and lost in you, my dear eternal Good. Break me, burn me, and torment me, so that I may be more prepared to what you, my God reveal to me as being your will.”

Know that this is how you will become steady and invincible and by means of grace will enjoy the immutability which belongs to God’s unchanging nature. Let the divine will be within you and around you so that you may be deified within and without as well as above and below. My most dear one, let us wait for the time of divine grace patiently, so as not to be too presumptuous and lose what we have acquired. *Et Deus tecum.*

*The safe way of achieving divine union.*

*Chapter 8*<sup>213</sup>

**4697** My dearest one, I wish that you were in the depths of what is divine and once you are absorbed in them I would then say. The further away we are from creatures, the closer we are to God., and the less we are known by creatures, the more we are known to God. The further we are removed from creatures, the more we are united to God. The more remote we are from creatures, the more we are with God. The fewer dealings we have with creatures, the more we have to do with God. The less we think about creatures, the more we think about God. The less we know about what goes on in the world, the more we know about what goes on with God. The further we are

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<sup>209</sup> Note in the margin: *Perfect love does not allow the mind to be occupied with anything but the object of love.*

<sup>210</sup> Note in the margin: *Whoever is in love is totally absorbed by it and does not cast an eye anywhere else.*

<sup>211</sup> Cf. 1 Jn. 4, 18

<sup>212</sup> Phil. 4, 13. Note in the margin: *A spiritual person ought to be in control of everything. This is the prayer of an ardent lover.*

<sup>213</sup> Note in the margin: *Note.*



separated from creatures, the closer are our bonds with the depths of the uncreated God. The more we refrain from talking to creatures, the more worthy we become for sweet converse with our loving God. The less we see of creatures, the more we shall see of God. The less we hear about creatures, the more we shall hear about God. The more being with and conversing with creatures displeases us, the more divine consolation we shall derive from conversing and being with God.

Whoever enjoys amusement dislikes the cross. Those who are friends of the cross abhor amusement. Whoever likes the earth, relishes only the earth. Whoever loves the flesh delights only in the flesh. Whoever loves God delights in God alone. Wherever our love is there our heart will be.<sup>214</sup> The heart seeks nothing more than the object of its love, and cannot be the slightest bit separated from the object of its love.

*Let the soul be attached to divine love and to sufferings.*  
Chapter 9.

**4698** *Vulnerasti cor meum. (You have wounded my heart).*<sup>215</sup> Jesus says to my soul, you have wounded my heart. The Hebrew<sup>216</sup> reads: *Fascinasti cor meum (You have bewitched my heart)* (o what a word). Oh Spouse, you have enchanted me, enchanted my heart, to such an extent that I am not free, or master of my mind, since my every thought and desire is fixed on you alone. I wish to say to you *fascinasti cor meum*.

Genuine lovers of this kind are bound so that they can hardly tear themselves away from the object of their love and this can make them lose or gain weight. Concerning such as these the Apostle says: the more exhausted and weak I am, the stronger is my love.<sup>217</sup> Becoming pale is brought about by a deficiency in the blood. A tree becomes weak; a person becomes weak when they suffer being deprived of love. If nature cannot take care of one bodily function, it will never be able to nourish the whole body because, on the wings of love, it will be continually flying to the object of its love (*alae, alae ignis*<sup>218</sup>). The lover is wrapped up in the beloved to the extent that it does not live for itself but for the beloved, St Augustine says: *Anima magis est ubi amat, quam ubi abit* (*The soul exists more where it loves than where it lives.*).<sup>219</sup> The spouse says: "My soul has left me, when I heard your voice".<sup>220</sup> Oh my dear spouse! Why does a soul move out of the body, taking with it the purest and most vivacious spirits which maintain the body? This astounding state of affairs means that when the most beneficial parts of the blood have been consumed the most acidic and useless parts remain to preserve life. The body becomes dehydrated, emaciated, pallid, almost dead and wasted.

**4699** O the power of love that can slay and restore to health! Now if all the lover's thought and affection are gazing intensely on my highest and eternal Good, who is loved and desired this steadily, and if they all durule with loving, like the spouse in the Canticle, they will become dry and insipid. Like spirits they will wander above the stars, where being deprived of all love and of earthly thought, they will be able to enjoy nothing but their unique beloved Good. This is when they suffer the loss and deterioration of self and are united with their Saviour, being transformed into Him emotionally, desiring to join and unite themselves to Him in unveiled and clear vision. While this may not be possible the soul swooning with love will say acquiescently like the Prophet: *Concupiscit et defecit aminam mea. (My soul longs and faints)*<sup>221</sup>

<sup>214</sup> Reminiscent of Mt. 6, 21; Lk. 12, 34.

<sup>215</sup> Cf. Cant. 4, 9.

<sup>216</sup> That is the Masoretic text.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 12, 16; 1 Cor. 1, 25, 27.

<sup>218</sup> That is love's wings are wings of fire. Cf. Ezech 1.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. St Bernard, *Liber de praecepto et dispensatione*, c. 20, n. 60 (PL 182, 892).

<sup>220</sup> Cf. Cant 5, 6 (Vulg.).

<sup>221</sup> Ps 83, 3 (Vulg.).



My soul longs and faints, O my dear and beautiful beloved! It is no wonder that when they that they are far removed from the beautiful face of their beloved and are so sad because of their desire to see him, that they sigh to heaven laying out their loving distress so that if they suffer earthly sorrow they ought to admit it. Lovers such as these could do no less than languish with the sweetest haemorrhage of love. Plutarch<sup>222</sup> says as much: Whatever is planted in hot humid soil languishes and dies immediately.

**4700** O that a soul that is sown in the fire of divine love would soon languish and faint out of love! *Obmutui et non aperui os meum, quod tu fecisti.*<sup>223</sup> (*I was dumb, and I opened not my mouth, because you did it.*) Love that consumes the innermost parts of a person, which is not concerned about reasons, words or measure, which sparkles with a burning flame, sighs and says with the Prophet<sup>224</sup>: As the hart pants after the fountain of water, so my soul pants after your loving face.” O fountain of all that is good for me, and fulfilment of all that I desire! When will the hour be when I will behold and enjoy your unveiled beautiful presence, O my one and only desirable love? Nothing will entice lovers to return to what was formerly bodily beauty, which has been banished by the love of their Lord. This banishes everything except love from the soul, because everything is under love’s control. Sometimes to eat can be harmful, because when a soul is more wrapped in the beloved than in itself, the body is of no help to the soul for it is no longer able to digest food. It is better for people like this to eat a little. Indeed after Pliny, who was a master of medicine, had lived for about a hundred years and was asked how he had done this, he said: “I have never risen from the table satisfied.”<sup>225</sup>

The genuine lover ought to become like the beloved and, if he is really in love, he should never cease following him, so that there is complete union, and he will follow the wishes of the beloved without the slightest concern for his own life. You know the life and the journey of our beloved Jesus. You know his divine will. If you are in love, marvel at the immaculate example that you have before you already.

I even urge you to suffer gladly and with enthusiasm. The exile will come to an end. The sowing will end and the harvest will eventuate. In a state of anxiety the farmer throws seed into the ground in winter. When he thinks about the harvest he is consoled and rejoices.<sup>226</sup> My dearest one when we consider how our body is buffeted by so much pain and mortification, it makes our senses weep. However when we consider the harvest, the more it is downtrodden and deformed, the greater and more beautiful will its resurgence be. What consolation! The Lord consoles us with his consolation out of his goodness.

*Love breads the desire to suffer. Love makes all bitter suffering sweet. Chapter 10*

**4701** Charity is what makes us God’s children. Nothing else, no matter what it may be, can do this. All the moral virtues put together cannot infuse this grace, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit, in the soul. However, when I said that the desire to suffer is above everything else, I did not mean above charity, since charity is a flame beyond everything. O God, how can I describe this gift which you confer on all your intimate and hidden lovers, on those who you transform into your brilliant love until they burn with your divine love!

Of itself nature does not produce the love of suffering. It is produced by means of love. Of itself nature abhors this because it was not created to suffer but to rejoice

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<sup>222</sup> Cf. the short treatise *De aquae et ignis comparatione*, in *Opera, quae extant, omnia Plutarchi ... interprete. Hermano Crusario*, Francofurt ad Mœvium 1580, 364-366.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. Ps 38, 10 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>224</sup> Cf. Ps 41, 2-3 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>225</sup> Cf. C. Pliny the Second, *Historiae naturalis* lib. XXVIII, c. 14 (ed. Parisiis 1829, vol VII, 52-57).

<sup>226</sup> This is reminiscent of Ps 125, 5-6 (*Vulg.*) and is worthy of the thoughts of great mystics.



so that it might abide in love. If a person does not love every small piece of suffering will appear to be a bitter punishment, a heavy cross. When he does love this will immediately generate so much sweetness in suffering that he will die thinking that he has died out of love. Indeed love will be a tasty morsel. An intimate, blazing flame will burst forth and burn in the breast. This is why I say that this gift comes from God and in the end it consumed the soul with love and transforms it into God. Then it produces this gift yearning to suffer for the beloved good. This gift is necessary for the spiritual life, and I say, that without it one cannot journey with sincerity of heart along the spiritual path to the state of annihilation and transformation into God, nor observe order or precepts.

**4702** The spiritual Father will say: “Eat bread and water, take the discipline until you bleed, sleep on the ground, and go about unshod through mountains covered with snow, when it is raining and *similia* (and the like). If the desire to suffer has not been produced within you, how can you obey this with the joy that you should feel if you were in the deified state of true lovers? If you do obey God will know how and why. How many will obey and suffer and when they die will experience punishment rather than reward because they lacked this desire! It would be better not to obey, much better.<sup>227</sup> How can poverty exist if there is no craving? How else could the glowing chastity which is in the crucified Christ exist? <sup>228</sup> How could patience or any of the virtues exist without desire? Genuine spiritual virtue does not and could not exist without this gift. However such desire is not given completely to everyone, but only to close friends who burn with love.

Think about how the Apostles were before the coming of the Holy Spirit even though they had been in the school of Christ night and day. All of them were afraid and not only fled from suffering but did not wish to listen to a single word of Christ Himself.<sup>229</sup> O how far from their breasts was this desire! Consider them after they were ignited by that divine fire and you will see that they were like deer which are thirsting for the waters of tribulation. Oh what dears! Let all discussion cease and let the lover speak. Love is how you act. They regard themselves unworthy of suffering and yet burn for nothing but to suffer for their beloved Christ.<sup>230</sup> Look at my Seraphic Father, a martyr of love, for thus the Church calls him a martyr of desire.<sup>231</sup>

Oh, therefore, the gift that is beyond all gifts which the Apostle praises above all else even after he had been ravished away to the third heaven, where amongst the other graces which he received he was made specially worthy to receive this grace. Oh benchmark which distinguishes between true and false love which is not the case with other gifts because all other gifts can be false and deceive.<sup>232</sup> You alone can tell the difference, if not immediately then with time. In the lover the weight of the desire to suffer corresponds to the degree of love one has for the one who is loved. Whoever loves deeply has a deep desire to suffer. Love makes suffering sweet just as salt sweetens bitter food. Ponder, weigh up, measure, consider etc.

**4703** Take a glance at what profane love has done to those who are in love. Is profane love stronger than eternal love? Don't even mention such a thing. Is there anyone who wants to enter the incompressible ocean of uncreated love and its depths? My dearest let our spirit traverse paths of what is beyond that which is intelligible lead by the Spirit of God through seas that can be investigated.

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<sup>227</sup> Here the Author does not mean not to obey, but wishes to emphasise that harsh and bodily mortifications that are endured without love and the desire to suffer (which is a gift from God) are of little value.

<sup>228</sup> Note in the margin: *Note*.

<sup>229</sup> Cf. Mt 16, 21-13; 17. 22-23; Mk. 8, 31-33; 9. 31-32; Lk. 9, 44-45; 18. 31-34.

<sup>230</sup> Cf. Acts 5, 41.

<sup>231</sup> This is the first verse of the antiphon for the Benedictus in the *Officium S. Francisci* by Julian of Spire (AF X, 385).

<sup>232</sup> Cf. Gal 6, 14; 2 Cor 12, 5, 9; Rom 5, 3.



Know that the desire to suffer is present in beginners, the proficient and the perfect. Desire that is possessed by beginners is very imperfect, filled with the love of self. Desire that is possessed by the proficient is purer, but it is not completely divine because it is produced by the soul, although within God. Desire which is possessed by those who are consumed with love is very stunning and completely divine and it is produced by a divine fire,<sup>233</sup> where the whole soul rejoices at having been annihilated and consumed. This is a condition that permeates the state of the blessed because the soul rejoices peacefully, completely consumed with blessings and the fire of divine love, which burns sweetly within radiating with such ardent desire, something that is only given to those who are blessed. In this condition the soul does not loose holy desires but remains completely filled with annihilated joy in God and nothing else. Note that the soul does not produce this, but God produces this in a soul that is lost in God Himself. Thus these desires are divine not human. The soul which is already annihilated in her God cannot produce these desires as God reigns in it with complete power. God is at work in the receptive soul.

When performing practices and enjoying indescribable peace the soul, like St Ignatius, the soul radiates with very ardent flames.<sup>234</sup> The person does not desist from the practices (being annihilated in his God he rejoices at a deeper level)<sup>235</sup> He forfeits control of his actions, because God is at work within him, and all that remains is the eternal desires in God, where once they have been transformed they have a divine effect, with the soul experiencing nothing but a taste and relish for what is divine and pleasing to God.

**4704** Christ taught the meaning of this state during His prayer in the garden when He put aside all wish and desire to suffer and simply gave Himself exclusively to the divine will and the pleasure of His Father.<sup>236</sup> O how correctly did the Holy Spirit instruct my beloved St Catherine of Siena, when once upon a time she saw her dear spouse Jesus with two crowns in his hands, one made of golden pearls, the other made of thorns, and he said to her: “Catherine decide the one that you want”. The beginners and the proficient mentioned above would have ardently chosen the one made of thorns. Catherine, however, consumed and wrapped in God her dear spouse, replied: “You know, my dear Spouse, that I surrendered my will to you a long time ago. I no longer have control of my will. Since I can no longer exercise my will give me the one which is pleasing to you”.<sup>237</sup> Oh what a response coming from heaven, produced by God’s infinite wisdom!

Even in beginners love is a quality that produces the desire to suffer for the loved someone, but it is produced by the lower’s sensual faculties. It is very imperfect and quite impure. Gradually this very love will be consumed by the ardour of desire by annihilating every human action leading to a state of beatitude without any of our merits. However while we are still on the journey, abiding with the blessed in heaven, lost in what is pleasing to God, being absorbed by an ardent desire for all which that entails with the Beloved gradually annihilating all ardour and activity, however spiritual, what remains is just the substance of the desires themselves where God is acting.<sup>238</sup> Thus we experience divine activity in ourselves which God produces in our souls, when they are fully receptive, and we are divinely annihilated and absorbed. We find our selves in this state without knowing how. When we become aware of this

<sup>233</sup> Note in the margin: *Stato che trapassa i beati... (A state which the blessed go through...)*

<sup>234</sup> This seems to be a reference to the words of St Ignatius of Antioch in *Lettera ai Romani*, cap. 7 “*Amor meus crucifixus est, nec est in me ignismateriae anima*” (PG 5, 694).

<sup>235</sup> Note in the margin: *Ultimo desiderio di patire qual sia. (The ultimate desire of suffering whatever happens.).*

<sup>236</sup> Cf. Mt 26, 38-42; Mk 14, 36.

<sup>237</sup> This episode is narrated by Raymond of Capua in the biography of St Catherina of Siena which he wrote; cf. AA, SS., Aprilis III, Parisiis et Romae, 1866, 901 s, n. 158.

<sup>238</sup> Aga in the text = the Latin verb *agree* = *to act*.



state, we share in the beautiful happy state of peace of the blessed, being dead to all desire, even though we could only enjoy such a state after dying.

Do you earnestly desire this? Suspend thinking and listen in the bosom of your God devoid of anything inside or outside this and let him do what he wishes with you and in you and let nothing else take place within you or in heaven. This requires perseverance, annihilating all your faculties continually, so that the only thing in operation is the divine will that controls you. Cast everything else beneath your feet. Be lord and ruler of all, allowing nothing to dominate you no matter how spiritual. Remain apart from creatures with God alone. Visible creatures do not give pleasure. It is God who gives pleasure. Love Him alone strongly. May He be blessed forever in *saecula saeculorum. Amen.*

*The soul is exhorted to bear the cross internally and externally. Chapter 11.*

**4705** It is said that wild goats always cry while they are alive, but sing a very sweet song at their death. My only Master said to his disciples: “My children, the world shall rejoice, but you will lament in bitter sadness. But in a short time your sadness will come to an end and be turned into eternal joy.”<sup>239</sup> This is why the Apostle Peter described suffering as a blessing.<sup>240</sup> I say to you: Do not rejoice in spiritual elevation and not in passing a lifetime in the highest spiritual feelings (don’t cast them aside when they occur), but only in the cross, experience the Crucified God who was atrociously crucified. Occupied with such sentiments do not think about where such trouble came from and so on, but (forgetting what has been created) think how all has been received from our uncreated Good, and simply out of love, without going into further discussion, which would be going back into your own self.

God’s Spirit dwells in you supporting and purifying your soul with its pure light. However, when you feel disturbed, oppressed or in darkness and so on it is He who is at work. It is He who is purifying and detaching the soul from all that is created and not of God in order to transform it into Himself in eternal peace. Just think of how much purification and cleanliness is required within the soul for this transformation to take place; what divesting, what spiritual emptiness and solitude and separation from all that is not God so that the spirit may empty itself. Grace, however, can gently and sweetly overcome everything, purifying the intimate depths of the soul in such a way that it hardly feels the light that strengthens it because it is working at such depth. Yet it is carrying out its activity at great depths, which is evident because of divine operations and effects, which keep the soul absorbed so that it will not fall even though it tastes the bitterest chalice of myrrh. Note that our soul must travel this journey because we are dealing with a soul filled with passions which we are trying to unite with God.

**4706** However, the divine fire which is the Holy Spirit who is achieving this union, proceeds gently within the soul purifying and consuming all that is created, no matter how spiritual it is. The more what is created is consumed the more the soul is transformed into what is uncreated, to such an extent that during those atrocious moments of desolation the Holy Spirit unites the soul to Himself and defies our spirit. Be sure not to turn your eye away from the first cause, and if the senses turn away, let the higher faculties remain concentrated on it. If you err it is my fault before God and you will receive the reward. Walk blindly and do not doubt that you will land in the purest condition at the most blissful port to enjoy your spouse in eternal consolation and happiness. In the meantime, I wish, generous, warrior, that you confront the gangs of attacks by casting them aside and denigrating them as of little account, since all of them lead *ad coronam*. May my assurance be sufficient!

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<sup>239</sup> Cf. Jn 16, 20.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. 1 Pt 3, 14.



While I was alone in my cell on Friday, reading a passage from Saint Bernard, I was filled with joy.<sup>241</sup> This is the passage: “When our enemy sees that we have put aside the exterior senses, he enters in to attack the interior senses. However, a spiritual person who is aware of his craftiness rejects this as much as he can. What he cannot reject he tolerates, and he tolerates the dog’s barking but does not fear the bite of the infernal dog. The bark only threatens but does not wound. It indicates victory. Although someone has been upset if he resists no damage has been done if he has not given in willingly.”<sup>242</sup> These words are filled with heavenly joy. Think well about them.

**4707** My dearest, when our enemy attacks us out of contempt he inadvertently offers us a crown. Who is there who does not rather fear than desires his attacks? When the enemy attacks you causing you anguish, distress and so on, know that he is transmitting to you a most beautiful crown to wear, a crown which is more beautiful the more brutal and dreadful is his attack when you do not give in to him. Beware not to discuss where the attack is coming from, rather think about the brilliance of the heart where God resides, that is keeping an eye fixed exclusively on him from whom all comes to make you totally deified. However, be patient concerning the effort and allow the Master to work as he wishes because there is nothing wrong with what he wants, but there can be in what we want. May his wish prevail and what we wish die. If we are actually on the cross how blessed is our soul, and how happy are the days in which we do not feel pain, which the more atrocious they are the more they are filled with reward. This is a time for having patience. The sun of justice will burst forth and the eternal day will dawn.

Act dead, blind, joyful, quiet, beautiful, loving and so on and focus all your thoughts on him who loves you more than you love yourself. Do not care what creatures say. Who do you wish to please? God! No one can separate you from God except your own will. Therefore let your will be lost in God, and resting in his divine pleasure leave the work and worry to him, being preoccupied with nothing else than what is the will of God, in which, my dearest one, we are annihilated, and lost for eternity.

*Encouragement for an afflicted soul, stimulation to follow the sure way of the cross.*  
Chapter 12.

**4708** *Nunc incipio esse Christi discipulus. (Now I begin to be a disciple of Christ)*

<sup>243</sup> As you wish to know how I am progressing as I console you and urge you how to follow the right path in a way that does not dismay you pay attention and listen.

I feel somewhat better, and I see more clearly. However for five days my dear Jesus made me spend the night at the top of a high island with the wind coming from all directions both from within and without with such force that was so frightening and upsetting that just the thought of its ferocity made my heart quake. *Intus pugnae, foris dolores. (Combats without: fears within)* <sup>244</sup> What happened outside did not matter. Indeed the worse it was the more I moaned saying: Come close my Lord. But I felt very poor inside. My heart felt that it had been slashed. I thought that I had been abandoned by God. Heaven was frozen. Earth was hellish. I found no pleasure in books and to read them was a waste of time. I found no peace in Maria my usual only remedy. I could not eat or sleep. I had a burning thirst but I was desperate when drink was brought.

On another occasion, further back, but with not so much bitterness, the Lord gave me that kind of food. I wanted to put what I was preaching into practice. The

<sup>241</sup> Note in the margin: *Note*.

<sup>242</sup> Cf. S. Bernardus, In quadregesima sermo V, 2-4 (PL. 183, 129).

<sup>243</sup> Cf. St Ignatius, *Ep. Ad Romanos*, cap 5 (PG 5, 691).

<sup>244</sup> 2 Cor 7, 5.



recall of certain passages that I had written in a book fortified me and soothed me, while I was continually crying and moaning. I wanted to die, not only in desire but in fact, although without wishing to sin. I failed seriously in lack of resignation. I cried out to God that I could not go on any further and that I wished to end my life and I called out with the Apostle: *Infelix homo, quis me liberavit de corpore morti huius? Video aliam legem in membris meis, repugnantem legis mentis meae et captivantem me in lege peccati. O infelix homo! Et quis me liberavit? Etc. (Oh what an unhappy man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind and captivating me in the law of sin. O unhappy man! Who shall deliver me?)*<sup>245</sup>

**4709** I begged God to release me from the pain in my heart by multiplying the pain in my body. I acted against what my confessor said above. He wanted me to eat but I could not obey in practice. However, I beg you not to postpone prayer but to double it if you can. I have great need of prayer. Thank God on my behalf. Implore him that if it is his will, he may lift the weight off my body since my life is of little or no use to my neighbour, but instead it is trying and a great burden to all creatures far and wide because of my sins. I have no doubt that such trials inflicted on Christians are caused by my defects. Out of his goodness may God deliver me from such failings, or from this mortal life, if that is what pleases him, and if he wishes that the short time I have left to live should be spent in continual pain and punishment. Let him deliver me from offending him by so many limitations, frills and shackles of the heart.

To be truthful let me tell you what I have always told you: “Exercises are good, even necessary, no matter how defective”. In his mercy the Lord endowed me with the light of great humility, to think that I was unworthy to wear the habit, to take flight from all creatures, to have a heart of stone towards my neighbour, to strip myself of everything no matter how small, to shun all consolation, not to breathe apart from obedience. O how happy the soul which the Lord draws to such obedience in his house for solitary and divine converse.

My dearest, let everyone enjoy what he wishes according to his taste, but you are to rejoice with me in the cross, in anxious moments and in pain and so on. Let the cross be our food, the sigh our freshest water, the perspiration which is caused by bewildering anxiety be what adorns our pale and ashen face. Let the cross be the bed on which we rest.<sup>246</sup> Let the cross be the altar on which we refurbish our heart and body by means of the immaculate Lamb who was consumed by the flame of love. Let the cross be what we always talk about and our consolation. Let the cross strip us of all self-love. Let the cross heal all passions. Let the cross confer every good on us.<sup>247</sup>

*The body has to be punished severely as a traitor. The desire to die. Chapter 13.*

**4710** I do not know if you could find anyone in the world who is as keen for wealth and worldly vanities as I am for death. I have been so eager for this that I could not tolerate the exile and if the desire increases it will exceed all reasonable limits. David used to say: “As the hart pants after the fountains of water, so my soul pants to see your open face, O God.”<sup>248</sup> My thirst is greater by far than the thirst of a deer. I have no consolation apart from the Most Holy Sacrament and continual weeping. Tears are my rest by night and my food by day<sup>249</sup> my only shelter and sustenance until my soul is released from this.

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<sup>245</sup> Rom 7, 21-24.

<sup>246</sup> This expression is reminiscent of various sayings of Blessed Angela of Foligno.

<sup>247</sup> This page is biographical and it describes the experience of passive purification or the night of the spirit.

<sup>248</sup> Cf. Ps 41, 2. (*Vulg.*).

<sup>249</sup> Cf. Ps 41, 4. (*Vulg.*).



My dearest, our body is the greatest enemy that we have.<sup>250</sup> It is always seeking to kill us and turn us away from our God. All of us know how often this has happened. Why do we love and cultivate a traitor who tries to draw us away from God? If I were able to do this God knows that I would do it. Do not love the body. Deny it when it makes demands by means of the senses. The more poorly you treat it, the more spiritual gifts you will receive from God. Strip yourself of everything no matter how small, only have what is necessary as the Rule permits and possess and even possess this with thrift. Place everything beneath your feet and set little value on anything, since the enemy is more expert in combat than we are. However with the grace of God we will obtain victory.

#### 4711

I know someone who to whom the Lord gave a special vocation (because his body was for a time the involuntary cause of making others offend God). He began to treat his body in such a way that others felt sorry for him. The more shame he experienced he used to pray night and day: My God change my bodily beauty into something spiritual. Let my heart put an end to such offenses. Take away the wicked beauty that caused me to offend you, so that no one will look at me anymore.” By means of persevering with these two things, namely prayer and discipline, he obtained grace and continual superb favours. People were amazed at how he had become so ugly, thin, pale and run down that it moved them to pity him. He smiled in his God. We would be astonished if such a person were an enemy, afraid that all kind of suffering might develop.

My dearest, all things pass away as far as we are concerned. My body prevents me from lifting up my soul and going ahead to behold and enjoy the beauty for which I yearn and where all the blessed dwell. But now, how many tears I shed and how much I sigh (whoever has loved knows the pain that is experienced in the absence of the beloved, and what he would do to anyone who prevents reunion), and when he arrives, what a day of joy? How long this is in coming? Oh death, you flee from the one who seeks you while chasing and flying after the one who wishes to escape and hide from you? There is only one thing which consoles me and that is that I continually suffer inside and outside for the simple pleasure, desire and enjoyment of my only Good because of the burning wound in my heart.

*Let the soul be encouraged to follow the cross, the only place where true life is to be found. Chapter 14.*

**4712.** I have always told you, and I repeat: “Let us prepare the heart and raise it to crosses, sighs, exertion. Sorrows and crosses within and without. This is the path that our Master trod. If someone wishes to follow another path, let him do so. Let us never depart from this path. *Si quis ascendit aliunde fur est et latro, If anyone enters by another way he is a thief and a robber.*<sup>251</sup>

Whenever something comes to us that is good and new or something that suits or contents us, or when something occurs that satisfies the senses cast it away from the heart as if it were a cruel assassin. When a new sorrow or something disgusting or some anxiety comes let us embrace it like a real treasure and joy rediscovered. When even the thought of what is good and new and of what brings happiness appears let us throw it over our shoulder. Let us bring a smile to what is sorrow, melancholy and anxiety. Your heart should turn to such as this and not to fantasies of spiritual life. This is all that our Beloved wishes.

Listen to the Apostle Paul who was crazy for the love of the cross: “*Mihi absit gloriari (Be it far from me to glory!)* In what, Paul? Not in what is relishing, spiritual

<sup>250</sup> This is not a pessimistic utterance but the genuine experience of the spirit. Read what St Francis says in the *Admonitions* (10). FAED ! p. 132.

<sup>251</sup> Cf. Jn 10, 1.



or temporal consolation, beauty, holiness, not in peace and quiet, not in being wrapped to the third heaven. No! no! In what then, O Paul? Perhaps in the crucified God? No, not even in Him! In what? Note the word *nisi* (except). 'Except' excludes every other thing completely. The cross of my loving Master is all that remains.<sup>252</sup>

My dearest, let all other souls glory in, become attached to or affectionate towards one thing or another according to their pleasure, but we shall glory in rejoice over nothing but the cross, on which our unique and loving Good died atrociously and dishonourably.

**4713** *Arcta est haec via (straight is the way)*<sup>253</sup> is true. However, *momentum a quo pendet aeternitas (it is instant on which eternity depends)*. Oh eternity! Our Seraphic Father said: "The goodness that I await is so great that any pain delights me"<sup>254</sup> Note this is meant to be an expression of joy so that while the Lord situates you in continual circumstances in which you are crucified with anxiety within and without these are signs of the love that he has for you. Such a sign makes us pine away and tremble as we think about our pure, transfixed heart. A lover cannot be at peace apart from the company of the beloved. My dear Jesus died for our pure hearts. Do not worry about grace any longer. Let that be all his concern. Do not look for lodgings anywhere else since he is jealous and do not think about, desire or feel affection for any created thing, no matter how highly spiritual.

How blessed is our soul during such visits full of little close hugs. Do not worry about the things that are still imperfect. Do not be stunned but rather always carry on with joy. The pain will end shortly, but think about the glory and the prizes which are being prepared for you in eternity. Who could ever describe them?<sup>255</sup>

**4714** So like me persevere as one who has been crucified. Consider in detail the bitterness of the sufferings of our beloved when he was praying in the garden. Acknowledge that in the progress of these internal and external sufferings God makes us come within reach of the crucified Christ with the same amount of glory that we shall enjoy when we are beside him in heaven. Do not worry about our weaknesses. In another place I have set out exercises to cope with them. When you are overcome by crying, still keep on crying. This is a special gift (which is often to be found in martyrs and is the sweetest food in my trials). However beware that you do not become misled by affection for created things. If this does happen begin to cry calling out to the Lord while at the same time focusing your thought on what has made you cry. If it has been caused by affection or desire for heaven, the Lord's Passion, or love for Mary, our Lady, cry and sigh as much as you like.

I am aware of the bitter anxiety that inner suffering causes. However if you endure it and interiorise it you will realise that such food is not fed to princes who in fact would spit it back. It is given only to those who are truly faithful and are his valued and closest servants, generous lovers and purest spouses. Therefore console yourself so that you are not dismayed but the more fascinated you are and the more beset by various kinds of crosses of anxiety the more you will be consoled. You should take heart because you are a most loved and esteemed spouse. Do what I am telling you and never forget the teaching that I gave you at the beginning of this book.<sup>256</sup> You will never find anything better for promoting your perfection.

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<sup>252</sup> Cf. Gal 6, 14.

<sup>253</sup> Cf. Mt 7, 14.

<sup>254</sup> You can read the context of this expression in *Leg. Per.*, 43; or in *Spec. Perf.* FA:ED, III, 100, pp. 346-348; II, AC, 77, P 180;

<sup>255</sup> This subject was dear to St Francis. It is often repeated in spiritual literature. It is also present in the early legislation of the Capuchins. Cf. *Constitutions* 1536 n. 15 (n. 427).

<sup>256</sup> See above *nn.* 4640ff.



*The truly spiritual person should never be stunned, but always desire to perform great works for God. Chapter 15.*

**5715** Beware to never lack determination. Become a brave soldier filled with ardent desires, and so that you do not neglect the practices be more courageous and, as the Lord desires and decrees, build yourself up with burning desire.

I will tell you once again: the less constant you appear to be in exercises, the more you ought to take heart. Eradicate lack of determination from your heart. In this respect I wish to add new reasons to what I stated the other day.<sup>257</sup> Arm yourself for battle so that when the enemy force appears to be large, the fortification will be more magnificent when victory comes. Your thoughts should be similar to those expressed in Deuteronomy. *Omnis locus quem valcavit per vester, vester erit. (Every place that your foot shall tread upon shall be yours).*<sup>258</sup> In as much as you develop your love and your will to act, so shall the essential glory that will be given to you in heaven be increased. To enjoy essential glory exterior works are not required. Such glory is conferred according to the measure of love and ardent desire (notwithstanding that true internal desire will break out in exterior works). Still eradicate lack of determination boosting yourself up by means of a great desire for your spouse, since glory will be conferred in proportion to the fervour of charity and a genuinely ardent desire. You should also desire to be despised, persecuted and to be martyred for God, so that the Lord will in fact accept such a desire. You should increase the yearning to carry out grand works for God even if you appear to be deficient in works and not be living up to your desires. Pay attention that you become more audacious.

**4716** Among the seraphim St Gertrude saw one of her devout lay ladies.<sup>259</sup> Speaking about this secular little lady she wonders: “How did she merit such exalted glory by means of such insignificant works?” The immediate response was that the tiny little works that she performed were always accompanied by ardent desires. Therefore God had rewarded them as if the desires had been put into effect by the works. She was a lay person. However, she had the desire to be a religious who would live apart from the world and she placed herself under the yoke of obedience. She always desired to be despised and to suffer.

There is another example that I wish to relate to you. There was a spiritual person who was always filled with the desire to do something grand for God and, when He led him to glory, God rewarded him as though he had performed the work. When the feast occurred of a saint who had suffered very much within and without, he had ardently desired to suffer the same. When the feast occurred of another saint who had lived in solitude and been abstinent, he ardently desired to do the same and begged his divine Master to give him sufficient spirit to be able to imitate these saints. When another zealot desired the salvation of his soul, he also desired salvation. When he heard of someone who was consumed with love as was Magdalene, our Seraphic Father, Catherine of Siena or the like, he burned with desire for such love. When he heard of someone who was separated from creatures and absorbed in the uncreated God he burned to be completely lost in God his only Good. He was thus always filled with desire to do grand things for God.

**4717** My dearest, essential glory is not conferred because of the work but because of the ardent desire, heart-rending emotion, intense and pure love out of which the work is performed. Both of us perform fasting. You fast with ten degrees of love and I fast with three. You will win ten degrees of glory and I win three. How unfortunate we

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<sup>257</sup> From here on it would appear that correspondence in spiritual direction was frequent.

<sup>258</sup> Deut. 11, 24.

<sup>259</sup> It is not easy to identify this fact. However the doctrine concerning “desire” being rewarded by God as “a work” is contained in the Saint’s revelations. Cf. G. Lanspergio, *La vita della beata vergine Gertrude ridotta in V libri*, Venetia, 1618, 131s.



would be if God looked at our works and estimated our reward according to them! However, he does not concentrate on works, but on the loving desire with which the work is performed.<sup>260</sup> How blessed if the loving God whom we serve who rewards every desire! If you act like this the enemy can never accost you and you will always receive new graces and new strength. While you desire, love, burn and you will remain united and taste beatitude while on earth.

Therefore try to always live filled with the desire to be humble and a genuinely obedient religious, wanting nothing but God, being stripped of all that is created, abhorring all creatures, being a little poor person in everything, *etiam* (even) in the things that are allowed by our Rule. Be prepared to endure intolerable pain, anxiety, and sorrow and darkness and so on until judgement day, being contradicted in everything by all creatures, being attracted only by God, always burning with love in this vale of tears and so many illusions so that you may eventually rejoice in your homeland with the Seraphim because this is what pleases God, where you will be strong and happy without worry and then this will surge forward<sup>261</sup> and leave me behind. If you wish me to live with God consoling me, be resolute, without ever looking back, taking flight from visible creatures. Do this for the love of God because this is where all true goodness and light is to be found. Turn towards God without anything being an obstacle and all my work will be a blessing upon you.

I shall finish and say: my dearest, do not ever be dumfounded, but increase your desire especially so that you and I can carry out what is pleasing to God, a condition in which I wish to see you completely immersed. When you have achieved this pray for me.

*Various pieces of spiritual advice. Putting the divine will into practice by means of the cross, the mirror and the rule of perfection. Chapter 16.*

**4718** I greet you in my sole Good in whom I wish you to be completely absorbed being dead to all else. I recommend and command, as far as I am able, that you be vigilant and study the teaching that is set out at the beginning of this book where a little vessel contains the entire ocean.<sup>262</sup> Be careful to persevere because this is the only way to reach your objective. Take flight from the world and everything that is of the world so that it does not assault your worldly heart and it will become continually receptive to Jesus. Never depart from the safe path on which the Lord has accompanied you with such favours and graces, for the enemy is not asleep but is always alert. Let us always buoy ourselves up with new ardent desires casting off lack of resolution, being always courageous and steady thrust towards your spouse the recollection of whom is beyond you.

Pray to God that in everything I may proceed according to what is pleasing to God. I do not want to do anything according to what pleases me but to do the divine will. I am in his loving hands. I always try not to do my own will by neither seeing nor hearing things that I like, so that only that which is divine is in control. I do this by dying, actually expiring on the cross. Since you need to have divine strength to act like this, I hasten to prayer asking that while you are on this journey you will rejoice exclusively in your divine spouse on a bed of prayer. Oh what a journey you will have! Thus if you wish any good towards me in Jesus Christ, it is now necessary for me to have confidence in your prayers and I commit myself to them. Note the teaching I have given to you. Do not wander about any more. Note that you should win the fight with sweetness, not with violent uproar as I have told you here and written about elsewhere if you understand how I suffer.

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<sup>260</sup> As St Therese of the Child Jesus says in her *Storia di un'anima*: "God does not need our works, he wants our love".

<sup>261</sup> The text has *intergo*; we have substituted *insorge* which gives meaning to the sentence.

<sup>262</sup> Note how the author continually refers back to the opening pages of this book.



**4719** I tell you that I suffer exceedingly when the Lord takes his cross of sadness and unremitting anxiety away from me because He is the only one whom I love. Now accept the consequence and say, if you want my heart to be continually joyful beg God that I will go on in this life without ever being deprived of internal and external sorrow. When I die my legacy will be what I taught you in the beginning concerning where all perfection is to be found,<sup>263</sup> together with a method for removing all obstacles, illusions and passions, as well as something that is more important to discover new enlightenment, so as to achieve the highest perfection by means of experience and taking hold of it more firmly the more the Lord calls you to the highest perfection. There you will gain grater depth of spirit and see with clearest illumination. The less you grow in perfection, the less you will deserve it. However, if you want me to feel consoled, pay attention to spiritual death. Die to everything, no matter how very spiritual and divine it may be.

Do you wish to be a truly spiritual person? Do you want to know if you are all beautiful? Do you want to know if your face is blemished? Look in the mirror and you will know immediately. Let our mirror be Christ Crucified. When like him you have become poor, despicable, abject, despised, sorrowful, anxious, exhausted, wounded, abandoned by all even God Himself, and feel thirsty, ravenous and whatever else, then you will have become a spiritual person, completely beautiful without a scratch, and not just an delusional spiritual person who is vain like some people are today.<sup>264</sup> By means of grace be sure to look into this mirror often. Do not fail to do this when you can since then you will be going towards a safe harbour, save from fog or wind.

Pray for me if you will with regard to the change of circumstances that I am about to soon experience so that God will bring me to die and thus put an end to the offenses I have committed against my dear Good God so that I may do what pleases Him and come to rest where I really wish, desire, invite and urge your heart to be, so that we may be united there *uno cardo* (with one heart). To this end and with this I leave you on the cross of Jesus Christ. Let it ever be in our hearts, on our lips and hands.

*Burning flame of ardent desires of pure beautiful purity. Chapter 17*

**4720** If I were really thankful that I had been found worthy of his divine endowment, of his sweet conversation, He would say to me: "Brother Gregory, I wish to give you a reward and the most excellent crown if you will do battle with your affections, temptations and circumstances and so on". I would reply: "Lord, I do not wish for this, but let it be done." He would reply: "On this occasion I want you to give an answer. This is my will." I would immediately respond light-heartedly: "Lord, I not only relinquish the glory loaded with crowns that you would bestow on me, but I would wish also for infinitely more in addition to this if it were granted. I would renounce all of this with thankful humility. I would not choose to engage in a battle like this, nor do I wish to do so".

As I bade you farewell, the more anxious and toughed by God's hand in various conflicts you were experiencing the greater was my heart's consolation as God knows. I recognise that hell is alert being jealous of what we have gained. It tries to tear down what has been built, which never the less goes on increasing. To accomplish this it sets hidden traps (by means of various thoughts, as you know) which are disguised as fake love. God will make you discover them. The enemy's strength consists in being hidden because once he has been discovered he takes flight and is not as strong. Therefore be alert to discover everything if you want to be steady and walk securely when this appears impossible. Have the courage to persevere for a

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<sup>263</sup> Her too we see the great importance he ascribes to the first small tract in which he is convinced there is a summary of exalted mystical teaching.

<sup>264</sup> Towards the end of the sixteenth-century there was growth in pre-quietistic tendencies with such spiritual writings being put on the Index.



long time and so on. Whatever doubts you experience I have doubted more than that. Be aware that hell is on watch. Take flight as much as you can for the enemy is active. However if you do what you are able to do he will be baffled and you will grow in perfecting what you treasure which I regard, love, esteem, respect and hold as beyond all heavenly gifts.

Do everything in your power to prevent me from desisting from what I desire in the Lord. I do not like these conflicts and neither do you. However, fly from them, loathe them, and repulse them by loving solitude. God wants you to be lost totally to the world. God wills that the soul dwells completely within a religious state the same as the body now lives. He wants all of you because he is fascinated by you not because you deserve it but out of his kindness. Correspond with grace; be in control of yourself, and make sure that you make new promises so that God does not turn his back on you. Jesus wants you to delight me. Secure all that you desire on him, offering everything to my Spouse saying:

**4721** “O my dear Jesus, since my heart is ravished I acknowledge and I see, O my beautiful heart, my only good, that you wish me to hold nothing in my heart so that nothing may stand in the way of enjoying you. O my Jesus, you wish my heart to burn with ardent desires that are more important than my father, my brother, my brother or anyone else. O my spouse, because you love me so much, make this possible for me. Take, take my dear life which is burning and wounded for you alone, bind it, imprison it to you, O true love, drawing my life away from every affection and thought which does not take the greatest delight in you. My God, remove all impediments that would separate me from you, O fond love of my burning heart. Take them away until my hearts has no energy or strength. I can do all things in you. I can overcome all the unbounded fury of Hell. In you I can stand against hell’s attacks. For your honour and glory I am ready for any challenge.”

All the exercises and prayers that you perform will not produce feelings and this is dangerous. It is enough to perform them with sheer faith to please God and not to please ourselves. Prayers and exercises that are performed in a state of anxiety and dryness are more valuable than a thousand performed when things are peaceful and there is spiritual consolation. When things are calm everyone knows how to sail and how to follow Christ willingly. Large crowds followed my Lord. Why? *Quia videbant signa. (Because they saw signs).*<sup>265</sup> This is conditional love. However even his disciples fled from the cross on Calvary. *Omnes, derelicto eo, fugerunt. (Leaving him they all fled).*<sup>266</sup>

My dearest, it is necessary that various trials come to you so that you recognise how much you really love God. May he be always blessed *in saecula saeculorum. Amen.*

*Evidential signs that show when the soul is possessed by the Holy Spirit. Three things are always present when Jesus is there. Chapter 18.*

**4722** St Bernard set down certain signs that show when the Holy Spirit is in a person. They are set out according to whether the person is in the beginning, proficient or perfect stage.<sup>267</sup>

With regard to beginners, the first sign is when a person experiences strong sorrow for having offended God by passed sins, because it pertains to the Holy Spirit to hate the hideousness of sin.

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<sup>265</sup> Cf. Jn 4, 48; Mt 12, 38.

<sup>266</sup> Mt 26, 56; Mk 14, 50.

<sup>267</sup> This teaching is set out in St Bernard’s writings. It is difficult to cite the sources. However something is found in *Sermones in Cantica: Sermo XVIII; In festo Pentecostes sermons I-III (PL. 183, 859-863, 323-334).*



The second sign is a firm proposal to be on guard against any sin in future, because such a firm proposal cannot exist apart from the grace of the Holy Spirit.

The third sign is an eagerness of soul to do good deeds, because love for God cannot remain idle.

With regard to the proficient, the first sign that indicates to them that they possess the grace of the Holy Spirit is that they frequently examine their consciences concerning all sins, including venial sins, because while mortal sin kills charity, venial sin chills fervour.

The second sign is that all worldly concupiscence becomes less to the extent that charity increases, because it takes the heart away from temporal things.

The third sign is that they become quite diligent in observing the divine precepts and so on.

**4723** With respect to those who are perfect, the first sign is that they keep divine truth secret as it goes to work through love absorbing the soul by means beyond understanding in the abyss of God.

The second sign is that they are afraid of nothing except God, because perfect charity banishes fear.<sup>268</sup>

The third sign is the wish (note this point well) to pass quickly from the prison of the body in accord with what the Apostle said regarding his love for Christ: *Cupio dissolve et esse cum Christo. (I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ)*<sup>269</sup> O flame of sparkling, burning love which is not able to continue to be taken up with work as it yearns for this hour! O what an hour, why the delay! Whoever is in love understands what I am saying.

Jesus our beloved Spouse had three companions who never deserted him all his life: poverty, scorn and sorrow.<sup>270</sup> If you really love the spouse, you should be his friend, as you love him so much. Desire reaches beyond what work can achieve so that you discover that you are in greater glory than those who have power, but no aspirations. If they do aspire to something they remain frigid and cold and never yield the fruits that are really effective. This amounts to foolhardy ambition which is very displeasing to God and comes to nothing. [I wrote about this in the preceding chapters.]<sup>271</sup>

For true lovers a burning desire that cannot be gratified is a cruel martyrdom, and God, who is most faithful, will give them a martyr's crown. Indeed our Seraphic Father was not martyred with a material weapon but with the weapon of unfulfilled desire (which is martyrdom for one who loves). Thus, the Church calls one who has received this crown as a martyr. *O martir desiderio!* (O martyr, by desire)<sup>272</sup>

*A person should never lose spiritual joy no matter what happens etc. with other pieces of advice. Chapter 19.*

**4724** I have always told you, and I am telling you again and insisting as strongly as I can, never lose spiritual joy (you know how many reasons I have put forward in support of such joy) not even on account of sin itself. I consider that I have been very careless through my negligence and unremitting defects never considering that my God would leave me for any reason, not for anything that I had done that was absurd or impatient or any other sin or defect. Let us never forfeit beautiful spiritual joy that brings union with it.

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<sup>268</sup> Cf. 1 Jn 4, 18.

<sup>269</sup> Phil 1, 23.

<sup>270</sup> This is probably a reference to what Angela Foligno said.

<sup>271</sup> In the manuscript there is an empty space following the word *allungo* (*spurt*) as if something were missing. We have added square parentheses.

<sup>272</sup> Cf. First verse of the antiphon for the Benedictus in the *Officium S. Francisci* by Julian of Speyer (AF X, 385. See FA: ED I p. 339)



Our Seraphic Father always wanted this for his sons and concerning himself he said: "My sons have pity on me if you notice that I am not always joyful. If you knew the anxiety that I suffer within, you would extend great consolation to me."<sup>273</sup>

Be well aware that I am not saying that you ought to experience joy in your lower faculties when you feel anxiety or hurt. In that case it is sufficient to have patience and endure the suffering. When you experience strong anxiety cry out and weep to God for mercy. At that time do not have scruples about anything. Endure the oppression and loneliness as best you can and leave the rest to me with complete abandonment. The soul needs to have great patience and resignation when enduring such oppression and dismay as it is almost beyond endurance. (Whoever has experienced it will believe me). It will be a sign of how great, true and pure is your love for God. This is how you will discover whether the ardent desires which sparkled in peaceful times were authentic. Genuine humility is accompanied by fear and lack of self-confidence. You think that you can do nothing well, but are always inclined to do what is sinful or defective. However let that make you happy and go ahead. Do not be overcome. The more calmly you weigh up passion the more you will take courage, becoming at all times a happy and generous warrior of the Cross, never afraid although all hell was opposed to you.

**4725** Keep praying. When you have finished the Litany,<sup>274</sup> make a brief examination of conscience (even though your state of union does not need much examination as you are praying continually) and weep over your defects, sighing, beating your breast and making other gestures. This is how to enter into prayer. When you feel dry, anxious, depressed and full of defects find help by means of exterior acts, extending your arms, sighing or using words (but with peaceful joy, not disturbing anyone) as you would do when calling to mind a dear lover. Let us console one another as we take on your desolation, anxiety and sorrow. How could I do anything but love you once I had observed that you were so similar to my beloved crucified Christ who so willing to be battered?

Console yourself if God calls you to follow His only Son. When we have arrived in paradise how we shall bless the day and the hour when we endured those anxieties, those sorrows! We shall wish to relive those times, but they will not come again. However, while there is still time let us be nothing but pleased about suffering that is the source of so much joy and may the Lord be with you.

*Good works ought to be performed in secret for God alone. Run from everything.  
Love battle. Chapter 20.*

**4726** My dearest, let us try to be good with God and hide it from the world. Let the good that we do be so secret that we do not know it ourselves. Let us seek God alone (the page has *vedi (see)*). Being regarded as good people is of little or no value. Sometimes it can be very dangerous. What is important is to be genuinely *coram Deo* (*before God*). Let us be always examining ourselves closely and rigorously so as not to allow our inner passions to appear to be virtues. The results will reveal what is really taking place. Hitting sacks will reveal if they contain dust or flower. *Exitus acta probat.*<sup>275</sup> Remove from yourself all talk of affection towards all creatures especially that which is frivolous. I include all creatures, the good and holy. Approach them with a blushing aspect that is flushed. (Blushing safeguards corporal and spiritual purity). Be mortified responding with words which are modest and humble. When you are

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<sup>273</sup> Cf *Mirror of Perfection* 99 (FA: ED III, p. 346). It is clear that there is a mistake in the Italian text which reads *O quanta compassione* instead of *consolazione*.

<sup>274</sup> The Litany of the Saints was prescribed for Capuchins before they began mental prayer. Cf. *Const.* 1536, n. 42, 4 (n. 217).

<sup>275</sup> This is a Latin proverb which means that the outcome reveals the value of the act.



forced to say ten words, say eight. Run away. This and nothing else will sustain your perseverance. Take flight running into the sweet embrace of your Spouse the crucified Jesus whom you have abandoned. You will see how much God loves you giving you such enlightenment so that will be all that you desire. Do not receive grace in vain. Try to release your heart from all curiosity and only carry Jesus in your breast. Plunge more deeply into your beloved. Let my efforts convince you of this.

I thank my God that sorrow has passed from you to me. You have already been heard. While you were asking God sorrow had already come to me. I hold it in secret from everyone. I disguise it from you in order to equip you for battle. While we are on the journey we need to concentrate only on battle (immersed in the divine will). Once we are in our homeland *tam non erit luctus, neque clamor, neque dolor. (there will be no mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow any more.)*<sup>276</sup> Oh what glory, what reward, what contentment, what eternal recompense for so little suffering! Do not neglect to perform these exercises with the greatest efficacy that you can, my dearest, undertaking them happily so that we are able to give God pleasure while still alive, and when we die and we pass away happily *de morte ad vitam! (from death to life) Et Dominus tecum. (The Lord be with you.)*

*The Examine concerning perfection. You should empty your heart. Preparation for death. What is real peace. Chapter 21.*

**4727** It is now the hour for us to rise from sleep.<sup>277</sup> My dearest, the time has come for us to rise from the sleep of negligence. Oh wicked negligence, you alone are the one who pulls down depriving the soul of perfection. Let us arise, dearest one, waking ourselves from such sleep. Let us make ourselves read for our beloved who is close by. Let us give our hearts to him alone to be with him alone. We do this by considering him in our words, thoughts and deeds, in our desires, affections and free moments and in our searching. If we are ungrateful for such gifts, graces and love let us be ashamed. Let us behave like real spiritual soldiers, like genuine lovers of someone whom we love very much. O wandering lover, why do you go after someone who does not love you? Immersed within and without in pleasing God I wish that you thought of nothing else, desired no one else, had affection for no one else and no inclination towards anything else. Pay attention to what you have undertaken always looking ahead and never behind. Go ahead without ever being preoccupied with fine points, since perseverance alone will bring reward. Always faithfully fix your gaze within and without on your Spouse being completely lost in delighting in him and never depart from this. Then all the tempests of earth and hell will break out.

Before you wish to think, speak, or do something consider whether it is pleasing to God. Scrutinise it well and aim to see how it will turn out, how fitting it will be, how to discuss it and how to put it into practice. Nothing other than this should be your journey towards perfection. Let us run and see who makes the most progress. Face every doubt with a joyful and strong will as the saying goes. O how much does God love your heart! Therefore give yourself up totally to grace without attachment to what is creaturely. Arouse your heart. Reject everything that is created by stripping your heart of everything both what is spiritual and what is material, so that you may plunge your heart naked into what pleases God aiming at nothing but achieving this. Regard nothing as your own. (This is not being in possession of something, but being possessed by something.) This kind of possession gives rise to crude affections and wicked depression. Consider everything as harmful, father, mother, brothers, family, friends and life. Let us free ourselves from everything and remain fixed to the cross at the divine pleasure so that this extreme situation may be the end of anxiety rather than the beginning. Let our silence, peace, relaxation, and rest be found in fulfilling God's will, which is that those who love him while they live

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<sup>276</sup> Rev.. 21, 4.

<sup>277</sup> Cf. Rom. 13, 11.



are actually dead and suffer, fixed to the cross, alone, dumb, blind, deaf, fleeing from visible creatures and what belongs to the earth.

**4728** The Spouse is jealous. Attend to him alone and to no other if you wish to enjoy divine conversation and arrive at the place to which you aspire. If we despise false vanities we shall rejoice among the Seraphim in heaven (as well as enjoying the peace this will bring on earth) amidst such glory that words cannot express even in part. Always –place yourself as if you were at the moment of your death thinking about what could stop you from going through it with joy and cast that away immediately whatever it may be. If we live like this how happy that moment will be! O indescribable consolation!

At the moment of death we do not need for anything. The other day a brother began to bleed from his nose and he died before morning. If things went well he would lose no more (for eternity). If things went badly what intolerable suffering he would endure, what desperate anxiety and what crosses he would endure for eternal ages!

When we think about this how sweet the crosses which we carry for our benefit and because they procure what we love how sweet will seem to us! Take note of what I taught you in the beginning. Offer up for me just a little less than what I offer up for you while being exhausted with sighs and tears so that you will die to everything that is created and cling to what is pleasing to God being crucified to the cross of Andrew, whose feast we are celebrating today.<sup>278</sup>

How more beautiful, clear and bright and pleasing in God's eyes are the crosses that are internal which the world cannot see! Blessed is the soul who has been found worthy to hold them within the breast, hidden peacefully and with resignation. Where peace exists there is no error provided that peace leaves the combatant prepared for crosses, for the eternal kingdom was established by the cross. Where peace exists there is no error, However that means crucified peace; a combatant with both hands wounded. Ignite the divine fire which generates true peace and which burns within your inner self so that it will give you invincible strength to possess the kingdom of God. The peace that the Word gave to mankind when He was born as a human person conquers all that is created. It is different from the peace that the world gives just as much as He is different. *Non commodo (sic) mundus dat, ego do vobis. (not as the world gives, do I give to you).*<sup>279</sup>

*Continue what you have undertaken. Cultivate a spiritual vision. Cultivate the genuine peace that it communicates. Be ready to suffer. Chapter 22.*

**4729** When pain has caused you to falter, the heart implored God on your behalf when you wanted to begin constructing such a profound structure so that you could finish and decorate it for his eternal glory. He already wanted nothing else but the transformation of our heart into his divine love. Genuine love involves action and is speechless. With this peak energy the heart reaches beyond what one can achieve by activity.

Note this move forward, which has often been indicated by word of mouth and in writing, never take a step backwards but be a steady soldier in all that you undertake in doing what your Spouse wants you to do. Focus on persevering. Even when we are wounded by every enemy assault never lose heart. The more dangerous these assaults are the greater the glory in victory, and the greater is the strength that the victor receives from God.

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<sup>278</sup> These references to personal details are not sufficient to set a precise date on the manuscript. As we know the feast of Andrew the Apostle occurs on 30<sup>th</sup> September. The year is unknown but undoubtedly we are at the end of the Sixteenth century.

<sup>279</sup> Cf. Jn 14, 27.



Never let your thoughts wander about because wherever they wander evil arises. All our wickedness comes from having various ideas and from having as many projects as we have ideas. However, as I have often told you, examine all of them but be fixed on only doing what God wants and on what is eternal. Do you wish to conquer everything? Be single-minded about pleasing God since which produces invincible strength and peaceful union which is filled with unutterable joy since this is where our final and consummate perfection lies in being absorbed in what pleases God and annihilated from ourselves.

At the outset I enjoyed great peace. Now I realise that I possessed great passions. I now see everything in the light of the cross. Wherever I look towards what is created my heart experiences fresh upset to such an extent that it terrifies me. However in the intimacy of my spirit I feel immersed and absorbed in the calmest sea of the divine will so that what I experience in my senses is outside of this and I only catch a hint of it. Thus I cling to blind faith and feel unfathomable strength.<sup>280</sup> When the Lord visits you scurry to prayer. Only God can bring such visits to life at great depth. You know of exercises that can afford some relief. However, God alone can confer the complete happiness that has been lost. Thus the Prophet and our Seraphic Father say: *Redde mihi laetitiam slautaris tui. (Restore unto me the joy of my salvation).*<sup>281</sup>

**4730** In addition to this enjoy physical exercise and speaking or hearing spiritual things. You are deeply indebted to God because whereas once you knew nothing of such visitations they are now your continual nourishment. As a consequence of such clear genuine divine union the Spouse has wrapped you in divine practices that mean being with God. Lift your gaze to what gives pleasure to your Spouse who has been pleased to dress you in the same garments as his own Son.

When I first read or heard about these practices I thought that I understood them, but now I see that you need to experience them before you can understand them well. This is the same with all the other steps along the Lord's unfathomable way. Whenever I read or hear about something that I have not experienced I do not consider that this qualifies me to be a teacher, but it humbles me *coram Deo (in the sight of God)*, for I am like a person who is thinking like this would and will make mistakes.<sup>282</sup>

Therefore let us feel glorified when God places us in amazing situations. How happy is that hour rather than when we are at peace and have spiritual consolation! Urge yourself to build your nest in God's eternal decrees with which you should necessarily comply. Admire nothing else and scourge yourself with nothing else under the sun.<sup>283</sup> Let us always be over the sun and never under it. Let go of whatever is a creature. Only go towards the Creator. Could this not be enough for you? Oh my God! *Deus meus et omnia! (My God and my all!)*

*A crucified soul is consoled by the Lord. The cross that is carried by the higher faculties is a gift that the Lord gives to his dear friends. Chapter 23.*

**4731** Your feeling of uselessness or even rejection wounds God's heart, your feeling that your heart is suffocated so that you experience being abandoned even by God is like bait that entices God Himself to come. It is even a magnet that attracts God Himself. The more suffocated that you appear to be the closer you are united to the

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<sup>280</sup> Note how doctrine is backed up with personal experience.

<sup>281</sup> Ps 50, 14 (*Vulg.*). – With regard to St Francis 2 *Cel.* 125, *Leg Per.* 97; *Spec. Perf.* 95-96. (FA: ED II, pp. 354-355: III, p. 344; III pp. 341-343)

<sup>282</sup> Note how it is all up to practical experience. What an important principle for the life of the spirit and for spiritual direction!

<sup>283</sup> Reminiscent of Qo (Eccles.) 2, 17. 19, 22; 4 1. 3. 7. etc.



Divine Word. The more that you love God the less you will recognise it and the more you will concentrate on your failings and are concerned with them alone!

Oh how great is the foolishness of being in love with the eternal wisdom of the Father of lights!<sup>284</sup> This will not disappear with death rather you will enjoy greater happiness and experience no fear but enjoy satisfying peace.

Often read the book that I sent to you so that it may be useful to you as a source of strength in various circumstances. Doubting that we are deceiving ourselves or uncertainty about anything will turn out to be profitable as it is a safe way towards making progress. However be aware of this always keep an eye on what is pleasing to God and not on what is pleasing or profitable to you. Concentrate on what the eternal Good wants whether you feel anxious, confused, suffocated, or perplexed in your higher or lower faculties. Oh what a situation in which God allows his intimate friends and spouses to taste Him! Through this favour your blessed soul will begin to taste Him. This is what constitutes genuine union (which few desire and fewer know how to attain), rather than remaining in one's cell enjoying consolation which takes you away from the cross. The days of suffering will pass, but the glory that suffering will win will endure for eternity.<sup>285</sup>

**4732** Since the Vigil of St Michael I have been visited within and without by the Lord and today, which is the feast day of my Guardian Angel, the visit was beneficial deep within me.<sup>286</sup> You told me that you always received consolation on the feast of Archangel.<sup>287</sup> Now you cannot even lift up your mind. Oh how inexperienced you are concerning real consolation! Are you still a baby? I think that the past years were filled with sweetness and filled with self-love. Now the Spouse has placed you in rock-hard virtue, in pure love and wed you in the bridal bed of the cross, making you enjoy there the rock-solid fruits of a marriage that only a few experience and yet you would dare to throw yourself into mud as the Israelites did when they rejected the manna and wanted the onions and the other food of Egypt.<sup>288</sup>

Know that this was a special favour that the Archangel gained for you. When a special feast occurs you should desire these gifts and not consolation or the milk of babies. If the day ended with great consolation it has passed with much self-love. If it ended on the cross what a happy day and how very solemnly it will be counted among the days of eternity! In so far as these times with their defects were spent on the cross, and tears that were shed with resignation in anguish, garlands will be provided to decorate the spouse on the occasion of most blissful admission into the eternal glory of paradise. How pleasant this will be! Therefore be big-hearted.

My anguished heart could receive no greater consolation than to see your naked body bound by every limb in this way. What would be more pleasing would be to see you plunged into pleasing my Lord who is to be always praised and blessed with great love by us most ungrateful souls.

*For the encouragement of a soul that had been wounded by the Lord. Much glory is conveyed on a small amount of suffering!. Reflection on death. Chapter 24.*

**4733** Two things are the main and necessary items for our soul: ruthless torments within and without and peaceful resignation. I have found both of them in your crucified heart as it was cut and stung most lovingly with many anxieties and austerities when acting in line with what was pleasing to God and ordained by Him.

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<sup>284</sup> Cf. Gen 1, 17.

<sup>285</sup> Reminiscent of *Const. 1536*, n. 150, 5 (n. 427); Rom 8, 18; 2 Cor. 4, 17-18.

<sup>286</sup> The Vigil of St Michael is 28<sup>th</sup> September. Therefore from 28<sup>th</sup> September to 2<sup>nd</sup> October the feast of the Angel Guardians is the time in which he wrote this letter or chapter.

<sup>287</sup> Thus probably Father Gregory's disciple was called Michael.

<sup>288</sup> A reference to Num. 11, 4-5. Written in the margin: *Note*.



At present your heart's happiness is dim. It will rejoice later among the Seraphim where I hope we shall both savour the Lord's most precious blood.

A small amount of anxiety which is suffered for God today will bring with it the most worthy, indescribable glory. Indeed it will bring complete glory. At present just a little suffering which is undertaken for God is worth all of Heaven's glory. What will a person who has endured so much for the love of God deserve? The Apostle Paul has this to say: *Momentaneum hoc et leve nostrae tribulationis aeternum gloriae pondus operator in coelo.* (For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation works for us above measure, exceedingly an eternal weight of glory).<sup>289</sup> Oh the grandeur of tribulations! Oh the strength that comes from suffering! Raise your eyes to see the pleasure that God perceives when He sees you suffering like this and urge yourself to suffer more. How blessed you will be in Paradise at the time that you Passover into complete love! However, try to always remain ever joyfully contented. What joy it gives my heart to know that your soul possesses both the things mentioned above. Wherever I turn I find anxiety that greatly refreshes my spirit and the more bitter it is the more it eradicates what pertains to creatures.<sup>290</sup>

**4734** I draw consolation from two things: first, to suffer for my God, second, when I see that your heart is suffering with resignation. As you already rejoice in God's goodness concerning these two things, beseech God that just as I have been together with you in the first so may I be together with you in the second. I hope to receive this gift by means of prayer. Do not cease to raise more prayers to God for this favour so that I may not lack dynamic faith.

When a person carries the cross we recognise that they are a genuine friend. Remain attached to the throbbing cord of what is pleasing to God, not only in pleasant things but even more when there are sorrows and crosses. In these days God's true way is known to just a few.<sup>291</sup> Holy Jeremiah shed many tears when he recognised that no one walked this road.<sup>292</sup> If we see this let us run without giving up. However enjoy knowing it. Enjoy walking the road. Persevere if you see that you feel consoled in the Lord. Always live as if this were the final hour. What is the rush? What is there to think about? What is to be said? What shall we do? Live like that but be lost and annihilated in the will of my Lord, where you desire to be entirely and never go away from this.

*Whoever dwells on the future loses the past and the future. Hidden hoaxes which console the soul. Chapter 25.*

**4735** *Nolite cogitare de crastino. Sufficit diei malitia sua.* (Be not solicitous for tomorrow. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof).<sup>293</sup> Woe to the spiritual person who postpones the time for giving himself completely to God and who passes the time that he has in being busy, recreating, attending to trifles and to what is vane etc. When the Lord comes to judge He will not judge in terms of the future but as if the present were the last moment. We shall be blessed if we act like this. The world will pollute us.

If we endure tribulation, anxiety, sorrow and suffering within and without with patience and happiness we shall always be united with what is for our wellbeing, despising all recreation and leisure time spent with visible creatures all of whom in truth impede us from having very pure and bright vision. In this way we shall defeat the savage attacks which the enemy usually launches on spiritual persons in their

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<sup>289</sup> 2 Cor. 4, 17.

<sup>290</sup> This is another clear example that shows that this mystical treatise originates from correspondence pertaining to spiritual direction.

<sup>291</sup> A rather harsh judgement of his times.

<sup>292</sup> Cf. Jer 2, 13.

<sup>293</sup> Mt 6, 34.



solitude by placing future anxiety, suffering, desolation and uncertainty before their mind's eye. This is how the traitor forces many spiritual persons, who are inexperienced in the practices of carrying the cross, into error. Do nothing else except inquire into how to adopt new strategies. Firstly concentrate on the time when you could gain what God is offering and not on the future which is filled with various frightening thoughts which would spoil both the present and the future.

Often the enemy makes you transfer prayer and other ordinary things from the present to the future, whereas if you had been aware of his deceitfulness you could have performed them with great enthusiasm and a sense of union. Later he makes you apathetic toward making the effort and makes you feel very bad and makes you stop everything. When this time is spent doing other things God allows that because you did not willingly and avidly recognise the present moment even the future is taken away which had been given to you, where there were such hopes of achieving good things, . It is clear that because of His infinite goodness God will grant that ordinary things can be carried out in the future with enthusiasm and as we had hoped, but the present has been lost for which a strict account must be given. Who knows how many graces God had prepared for you at that time which has now passed? Such prayers could have been offered with spirit were postponed and that time will not return.

Oh time that is appreciated so little! Oh traitorous enemy who never rests but always fabricates new trickery! Jesus, you reveal your glory to us through grace so that we may win and remain victorious in your honour.

**4736** Watch and be on guard praying continually. What great things solitary prayer reveal! Love solitude, be diligent concerning the visits of the Spouse so that they do not slip by without being helpful and producing new graces. Fortify your determination never to offend holy God, or to willingly commit the slightest fault against what is perfect. Prefer rather to risk life itself than give up your soul for, as you will see in paradise this will be worth whatever effort and vigilance it takes.

Never think about the future, but make good use of the present and you will discover how to overcome various ruses and always live happily and undefeated. Whereas I spend a long time in prayer you should spend a short time and thank God for his generosity. Never think of the future, or put off till evening what should be done in the morning or vice versa, saying: "What shall I do tonight? What shall I do at a particular time? I will not know what to do. Something distressing, distracting or disquieting might overtake me? At least these devotions and exercises will make time pass". Be aware of and dismiss thought about the future. Always live in the present with the help of the Lord. Concentrate on what the Spouse wishes now and carry that out. In the end everything that pertains to the future will become the present. The future belongs to God alone, and not to us. Therefore what is the use of thinking about what is not our own nor could be our own?

**4737** Take care only of what is in the present, since this is what God will judge. In this way you will continually grow in the invincible strength of new enlightenment. Whoever does the opposite and is continually distressed, anxious and fearful about the future will lose the present and will be found not to have good works. You be the judge of the sentence that God will pass. Never say: "I will do it tomorrow. Tomorrow I will arouse myself to offer everything to God". As soon as you recognise something that is preventing the genuine shedding of all that belongs to temporal or spiritual created objects, throw it away immediately, and become alert raising your thoughts to God (whoever wishes to pass over to the divine essence needs to be stripped of everything within and without) by treading underfoot every creature, so that nothing, whether spiritual or temporal, can dominate your brightly shining heart. You should dominate everything invincibly. Be united to and transported into uncreated light, immersed and plunged into the intimate depths of what is pleasing to God into whom you have been absorbed and annihilated.



*For the soul to climb to perfection it has to break all connection with the world.  
Practical method of the spiritual battle towards perfection. Chapter 26.*

**4738** Be sure to walk without ever pausing. Look carefully to see how you conduct yourself at all times. I know what I am saying. I do not know what you are doing. I have doubts about what you said to me during our discussion the other day when you said that you were mortified and spiritual when dealing with others. God knows how you deal with others. Be careful not to be spiritual only with those who are spiritual and then be vain, frivolous and inquisitive with those who are vain, frivolous and inquisitive. This is not the way to perfection, no, not this. You should break away from everyone and seek God alone. If you break away from the world you will be attentive to God.

Listen to the Beloved: "*Filioli nolite diligere mundum, neque ea quae in mundo sunt, (My little children, love not the world, nor the things that are in the world).*"<sup>294</sup> If we did not love the world we would not be involved with it and the world, once it recognised that our determination to want nothing but God, would leave us in peace and you would enjoy making an investment in paradise. If you do not behave in this approach but want to be partly with God and partly with the world, *non potest duobus dominis servire (no man can serve two masters)*<sup>295</sup> Do all that you can to not fall into serious error. Be aware that you have to make the break if you want to reach the heights of purity of spirit. I can do no more. It is up to you. God knows how much I have worked for you. Do not act in a way that my tears, and sleepless nights will be cursed, but in a way that they will be blessed for eternity. Never turn your gaze to creatures. Run from them or else you will regret it to your damnation.

Love solitude. You do not believe me. You doubt. Allow only God to be in your heart. Let your heart belong to God and to no other. I thought I was talking to a person who had died and I found him as he had been before. I wait to see when you become someone else; when you see everything that is visible as an impediment to your perfection. Until you practice this obediently you will always reek of the stench of the world and exude the odour of the world. Time passes and death draws near. These are evil and very dangerous times,<sup>296</sup> even for God's great friends. There are few who seek God with real appreciation for the cross. Everyone seeks himself and what he wants,<sup>297</sup> and not God's inner spirit. God will throw them all in a corner.

**4739** How often we choose Barnabas and cast away our blessed Christ when we say, not with our voice but by our actions, *Crucifigge, crucifigge eum! (Crucify him. Crucify him!)*<sup>298</sup> No, God is my only love! Yet you cast off you Spouse's heart by immersing your heart in creatures after receiving so many favours and graces! Do not allow this to happen, O my eternal Good, do not allow me to do it anymore!

My dearest one, stay awake, do not sleep, watch and pray continually.<sup>299</sup> Time passes and rendering an account for time is approaching. What a dreadful thought! How many things do we consider to be nothing which God scrutinises carefully! Let us wake up, putting our inclinations aside, for time passes. Time goes by and how rigorous is judgement! Be on guard the days are evil! Wherever you go you are in contact with a very impure world. If you wish to attain heaven it is not among us. It is present in solitude. God is so jealous of our heart that He sends us warnings not to

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<sup>294</sup> 1 Jn 2, 15.

<sup>295</sup> Mt 6, 24.

<sup>296</sup> Cf. 2 Tim 3, 1.

<sup>297</sup> Phil 2, 21.

<sup>298</sup> Cf. Mk 15, 14; Jn. 19, 6. 15.

<sup>299</sup> Cf. Lk 21, 36.



embrace what is mortal. Take notice, take this to heart, try to put this into practice. If you wanted to achieve perfection as much as I wish it for you, how happy your heart would be! Therefore uphold my wish, my tears and my sighs by doing what I ask for your good and for my consolation.

There was a religious who was so concerned and careful that when he found peace and quiet in something he immediately cast it away and fled from it so that he could always remain unhindered and free.<sup>300</sup> We go in search of creatures to pass the time and yearn for things, places and rewards and whatever gives us satisfaction. How wretched are our times! Shame on us who are so anxious that the body not suffer! Such anxiety will crucify us. My very dear friend, weep! Like St Ephraim the Syrian let your eyes be always full. His eyes were never empty.<sup>301</sup> There are many examples of the lack of love we show to those who love us. Think about this and cry out: "O my God, why do I not love you!"

What you do, do it with unction.<sup>302</sup> God is not as pleased with the work as he is with feeling and purity of intention that is put into it. O my son I hold you in my hearts with Jesus. Given that your heart is always concerned about creatures; let it be fixed on Mary. Be careful to never turn away your gaze but remember me as I never forget you in the Lord.

*Genuine love never wearies of doing things for the beloved! Strive for divine love and suffering. Chapter 27.*

**4740** You have never taken hold of or, may I add, merited the sorrows that you have experienced. God revealed to someone that if he wished to reward a faithful person who was on the journey for having endured great adversity, for love of Him, He could not find a better reward than to give him new adversity, new suffering, new anxiety, new crosses. (As your heart is full of disgusting odours and impurities) how did you deserve to enjoy such favours and graces that God promised would fill you with so many gifts, such hatred for what is created, nourishing you exclusively with heavenly food and conversation so that this was all that you enjoyed throwing away anything else? How did you deserve this? Where did you come by such desire for heaven while finding the world and everything visible so fetid? Where did such shining purity together with such exalted and secret union come from if not from divine generosity which gave you daily guidance taking the appearance of a delightful spouse who gave you either bodily suffering, or anxiety of spirit, or left you feeling lonely, or enlightened, or sent someone to crucify you, or to guide you, or took them away, in one situation or another, in order just to purify you, to make you beautiful to raise you to love our unique spouse and to enjoy His presence that filled and adorned you with reward and joy such as is only given to the soldiers of the loving one who was crucified. He loves us, I say, but we do not love Him.

Wretched response! Do you wish to discover if He is your spouse? Consider His entire life from when He left heaven, on the exposed stump, and consider why this was so. Oh my true love, how I see how much You love me by means of what You did! If you have recognised your lover, now look at yourself. What have you done, and what are you doing for Him? It is foul. How deeply we are in love with ourselves and how much do we dread suffering! You are on guard so that nothing hurts your body, that sleeping in the open or that sleeping on the earth do not injure you. Oh, indeed He is my lover but He is not loved but fled from! If love was present there would be no need for a stimulant or a command or a measure or fear but unbounded freedom.

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<sup>300</sup> Br Lucidus a companion of St Francis said this. Cf. *Spec. Perf.* 85. (FE: ED III, p. 333)

<sup>301</sup> Cf. further ahead par. 4813.

<sup>302</sup> That is with a spirit of devotion and love.



**4741** Worldly lovers have no need of prodding to put themselves in the bald-faced danger of death,<sup>303</sup> to sleep in the open or in water on cold nights simply out of wretched insanity. Giving yourself to God in such a calculated manner, with such reserve and fear will give rise to doubts and scruples. O God, my dearly beloved, it was love that made You come down from heaven and go through the world like a desperate and lost man. In the end it was love that put You on the cross where You gave up Your life. O true lover! O Magdalene, true lover, who immediately kicked the world away and plunged into unbounded and wild divine love! You then abandoned yourself to blind love which you regarded as doing nothing for your beloved, the God whom you loved and ardently desired.

O how my Seraphic Father followed this path! We do this with such fear, scruple and calculation. O if only we were true lovers we would do it all as if it were nothing and we would never be content with doing more for the beloved. Concerning Alexander the Great we read that when he wished to celebrate with dignity the funeral of a warm friend who had passed away, he summoned many orators. Having heard what the others had to say the last speaker added: *De dilecto nunquam satis*. A loving heart carries out all that is possible for the beloved without ever being content not to do more.

Let love be our school, our advisor, our guide, our rule, our gauge and our law. Happy is the heart that is infatuated with love! It cannot be mistaken. St Augustine says: love and do what you will.<sup>304</sup> The image of true love can be seen on the cross. It awaits you there if you are lovers.

*Reproach of a soul concerning certain unintentional defects. What is simplicity of spirit. Blind obedience. Chapter 28.*

**4742** I am greatly consoled to see you with a rejuvenated determination. Now God knows. You obey in word, but you appear to be acting in another way. You wish to achieve simple obedience but what you do does not live up to what you say. You say let us flee from creatures as you know St Catherine of Siena did.<sup>305</sup> You attempt to do this. You speak loving words and follow with lack of purpose. You cry Father as if it were a joke. O wicked joke! Is this how you call on God? This is not the kind of joke or foolishness that the Lord wants, nor those who serve Him. It is the serpents' wisdom.<sup>306</sup> This is the world's wisdom, the wisdom of the flesh (which is great waste of time) which gives off the stench of the flesh, of the world and of unbridled and frivolous talk.

The foolishness of God's spirit produces few words and these are crucial, well thought out, modest, bright and pure. They create the deepest union with God exclusively and detach us from every creature. A soul who receives these words is not overcome by a taste for any created object. When this soul acts it does so totally without any affectation or divided heart. This is the kind of foolishness I want you to have and not that of the world. If you do not adopt these kinds of words you will never be known as a lover of God and you will be sorry.

I told you about the person who was sick and you do just the opposite to him. You say: "Father, he was cured in the end". I say that was not blind obedience, but following your own fancy. Since obedience does not have eyes it cannot see but goes on blindly. Pluck that eye out, throw it away, I tell you.

**4743** You not only do not want to cast creatures aside, but you go in search of them which is a sign that you are imprisoned in the body while your heart wanders around

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<sup>303</sup> Note in the margin: *Note*.

<sup>304</sup> A famous saying of Augustine: cf. *In Joan. Ev. Tr.* 7, 8 (PL 35, 2033).

<sup>305</sup> St Catherine spoke about this in her *Libro della divina dottrina*. Cf. for example in *Mistici del Duecento e del Trecento*, ed. A. Levasti, Milano 1960, 831.

<sup>306</sup> Cf. Mt 10, 16.



the streets among creatures. You can deceive me, but for certain God can see your most intimate secrets. You are either being deceived or you are being hypocritical. Meditate well at the foot of the Cross as to whether these acts are blind obedience or carnal foolishness. Are they acts which wish for nothing but God, or do they opt for creatures? O what an unhappy person you are, why don't you cry? If you do not fly from creatures you will always be miserable. Do you want to live feeling consoled? Adopt blind obedience.

Do not cast aside what I am writing to you, but take notice, value it, take it to heart and put it into practice, because I am addressing you and not someone else. I am disclosing divine secrets to you a little at a time according to circumstances, your needs and the graces which God sent you. God likes actions not words when a person is to acquire perfection. *Non qui dicunt, sed qui faciunt.* (Not those who talk, but those who act.)<sup>307</sup>

I would like to see you continually striving towards what is pleasing to God so that your death would be the beginning of joy and the end of suffering. How different it will be for those who live amongst consolations! A genuine lover is never satisfied with doing a little for the one he loves until he has reached the desired end of being one with and transformed into the object of his love. Someone said to me: "I would be happy to reach the last place in paradise". These are the words of someone who is not in love; they are indeed words of love of self. I replied: "I want to be among the Seraphim and behold radiant love. I continually ask God with most ardent love to strip my soul of these vane and transitory things and from all creatures and to make it beautiful for God alone."

Therefore listen to me and be assured of my assistance. Pray to the Lord for me so that I may convey to you what I have to say with a pure heart. If we do this we shall be blessed.

*The happiness of those who journey following the divine will. A path on which there can be no error. An invitation to travel the road of suffering. Chapter 29.*

**4744** I have spent days, years and much time during which everything went well because all that happened to me came about through the divine will and what was pleasing to the One who loved me so much. Therefore, how can wicked things come from the One who is the supreme good and indeed goodness itself? How can what is contemptible and irritating come from one who is completely peaceful and who flickers with flames of true love? If I do not have time or am upset it is because things are not going my way that is everything is not going as I wish.

My dearest, putting it briefly, one can reach a state of happiness in which everything that is creaturely is overcome and one enjoys the Uncreated One. If you want to continue on the journey, run and do not have doubts. As I have told you many times let the divine will be your teacher. Never begin to ask a lot of questions. Cast aside all doubts, thoughts, defects, sufferings and anxieties into a deep hole. . If an Angel from heaven were to say: "You are being deceived, you have strayed from the path, all the good that you have done up to now is lost, you are not walking the true path and you are being deceived" turn your back on him immediately, remaining unconquered and generous, say to your Spouse: "As you wish, my dear God, as you wish. I am joyful, throbbing, immersed and lost in what pleases you."

Carry this out obediently and have no doubts. Let us remain in God's loving hands like the pen that I am holding, I move it, I turn it and it does as I want it to without asking why. Even if it recognises what is happening it does not complain. If it followed its own whim, even if it wished to please me, I would not be able to form the characters that I wanted to form, nor reveal hidden eternal secrets to you. Then consider how much evil would be done and be aware of what you are doing.

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<sup>307</sup> Cf. Mt 7, 21. Note how decisive and radical this challenging spiritual direction is.



**4745** Everything is either good or bad to the human eye, but not to God. If you are alarmed by anxiety or confused even to perspiring as if you were at death's door, distracted by evil and diabolical thoughts, lift your eyes up to God since it is He who is tormenting you. It is only Him. Therefore be consoled as you wish for nothing other than what He wants. Be careful not to stray from what I am telling you. Although you may argue about this with your hands do not do it with your intellect.

Christ and all the Saints travelled the path of suffering, anxiety and violence. Now their suffering is over and they rejoice forever. At present we are their companions in suffering and later we shall enjoy eternal glory with them. It will be a short time to when the sun will set and the day will dawn when the light of the eternal sun will shine when we shall happily bless the hour that we spent on the cross.

Yesterday's suffering has passed and so will the suffering of today. Everything shall pass. However the prize and the reward that is to eventuate will last for eternity. Let us enter into ourselves, into the depths where God abides and be still there banishing every thought from our heart, every thought of creatures. By means of ardent, violent exercises, anxiety, suffering and hurt we shall win the victory for which the palm is awarded at death.

Do not be alarmed by the defects that were mentioned above. Rather work joyfully towards being united in happiness and peace. God keeps His gifts secret so that we may keep ourselves from self-love that tarnishes even infinite goodness. You will discover everything at death and then you will happily fly to heaven, *et Deus tecum.* (and God will be with you).

*Emotion deceives, but the light of faith does not deceive. The path of humility, resignation and obedience. Chapter 30.*

**4746** I greet you wherever you are in what pleases my beloved Good and in what is according to His will. Indeed you give me consolation beyond words. More than once I took up the pen to respond to you, but I have not found the door open so that I could enter, see or speak, to go beyond the reach of the intellect concerning the matter that we are discussing. I have decided to address you at some length concerning what I think, even though when we deal with spiritual matters it is better to listen than to speak.

God wishes first of all to inwardly test His dear friends on whom, once they have been proved to be true friends, He wants to confer very special gifts that will make their soul profoundly humble. For my part I believe that the more perfect a servant of God becomes the more he descends into deeper humility, abjection, awareness of his own wretchedness, disgusting stench and practices.

When you find yourself experiencing the bitterest crosses to which the Lord has firmly bound you by means of the very strong chains of most intimate emotional resignation, and when you feel abandoned by heaven and earth, realise that this is a test which is sent by our beloved to test his secret lovers in three ways: by pretending to depart from them, pretending to abandon them, pretending not to love them in order to arouse fervour, to bring on tears which are precious nourishment. Your lover wounds your heart. *Fingit se longius ire* (He pretends to move further away). However He does not depart. *Fingit tantum* (He only pretends). However whatever unites more closely and makes the heart languish more deeply joins the beloved to your heart. A true lover who wishes to test the beloved will say and do things that do not seem to be expressions of love, yet all of these are sparks of the most intimate dynamic love. They are strong bonds of love. They are sharp darts of love by means of which the lover's heart is brought to life and inflamed. The poet said:

The true lover who desires and pines  
Does not appear to love because he loves too strongly.



**4747** My dearest, God's pretence to leave you is really a spark that comes from love's most vigorous furnace which as it is burning in His divine breast flings out very ardent embers to you in order to both test reciprocal love and also to play with you and derive pleasure from that. Accept it joyfully with an unconquered soul with resignation, confiding yourself to His strength, with patience and leaving what is happening up to Him.

You will appear to be travelling to an unknown destination, without knowing what you are doing. What a reward, a rare gift and the very first step towards the highest perfection! What a safe journey it is to walk like this! You wish to discover God by walking the path of the emotions, and to abandon yourself to enlightenment and absolute faith where all the exercises appear to be wanting and fetid in the sight of God. This is the result of grace which is a most excellent gift. The enlightenment of faith is a supernatural gift which is secretly infused by God in the deepest recesses of the soul which those will admit that do not possess it. The more secret it is and the purer it is, the more protected it will be from the infected breath of self-love which, in a most subtle manner, attempts to infect Holy God's purest and brightest works.

**4748** This gift, this enlightenment, because it is so pure, simple and splendid, the more clearly it shines in the depths of the soul (already darkened by sins) the more it recognises minute imperfections making them appear to be great errors or grave defects. Thus it will appear that the soul is putrid in the sight of its loving God because it sees nothing in itself but faults and blemishes. Because this mystical insight and progress in the light of faith does not come from the person himself but from most extravagant divine kindness, and because it makes a person self-conscious regarding lack of gratitude, purity and separation from his beloved Spouse, it makes him feel putrid; but he is not so in the most precious eyes of his dear, loving God.

O my love how well you know what to do! My dearest, may we not go on tormenting<sup>308</sup> ourselves. Let us work for the one who knows and loves us so much. Let us not do the work that is pleasing to us because our work is not supposed to please us but to please God our fabulous Master. Let us do the work that is pleasing to Him. As we are seriously blinded by self-love the work that is more perfect to God appears to be imperfect to us, while what we like and think is perfect is putrid and repulsive to God. Let us do the work of Him who knows and loves us. Let us not say: "This kind of work is not useful. It is wrong and will bring about my ruin." (Who should we please ourselves of God? If we are to please God why worry about ourselves.) Be certain of this that what appears to be wrong, defective, mistaken, not good and harmful is most necessary and advantageous for doing something ideal for our perfection.

**4749** Let God take the initiative because he knows us and loves us. We should not do anything like taking the initiative. When I have committed a defect I should feel infinite hope as if that defect is improving my soul and perfecting the work, *ut perficam opus eius. (so that I shall perfect his work)*<sup>309</sup> I long for the sweet pardoning of the defect, the construction of the edifice so that out of this something very beautiful will result. I long for the wisest of Masters who is able to bring his work to perfection sometimes by means of what is lacking, sometimes through anxiety, sometimes through lifting the weight, sometimes through the worst thoughts, sometimes through good thoughts, sometimes by a warm loving embrace, sometimes through pretending to abandon a person, sometimes by means of a fall, sometimes through tribulation, sometimes by one thing or another. We should remain steadfast and leave it to Him.

You may say: "Father I am fastidious." This comes about because you want to live and not die. To your shame, not wanting to die leads to a thousands deaths. What

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<sup>308</sup> *Martriando* is a word that is hard to define. Perhaps it should be: *martoriando*.

<sup>309</sup> Cf. Phil 1, 6.



unhappiness! You are not willing to cast this wicked preoccupation aside! Let us be very aware that such harsh thoughts are about not going into the leaping and eternal flames of hell. The greatest assurance you can have when travelling the path to God lies in holy obedience and in living in an annihilated way in obedience to Him.

What a safe harbour is obedience! How would it be if we were able to walk in peace and obedience! I assert: How necessary it is for those who are travelling this road, especially for those who are young, to have a guide, enlightenment and a superior who is well trained in spiritual exercises!<sup>310</sup> These are the signs by means of which you can recognise him clearly: let him be at peace within and without, steadfast, serious, courageous, and humble within and without, wrapped in intimate prayer, outstanding in charity and compassionate in lifting the load from the soul. There are two signs that are most important. His speech will reveal what is in his heart. This will become clearer with time. Speech uncovers the heart, but not immediately. The other sign is evidence regarding his purity.

Indeed, Blessed Vincenzo Domno<sup>311</sup> advises us to be careful as it often happens that many spirituals persons begin well and end up badly. At the outset they speak about the Trinity, the hidden secrets of God, mystical theology, supernatural union etc. They begin *Credo in Deum* and end up with the earth the world and the flesh. They end up with *carnis resurrectionem* (*the resurrection of the body*).<sup>312</sup>

**4750** Let us be vigilant, let us be vigilant, most dear one, especially concerning the beautiful flower of purity. Let our ear never be attached to what pertains to what is created no matter how holy and divine it may appear. (I am speaking about our will, as I have done so often and not about the lower animal instincts.) Being blind to all else, let it concentrate with loving warmth on what is pleasing to God.

Be concerned with walking towards the unknown and leave the rest to the Lord not wishing to know or do anything further. It is enough to remain passive grasping onto the divine inspirations by means of which He is accomplishing His work. Do not attempt to understand this, but allow yourself to be led. If you judge yourself to be fetid and defective you will grow to be as beautiful and divine as He who loves you with pure and shining love wishes.

You will feel abandoned because of your crosses. My advice is that at such times do no more than just try to have patience because you can do little more than that. Think about the One who is lovingly making you suffer. Cast all doubts, thoughts and scruples onto Him. I do not know what else to say. Resting peacefully and feeling grateful, sleep<sup>313</sup> most happily on the sweet, secure bed of holy obedience to what pleases God, which is what you desire absolutely and nothing more.

Fly from creatures using St Catherine of Siena's exercises.<sup>314</sup> Try to be thankful, so that the above-mentioned enlightenment may increase and never losing sight of God you will grasp what is invisible and experience within yourself what is the divine will for you. When you are tempted to perform the slightest voluntary defective act (I am not talking about a serious venial sin) you will prefer to forfeit your life. This is how we recognise who loves God and not by means of divine consolation. Nothing could be clearer than this.

Practice this advice with simplicity of heart, detached from every creature, searching within and without for nothing but God and what pleases Him while being blind to everything else. Be always prepared to receive the Lord's gifts, which will ravish your heart, more than the emotional and sensual ecstasies for which so many yearn. Be resigned to His will and pray for me.

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<sup>310</sup> Note in the margin: *Nota bene*. Think about the importance of this warning and about discerning the qualities of an enlightened spiritual director.

<sup>311</sup> We have not been able to find this Saint in the *Bibl. Sanctorum*, or in AASS.

<sup>312</sup> Words taken from the Creed.

<sup>313</sup> *Assounando* is derived from *assonnare* which means to be drowsy.

<sup>314</sup> Cf. above note 305. Note that he refers to this Saint very frequently.



*Various different pieces of evidence which are of special importance with regard to the purity to which a spiritual person ought to strive. Chapter 31.*

**4751** Our spirit is firmly connected to the strongest pillars as it journeys along the road of the Spirit, on the way to eternity, in mystical divine union. This is why Paul the Apostle advises us, *qui stat videat ne cadat, (whoever is standing let him take heed lest he fall)*.<sup>315</sup> I wish now to present you with clear evidence so that being free and unfettered like David the Prophet (who said of himself that the more he sought out precepts the more he was tied down and bound with more chains, the more freely he walked on a safe road to the eternal home) you may run swiftly towards your destination. Listen to the holy Prophet: *Et ambulabam in latitudine, quia mandata tua exquisivi (I walked at large because I have sought after your commandments.)*<sup>316</sup> However you should attend to the implementation with vigilance.

Let all your words, thoughts, actions and desires be annihilated in what is pleasing to God and let them be carried out because of the divine will and for no other purpose, no matter how good, holy or godly. Simply search for obedience in everything which is not sinful. Obey blindly without asking the reason. As soon as you look for reasons and start discussing things there is no blind obedience, but compliance that is thrashed out by means of logic and intellectual activity. Blind obedience *est super intellectum (is beyond what is intellectual)*.

Whatever you do carry it out happily in a heartfelt manner. Never surrender spiritual happiness. Everything that is good comes from this. Do not put it aside for any reason even sin. Strip your heart of all that is created, so that God may fill it with Himself.

You can achieve this by means of violence, tears and prayers in solitude. Whoever delights in conversation with creatures, will surely cloud his soul, and the more impenetrable the fog the more serious, intense and dangerous it is. If this seems harsh, have patience.<sup>317</sup>

**4752** My dearest, if you want to be close to God move away from all creatures. The heart is easily tied down. Indeed it finds itself tied down by conversation, even spiritual conversation, and it does not know how. It is difficult to untie it. I know this and how desperate this is! Take care as much as you can to keep away from all creatures. Spiritual persons have to exert great effort to keep the heart bound and there is great danger. (I have experienced this at my own expense.) It is something that is hidden which is evident only to experts.

It is God's will to bind spiritual people to Himself. However you should be careful to stay away from creatures and not to imagine that you are spiritual, enlightened and well off in being emotionally attached to God. Admit and consider how you are made of flesh, sexually fragile, living among many enemies, old enemies and very experienced warriors who plot nothing but to set hidden traps. Take it to heart to strip creatures from your heart and give your heart freely and unfettered to your Creator since it already belongs to Him.

I command and beg of you as much as I can to turn your back on all creatures, placing all that is visible under your feet since God created us to be masters and not slaves. *Omnia subiecisti sub pedibus eius. (You have set everything under his feet)*<sup>318</sup> Whoever does not truly flee from all creatures will never know and enjoy eternal rest and will always experience lively passions in addition to many other dangers and evils that go along with them. I do not wish for anything more from you other than this:

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<sup>315</sup> 1 Cor. 10, 12.

<sup>316</sup> Ps 118, 45 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>317</sup> Note in the margin: *Nota*.

<sup>318</sup> Cf. Ps. 8, 7.



that you strip your heart of all that is created. I say of all that is created since this is what constitutes the state of deification.

**4753** You will say: “Father, whoever is so predisposed towards creatures? I do not have affection for them, nor am I attached to them. I may converse with them but when I leave them I think no more of them.” Be careful and listen to something that you should always keep in mind. In order to reach the state of deification you need to have great purity, modesty and to be more detached from creatures, no matter how spiritual, than you would believe if Christ the Lord had not said it Himself.<sup>319</sup> The slightest amount of affection towards creatures impedes the state of deification and perfect transformation into God and makes us unable to receive the most important gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Listen to our beloved Master Jesus: *Nisi ego abiero, Paralicus non veniet ad vos. (Unless I go, the Paraclete will not come to you.)*<sup>320</sup> My dear children, if I do not go from you, the Holy Spirit will not come to you. What a most terrifying statement! How! O my dear God! Are you perhaps the obstacle in the way of the Apostles being unworthy that the Holy Spirit should come upon them with His gifts and graces? How can that be, my most beloved! Are you not completely simple, all pure, totally modest and indeed the very brightness of eternal illumination?<sup>321</sup> The how can this happen my good God? What a very deep truth! In spite of the fact that I became human and was very pure and immaculate if my disciples are attached to creatures they are prevented from having clear vision and the height of perfection which constituted the state of divine deification. Therefore the Spirit will not come to us *nisi ego abiero, Paracclitus non veniet ad vos.*

**4754** The coming of the Holy Spirit brought about the deification of the Apostles. Indeed it transformed them and filled them with infinite wisdom, omnipotence and all the divine attributes. Listen to the vessel of election: “*Omnia possum. (I can do all things).*”<sup>322</sup> This means omnipotence. However whatever pertains to what is created is an obstacle to a work such as this which is above what pertains to nature. The state of mystical deification of man is brought about by the coming of the Holy Spirit and since it is up to Him to perform such a work, the Spirit searches out a heart that is free, unfettered, set apart and void of all that pertains to what is created and indeed free from any affection for what is created.

Have you understood? If you find this bitter it is because you wish to appear clean and pure in the sight of God and not devoted to creatures. Then when you die you will fly freely and easily to heaven which is now the constant object of our conversion and longing.<sup>323</sup> The violence which we undertake for God will pass whereas glory is eternal and it will come about if we make the effort to conquer ourselves and all our desires, affections and thoughts. Plunge yourself into carrying out what is pleasing to God then you will discover that you are unworthy of wearing the Capuchin habit.<sup>324</sup>

*God is more pleased with something small which is carried out with emotion than with many things performed with indifference. Chapter 32.*

**4755** I greet your soul and your spirit in the flashing flame of divine love in which I desire to see you parched and consumed within and without. Devotion is not made up

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<sup>319</sup> Cf. for example, Mt. 10 37-39; Lk. 14 25-27; Mk. 8 34-36.

<sup>320</sup> Cf. Jn. 16. 7.

<sup>321</sup> Cf. Wis. 7, 26. Note in the margin: *Nota bene.*

<sup>322</sup> Phil 4, 13

<sup>323</sup> Cf. Phil, 3, 20.

<sup>324</sup> This is perhaps the only occasion on which the author admits that he is a Capuchin. This supports the traditional contention that Gregory of Naples is the author of the manuscript.



of the work that has been carried out, whether great or small, but by the genuine emotion and single-mindedness with which it is carried out. Whatever is done should be executed with feeling and as being directed purposefully at God.

I do not envy a person who performs great works, wonderful fasts, and harsh exercises and spends days and nights in churches, receiving Communion, making frequent Confessions, performing many devotions and the like. I only envy a person who does what he does, even when the work is of very little value, yet he does it with feelings for God in the depths of his heart and with purity of intention. It is not the work, but the love that motivates it which makes it great in the sight of the Divine Majesty.<sup>325</sup>

St Augustine said: *Omne quod facis, bene fac, et Deum laudasti.* (Whatever you do perform it well and you will give praise to God).<sup>326</sup> Oh you who boast about fulfilling the Lord's counsel: *Oportet semper orare* (Pray at all times), you ought to always pray and never stop,<sup>327</sup> try to practice with all your heart that which I envy as I said above. Try in this way to always remain praying as God wants His beloved children to do. Let us commit ourselves to completely fulfilling what pleases God on earth so that we can enjoy this in glory among the Seraphim.

*The feeling of a soul who loves God alone. Concerning the state of annihilation.  
Knowing self-knowledge. Chapter 33.*

**4756** It is true, indeed very true, that Magdalene was a very great sinner. However, to speak the truth I admit that I am an even greater sinner. There is some excuse for Magdalene since she did not know whom she was offending. The poor woman did not know whom she was offending. However *ut cognovit* (once she knew), once she knew she no longer offended. She always cried and fled from creatures. She did not care about them but only desired to possess, to serve and to love Jesus. Can I (unhappy man that I am) put up a similar excuse? How is it that after so much enlightenment, new information, brand new favour and grace, I find nothing in me except offenses that are putrid in God's eye?<sup>328</sup>

My dear God you love with heartfelt love, while I commit cruel offenses against You. You grant me so many favours while I disgust You. You come after me while I flee from You. Oh my beloved I do nothing but actually offend You who love me so much. In the midst of tearful sighs I offend You. Oh how miserable infected nature is that does nothing but cast what is putrid before the most pure God! I cannot find within me anything that I could present to my God!<sup>329</sup> What is more, I do nothing but stain and infect all the work which God performs in me. How can I stop weeping and continually calling out to the Lord to bring such offenses to an end by breaking my soul out of this iniquitous prison?

**4757** This desire has increased in me as I noted that the times are most vile, everyone is looking out for himself and things which are passing and not for what is eternal and is of God. What is worse, there are some who appear to be spiritual people and friends of God<sup>330</sup> and what they do is more dangerous than the worst Christians. I shall say no more. I only say; fly from creatures.

When I think of God's immeasurable love for me and recognise my endless ingratitude my heart shudders and I burst into tears especially when I see that this takes place against my will and it disgusts me that this is so tediously revolting to my

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<sup>325</sup> Note the practical wisdom in these statements which has always been a characteristic or fundamental objective of the spiritual formation of the Order.

<sup>326</sup> Cf. St Augustine, *Enarratio in ps. 34*, n. 76 (PL 36, 341).

<sup>327</sup> Lk 18, 1.

<sup>328</sup> Note in the margin: *In God's eyes there is no creature who is more vile than man.*

<sup>329</sup> Note in the margin: *By means of sin the soul has become almost infinitely worse than all creatures by offending the most infinite God.*

<sup>330</sup> *Sino* in the text should probably be *persino*, *pure*, *anche*.



Lord who loves me so much. Therefore I can but cry out: “Lord, put an end to my enormous disrespect.”<sup>331</sup>

However, when my enamoured lover raises me up to intimate contemplation; oh my love to what heights you transport me? Who is it that gives me those tears, this sorrow, that horror at offending the one who loves me? It is You, my Beloved! Who is it that makes me recognise my ingratitude for so many gifts? It is You, oh my Beloved, who transports me to secret heights! Who is it that makes me die with heartfelt sorrow and recognise how far I have wandered from Your warm breast? It is You, my Beloved! To what brilliant obscurity You carry me, to what misty brightness and to what divine darkness do You lead me!

Therefore when I see such love I burst into tears. What is more, who is it that gives me such a vision of love that I no longer go around seeking creatures? It is You! Oh You who are crazy with love for me, who love me without expecting anything!<sup>332</sup> Have mercy on me, my God,  
. I proclaim Your love.

**4758** Rising from a level of depth to another dimension of divine goodness and becoming lost I find myself at the centre of my nothingness even worse than nothingness. If it were nothing it would not offend my beloved. Who makes me recognise this and so many other most profound divine abysses (when this has been hidden from many who are better than I am)? It is He! Oh my love, why? Out of Your naked generosity! Our actions do not come about through our vigilance. (Oh my God do not permit this devilish thought to come to us.) Everything belongs to God. *Deus in nobis manet, ipse facit opera.*<sup>333</sup> (*The Father who abides in me, he does the works.*) As I have said above, what I do is iniquitous and fetid.

Therefore, how can I not say with tears: “Lord, raise my soul up so that I never offend you again?” Who will make me say this while I weep? Only the One who is my one and only dear Good. Oh beloved who is foolish with love of me! Therefore to God may there be all praise, honour, glory, riches, beauty, blessing and all good. To me may there be all disgrace, discredit, poverty, defect, curse and every evil.

I offer you exercises to suit the circumstances, so that you may reach the state of annihilation where you will enjoy the tranquil union which might have injured you in other circumstances. Cling to this, my dear, together with what I taught you at the beginning of this book,<sup>334</sup> putting it into practice with prayer, *et Deus tecum*.

*The soul is exhorted to exercise care in stripping itself so as not to put on more worthless attire. Chapter 34.*

**4759** Let us be careful as we strip ourselves, let us be careful I say. Oh how necessary it is so that when we strip ourselves we do not dress ourselves in clothing that is very fine and not gaudy! Oh how in the depth of my soul I would like to see more than what appears to be fully clothed in daylight! May the uncreated light allow me to see more clearly my troubles and what is rotten so that by means of such divine light I may have a lively and heartfelt faith in the eternal good itself and be overcome and transformed by that light plunging my soul into the burning flames of infinite goodness of the welfare of my soul.

Therefore let us be vigilant when stripping ourselves and proceed using only the vision which you recognise as the only way to identify the clothing that needs to be shed, even if it is difficult, in order to shed what more fine, invisible and spiritual, especially when the surroundings are dark yet we believe them to be filled with light.

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<sup>331</sup> Note in the margin: *Man's baseness is derived from iniquity committed against God.*

<sup>332</sup> Note in the margin: *Christ's life came to birth out of Love.*

<sup>333</sup> Cf. Jn 14, 10.

<sup>334</sup> Thus the objective of this high and progressive spiritual direction is “annihilation”. Once more note how the author refers to the beginning of the book.



This kind of darkness is more dense, intense and deceptive and the Lord will free us from it out of His goodness.

*How the soul must strip itself in order to enjoy beatific peace while on its journey.  
Chapter 35.*

**4760** My dearest, strip and divest your spirit of everything both what is lower and higher. Let us be alert by means of careful consideration and prayer. In the depths of our spirit let us seek to recognise unfamiliar fine garments. O how we will recognise them in the light of day! You will discover nothing, even any exercise, more helpful than simple resignation. Whatever you do will immediately fall neatly into pace and your spirit will be uplifted.<sup>335</sup>

Fear of abandoning ourselves or not really abandoning ourselves will prevent us from discovering ourselves. Let us abandon ourselves and acquire strong hope of discovering ourselves and everything else will lose its power. Let us divest ourselves of old clothing and the deceit of the enemy so that nothing like this is left in us. The more spiritual such things are, the harder they are to recognise.

Let us seek new enlightenment not just to assume a pose by putting on more clothing, but by means of annihilation, becoming blind to all that is created, however useful or necessary it seems to us so that we achieve a degree of insight whereby divine enlightenment will be infused in us through the generosity of God.

**4761** Let us strip our spirit to the extent that God wants it, not by willing what God wants since no one is able to know what this involves until he has died in God and has become lost to himself and departed from himself and become knowledgeable and a new man in God. In these circumstances we have become aware in a *passive* rather than *active* manner of how to want what God wants. To act in an *active* manner means that the soul produces acts of will on its own even when they are in accord with the will of God and even when it is difficult to do this. To act *passively* means that the soul produces all its operations when it is in a state of annihilation and is absorbed and plunged into the divine will to the point of being blind to everything that is created, so that the divine will is in control, acts, initiates and moves the soul and not the other way around, but is totally possessed by and in harmony with joyful, blessed peace.<sup>336</sup>

Perhaps we have a lively and fervent resolve and every difficulty has become uncomplicated. Oh my most sweet Jesus, how many are my fatal clothes and how very hard it is to shed them and how very difficult to identify them! As soon as they have been identified and recognised by a keenly spiritual eye that has shed them, we shall immediately see and enjoy God in everything and discover everything and nothing in Him.

Let us strive to achieve that our tranquillity, serenity, consolation, desire and longing reside in nothing but God alone, since if it lies in something else, no matter how good and holy, it will still pertain to what is created. Then when that is lost peace will be lost. However, when we adhere to God who is the uncreated Good, heaven may fall, the world may spin around and everything may be lost even our serenity yet we will be lead by His unconditional grace.

*A spiritual person ought to be concerned with the first spiritual contacts, so he may live and die happy. Chapter 36.*

**4762** The Gospel says that when Jesus was travelling towards Jerusalem when He saw it and it looked so beautiful, He began to cry and shedding pitiful tears He

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<sup>335</sup> Note in the margin: *Resignation is the best way to divest yourself of all apparel.*

<sup>336</sup> This is the fundamental component of the mystical state. Note the ease and precision with which the author explains these complex and profound concepts which is a sign of his familiarity with and experience in the spiritual life.



predicted the evil that was hidden to the others and clearly explained the reason for this: *Eo quod non cognovisti tempus visitationis tuae. (Because you did not know the time of your visitation).*<sup>337</sup>

My dearest, try to cooperate with the Lord's visitations, so that [when they happen]<sup>338</sup> you will not lose your reward. You now have the time to recognise the visitation but you take no notice. Later you will realise that you had the opportunity but you will not find it again. Your soul will be happy if you try to be ready at all times just as you would wish to be at the hour of death. All things pass away. Worldly lovers take up amusements. Let us enjoy exclusively the amusement of the cross, trampling on all the world's consolations, by always denying what the senses desire, so that by living in this way we shall be happy and blessed at the hour of death.. Indeed we shall be happy now and blessed on our journey.

*Christ's humility is the way to divine union. The way of true peace with much additional evidence. Chapter 37.*

**4763** *Ego sum via. (I am the way). O quam arcta est haec via. (How narrow is this way). Per hanc viam si quis introierit salvabitur, sed pauci sunt qui inveniunt eam. (If you enter by this gate you shall be saved, but few there are who find it).*<sup>339</sup>

How wretched and unhappy am I! What a sad and sorry story! There are few who find the way! These are Christ's words. If only a few find the way, how many fewer are those that follow it! *Viae Syon lugent, eo quod sit qui venieat ad solemnitatem. (The ways of Sion mourn, because there are none that come to the solemn feast).*<sup>340</sup> The streets of Paradise weep the roads that lead to the Incarnate Word, the roads that are the Incarnate Word Himself, since there is no one who travels along them. *O quam est verbum istud absconditum hodie! (How the word is hidden from them today!)*<sup>341</sup>

Let us not sleep, but cast off the slumber of negligence. The true way is Christ Crucified and not the consolations that allure us since these lead to imperfect love and slow the soul down on its true journey. Let us not delight in prosperity, peace and quiet, rather let the naked cross be our delight, making our nest on it<sup>342</sup> and not on anything else, so that our spirit may be made plump with pain, anxiety, disturbances and crosses.

Whoever wished to enjoy contemplation of divinity<sup>343</sup> by any means other than by means of Christ Crucified errs. When we go more deeply into ourselves we experience our Master. *Nemo venit ad me, nisi per me. (No one can come to me except through me.)*<sup>344</sup> However since this path is draining very few really follow it. It is sweet and easy only for those who have emptied themselves of their own will.

**4764** What an infernal state of affairs! Such people are always happy, at peace and deaf to both what is evil and to what is good while knowing from experience that what their God gives them is all because of the love that He bears them in order to protect them from eternal punishment so that they might gain eternal glory. It is not done out of hatred or anger or to hurt them as those who have their self-will in their hearts impatiently think.

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<sup>337</sup> LK, 19, 44.

<sup>338</sup> The word *danno* has been added in between the lines and placed between square brackets because the meaning is uncertain.

<sup>339</sup> This is a mosaic of quotations: Jn 14, 6; Mt 7, 14; Jn 10, 9.

<sup>340</sup> Lam. 1, 4.

<sup>341</sup> A reference to Lk 18, 34.

<sup>342</sup> This is reminiscent of a statement that was made by St Bonaventure in his *Lignum vitae: Iesus trans lanceatus* (cf. *Decem opuscula*, Ad Claras Aquas 1949, ed. IV, 188).

<sup>343</sup> *Della divinità (of divinity): is a correction in the margin.*

<sup>344</sup> Cf. Jn 14, 6.



How drastically do such people (when their vision is enlightened by the light of created things) ruin the sound effects of the divine will by not concentrating on these effects but instead being wrapped and plunged into the depths of things they already possess? Do they know why? Do they know the cause? Do they know the outcome? Do they know how to proceed? Do they know how to start? In everything let them see nothing but the scorching fire of love sparkling from the ardent breast of the Divine Incarnate Word who wants nothing other than our wellbeing and to ignite our cold and ungrateful hearts. We can find genuine light only in the cross of Christ Crucified. However, if you have the crucified Lord inside and outside you will be consoled because it is a sign that the dawn is giving way to sunrise.

**4765** Often enter into yourself to take any thorn out so that you may gradually clear the light that the Lord gives you more generously than he gives it to others, continually stripping your soul of all created things that are more easily visible. O how necessary is this continual stripping, not simply in word, but in practice! *Non qui dicunt, sed qui faciunt.* (Not he who says, but he who acts.)<sup>345</sup> O how often in word I thought that I had been stripped, but later discovered otherwise in practice! How I praise God since He has shown me in practice how great His gift is. By means of this imperfection I have come to realise how I suffer from the hidden devil within me. He did this so I could discover and recognise him in order to cure every weakness. The doctors say that knowing what is wrong achieves the cure.

The main way to achieve perfection is to know how to review and how to profit by defects in accord with what I said on previous pages.<sup>346</sup> Thus we should congratulate ourselves over the practices even if they have many defects and remain humble and apprehensive about new practices, new adjustment and obnoxious interruptions, so that they may reveal the limitations and hidden passions that exist unseen within us as we cry out with David: *Ab occultis meis munda me Domine* (Cleanse me of my hidden faults),<sup>347</sup> Do not be content with practices that do not come from the hand of God (which you will easily recognise when you experience them). They will not feel the same as the true peace of highest perfection. This is genuine peace. God says: *pax, pax, et non erit pax.* (peace, peace and there is no peace).<sup>348</sup>

**4766** The practices give us incomprehensible enlightenment, make us humble, separate us from creatures and detach us from self-love uniting us to the Crucified. Genuine peace, genuine union and mystical deification can only come by means of the cross. Apart from the cross it is not genuine. Cast aside imaginary union, leave it to those who conjecture and are false friends and embrace practical things which will keep you honest and unite you to our beloved Crucified Christ.

Ponder well and see with keen vision whether the divine will or your own will directs you in your thoughts, words and actions. See whether in those things you seek and desire what pleases and satisfies you or what pleases and delights God alone. Examine everything intensely. How do you spend your time? It is sufficient to say: "I do not have specific defects". Your mouth should not say: "I spend time well, I speak well, I work well". What you should recognise and say is: "Could I not spend it better, more perfectly? Could I not perform works that would give greater glory to God"? If you can, ask "do I spend time on things of little or no value?" Do not waste so much that God will call you to account for it when you die. Whatever you have that is superfluous offer it to God with the greatest care, perfection and glory that you can. Calculate them to God Himself, as I know you do. Hasten to the work that is commanded of you by obedience as well as to that performed out of charity.

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<sup>345</sup> Cf. Mt 7, 21; 23, 3. Rom. 2, 13; Jn 1, 22.

<sup>346</sup> Cf. above *nn.* 4652-53, 4670.

<sup>347</sup> Ps. 18, 13 (*Vulg.*)

<sup>348</sup> Ez 13, 10; Jer 6, 14; 8, 11.



Immediately withdraw to your cell and give yourself to prayer or to something else that you know will give more glory to God such as studying sacred books or the like.

**4767** I specially recommend prayer to you. The more you turn to prayer, the more it will delight you. The more you neglect it the more tedious it will become for the soul. Prayer is not pleasing to anyone who neglects it but only to one who is continually praying. O what a delight! One thing follows the other. One prayer is bait for another.<sup>349</sup> Willingly spend a great part of your twenty fours in physical solitude (I do not say spiritual, since I know you do that now and it is necessary for attaining perfection and whoever does not do that is not a genuinely spiritual person) which will be a great benefit to you.

You know how much this was treasured by the saints and by Christ our only Master. *Dum tempus habebmus, operamur bonum.* (While we have time, let us do good).<sup>350</sup> As God is now giving us time, let us not waste it. When the body acts against you in any manner and you oppose it by eating little and cutting sleep short etc., above all else double your prayer. The Most Holy Virgin revealed to our St Elizabeth<sup>351</sup> that prayer and austerity of life bring about God's great gifts in the soul and whatever graces she had received (apart from the grace to be the Mother of God) had all come about by means of prayer and asperity of life.

You should take this to heart, aim high, follow what is impressed on your generous heart and ardent free will to desire holy God alone, otherwise the time will pass in tepidity and wistfulness which is more displeasing to God than frigidity. This is written in the Apocalypse.<sup>352</sup> Consider every day, every hour, every moment: are we walking in genuine love? Are we detached from the world? Are we detached from ourselves? How are we presided over in everything by the divine will?

You read many lives of saints and spiritual books or listen to spiritual people. When you experience the great gifts of revelations, visions, spiritual consolation, poignant emotions, ecstasies, miracles etc., overlook them without letting them affect you. When you are occupied in bitter penances go ahead praising God and urging yourself to love Him and only feel this fleetingly. When you experience an act of resignation to the divine will (especially when feeling suffering, anxiety and crosses), a divesting of yourself from all things created give yourself completely to what is pleasing to God. There, my dearest one, like someone who is blind or drunk, you completely immerse yourself in God within and without. There, burning with love, you will loose yourself completely without reservation.

**4768** Wherever you hear the terms, divine will or pleasure etc. embrace them with a rush of love. When you hear them spoken, rejoice filled with deep love. Disregard what you see or hear and anything else that does not pertain to pleasing God. Banish whoever tries to distract your heart even if it is under the pretext of leading you to deeper contemplation or a better way of accumulating virtue and the love of God. No matter what happens under the sun do not utter a word or breathe a sigh of out of lack of resignation. Whether it rains or does not rain do not say: "When will this rain stop, or how much rain we have had this year? How long will the drought last? This heat is killing me! How severe this winter is! What a strong wind! It will cause death and destruction!" Do not utter a sigh of lack of resignation in the face of these small innumerable incidents. Always say: "Everything is alright and beautiful and necessary because everything is according to the divine will. I see nothing else, know nothing

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<sup>349</sup> These are splendid statements, the result of living experience and they should be carefully noted.

<sup>350</sup> Gal. 6, 10.

<sup>351</sup> The text says "our" to indicate a reference to St Elizabeth of Turingia (+ 1231), a Franciscan Tertiary, This is perhaps an error since the revelations that are mentioned were made to St Elizabeth of Schönau (+ 1164), a Benedictine, who had visions and ecstasies as described in: *Visiones; Liber viarum Dei; Revelationes* which was well-known in the Middle Ages.

<sup>352</sup> A reference to Christ's lament against those who are tepid. Cf. Ap. 3, 14-16.



else, sense nothing else, feel nothing else, touch nothing else, want nothing else do not intend to wish anything except the will, pleasure and wish of my God.”<sup>353</sup>

Then, if I look, I see God. If I speak I speak of God. If I experience anything, I experience God. Whatever I am doing I do it for God. This is how I remain resigned and plunged into God who is a deep sea in which the saints in heaven enjoy peace. They already love God more perfectly than those of us who are on the journey and they are never afflicted by whatever happens, but are ever enraptured in what pleases the God they live in continual love and peace.

**4769** I have revealed this secret to you for three reasons. In the first place I did this to inform you of the secret. Secondly, so that you would always consider yourself to be abject and vile in the sight of God, considering yourself to be opposed to God’s will since it is not easy for you to this to death because we always find excuses. Thirdly, so that you will always be joyful and happy wrapped up in the divine will (and not in events that produce obstacles, anxiety, desperation), moving away from unambiguous situations and plunging yourself into the vast sea of divine secrets.

Do not be dismayed by such heights, rather rejoice with me in praising God for the many graces which He has given you by means of His generosity and which he denied to others who served Him better day and night. Review quickly what has been wasted and you will see that there are few who possess genuine mystical union and deification together with passive annihilation etc. Let us return to us. Do not judge anyone, but remain detached from everyone else, in everything hope and say: “the Divine will”, as was set out in the rules given in folio 20.<sup>354</sup> In this matter see to it that there is nothing except yourself and the divine will, which is God Himself and nothing else.

Obedience! Be strictly obedient to your superior and to your confessor in accord to what is stated in our Rule.<sup>355</sup> However, above all and most of all let the divine will dominate all your thoughts, words and actions in everything. This is the most exalted obedience that can be found. It is most pleasing to God and most profitable to the one who practices it. No one can achieve genuine, perfect union without highest obedience. I exhort you, under divine guidance, to become lost in this. Think only of this. Speak only about this. Do not willingly commit the smallest fault against this. This is how the whole world is to be saved. Note well, nothing will damage your name, your life and the salvation of all creatures more than a small voluntary fault.<sup>356</sup>

**4770** Poverty! Have nothing more than what the Rule and our Constitutions allow. Let these things be poor without any ostentation or pretentiousness. Even though human reason demands that the bride be adorned like the bridegroom, observe poverty as you understand it, according to divine enlightenment. How many there are today who think that they have achieved genuine and perfect union (which is hidden from the Gospel teaching, and, dear me, is put aside today) with the Spouse and in fact are far from it because they are concerned with trivial things rather than with what is substantial and real.<sup>357</sup> However, my dearest one, seeing that you are already

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<sup>353</sup> Note in the margin: *Stato beatif[ico] sopra spirituale*. (A blessed state: beyond what is spiritual). Note the concrete manner in which the author knows how to connect the highest teaching with daily life. We can possibly observe here the influence of Benedict of Canfield or spiritual teaching similar to his.

<sup>354</sup> Note in the margin: *Nota a non mirar le cose* (be care not to yearn for things.) To see what was contained on folio 20 above go to nn. 4659-4660.

<sup>355</sup> Cf. Rb 10, 3-4. FA:ED I p 105.

<sup>356</sup> This is the striking radicalism of mystics. In the manuscript the whole paragraph is highlighted along the margin.

<sup>357</sup> This is a very critical judgement which is even more critical if the author has in mind certain formalised practices concerning poverty that were introduced into the Capuchin Reform at the end of the Sixteenth Century based on an excessively juridical interpretation of the Rule.



trying to walk the right road, use only necessary things and let these be poor, exercising simple use without ownership (as a true Friar Minor would try to do), so that if our superiors should take something away or prohibit its use you would not lose inner peace and consequently union with God. Let your heart which is free, detached, naked and poor not be disturbed by any created thing but exclusively rich in doing what is pleasing to God.

Chastity. You already enjoy bodily chastity. This most exalted gift was given to you by the Lord. Try as much as you can to enjoy what belongs to the spirit, in the same way that a very faithful spouse should present herself in all purity to her spouse, to such an extent that she desires no one else, speaks to no one else, thinks of no one else, yearns for no one else, wants no one else and loves her spouse alone. Be vigilant about both kinds of division as the devil does not sleep. Do not imagine that in what I have said or written I have committed you to wed without considering. Indeed I have wed you to Jesus with deep thought so that when attacked in the future you will have a variety of armaments, making use of one or another teaching, not as if they came from me, but as being laid down by your Spouse who will reveal as much as he wishes to your heart.

Make sure to put these things into practice so that I will not lose touch with you or with Jesus. Be happy and cheerful because God loves you and wants you to be the faithful spouse of his one and only loving crucified Son. Thus the Apostle says: *Indumini Dominum Iesum Christum. (Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.)*<sup>358</sup> Farewell!

*The method of seeking virtues or anything else from God without self-love. even though there is a great desire to possess them. Chapter 38.*

**4771** I have always told that because love is blind he who genuinely loves God should not have anything on his mind other, if he really is in love, than the highest Good. He should not think about humility, patience, the gifts of grace or anything else no matter how divine, not intimate peace, one's own health, but only about what is pleasing to the beloved.

Now there arises a very beautiful difficulty, which is: How did some saints, yearn for these virtues with such agitated desire, placing so many exercises and prayers before God? Was this out of self-love, no matter how unobvious? Father, no! Listen.

The true lover (like the saintly brother who said: "I never derive consolation, or speak if God does not grant me the grace; that will come in the end) being blind to gifts and completely intent on the will and pleasure of the beloved and being totally absorbed by this, realises that the wish of the beloved is that he acquire these virtues: that he should be humble, charitable etc. When a true lover becomes aware of what the beloved desires he immediately does not rest and cannot rest until he has satisfied the wish of the beloved. Thus he sets everything aside to acquire humility, and can think of nothing but this and directs everything towards acquiring this. He weeps because of this, sighs for this virtue, not so much for humility which he estimates as little, but to fulfil the will and desire of His beloved Lord.

However, he is never at peace and if he is a genuine lover you will see him perform heroic acts (which are madness as far as the world is concerned, as was the case with Brother Juniper)<sup>359</sup> to acquire such a beautiful virtue, not for its own sake, even though that would be good, but, as I have said, to please his Beloved God.

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<sup>358</sup> Rom. 13, 14.

<sup>359</sup> Cf. *Vita fratris Juniperi*, in *Chron. XXIV Gen.* in *AF III*, 54-64; ed. Italiana in: *I Fioretti di san Francesco*, containing preface and notes by P. Beneventuro Bughetti, Firenze, 1926, 253-276. *The Little Flowers of St Francis*, The First English Translation, revised and emended by Dom Roger Hudelston, with an Introduction by the Arthur Livingston (The Heritage Free Press, New York).



**4772** Let us conclude by criticising ourselves. In these wretched times almost no one devotes himself enthusiastically to the acquiring of virtue. We have to say that no one loves sincerely; no one is a genuine lover. Anyone who has experienced love knows what the expression “genuine lover” means. When he knows what the beloved wants what does he do to fulfil his wishes? There is no doubt that the one who loves us wants desires and wishes us to be adorned with holy virtue. If we are true lovers what should we do? How should we regard creatures? What should we think of the world? To do this well and to practice such an exalted virtue go and look in the mirror of the fountain and, when you are absorbed into what you behold see how pleasing it is to the beloved in that you have acquired a particular virtue, not in general, but being specific. Once you have seen this, I do not know, but by your actions you will see that you are a genuine lover and how much you love. Gaze on this vision through the eyes of the Word Made Flesh. When you are lost in such a vision you will see how peaceful, humble and charitable you are etc. In a special manner take up the teaching of the Gospel, for this is the true, secure and divine fountain from which all the other little streams of saints and scholastic doctors are fed. This is where Christ’s doctrine is found today even if He neither speaks nor appears to you.<sup>360</sup>

See specifically whether you possess all the virtues. Use this approach to cheer yourself up. Look into yourself to see whether you are stripped of all worldly things. Is God your only light? Does nothing else please you? Do you feel dead to things, yet alive? Do you kiss the more rotten sores and lick wounds? When insulted do you not care about what the world says, whether good or bad? Take a good look at yourself. You will uncover hidden deception. The clever man says: “Father, should not a genuine spiritual person be dead to all desire and to everything so that he desires nothing? Be careful that this kind of lack of desire is not in you. I want you to desire until you possess what you desire as long as what you desire is pleasing to God and not something else. To desire nothing is to kill love which should consume and perfect you. Whoever lacks desire lacks love. Wherever there is love, there is desire for the object of love until the lover possesses the beloved and desire ends.

**4773** How deceived they are who do attend to truth saying: “A spiritual man should be dead to everything including the desire for God.”<sup>361</sup> It is not up to us to throw such a desire away or to annihilate it, rather it is up to God. He does this when He brings us to perfection and we are consumed by love. Let us do our part which is to desire and thus God will do His part by bringing us to perfection by deifying our whole soul and desire will be annihilated by means of divine consummation. Otherwise if we do what it belongs to God to so, this will lack virtue and the devil will win the victory..

Because of this never cease to desire (keep your eye on pleasing God not created things no matter how divine they may appear to be). Above all never distance yourself from discovering God. If you love how can you stop desiring? If desire stops so too does love. Let this never happen to you. As I have said it belongs to God to take desire away when we are enjoying Him face to face.<sup>362</sup>

A spiritual master always told me: “I never wanted to die”, now I often wish it. When praying I see that whenever this desire ceases nothing replaces it but the loss of love, and when love is lost so is desire. Furthermore when this happens in certain circumstances, for example when time is lost through speaking too much and love is lost, not only is love lost but I begin to fear death and I do not try to gain courage by performing specific acts of love which would kindle the fire of divine love

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<sup>360</sup> This is a splendid affirmation, which is totally Franciscan which asserts the primacy of the Gospel for life and doctrine. “Gospel teaching” is a characteristic expression in the Constitutions. *Cons. 1536*, n. 1.

<sup>361</sup> Note in the margin: *Nota bene*.

<sup>362</sup> This clearly demonstrates the influence of St Augustine’s teaching on “desire”, which is developed expertly here.



in me and immediately ignite the fire of divine desire. Thus where love abides, there is desire.

Put the above into practice in prayer, and *Dominus tecum*.

*The practice of love and self-knowledge. Chapter 39.*

**4774** *Nemo perfectus* (says St Bernard) *qui perfectiior esse non appetit, proficiendi studium, ut ingis conatus ad perfectionis putatur studere perfectiorem esse, perfectus est.* <sup>363</sup> No one is perfect who does not desire to be more perfect. The desire to continually advance, forcing yourself to climb towards perfection is regarded as genuine perfection because perfection consists in the person trying to be more perfect. This is what St Bernard is saying.

Now listen to the Spirit of your Spouse, not to me. The genuine spiritual person always requires that the depths of his soul is filled with peaceful enthusiasm and is annihilated, longing for greater perfection and deification, allowing nothing but simply God and what is pleasing to God to enter the depths of his spirit because he is totally absorbed in God as his highest and only good so that he may become one spirit with his loving God.

Only God is impressed on his memory, and all his emotions which are united in the joy of love rest peacefully in the enjoyment of his dear God. If this is not possible, his soul is not disturbed nor does it cease completely to be deified because his soul is marked by God who is stamped on it with the impression of a stamp.

My dearest, place only God in the depths of your soul. Have your intellect fixed on knowing God alone (such knowledge does not come to us by way of our imagination, but by our affections being transformed into God). Let your will be absorbed in the eternal love of the immense and eternal good. Let you will be plunged into one vision, enjoying highest happiness, not as perceived intellectually, but going beyond what is intellectual to be conformed to its object though you do not know how, where, once it is filled, it will forget all the rest of what has been said above. Consummate perfection is not experienced while we are on our journey because it comes about by means of the glory of beatification. It belongs to the homeland where we shall behold unveiled what now we speak about confusedly and which we can only love and desire from the bottom of our heart.

I say that the basis of what we have said above is the supreme perfection of life while on the journey<sup>364</sup> since this is the highest state that can be achieved by those on the journey. This does not mean that once this has been achieved that no further transformation can take place.

**4775** Pay attention to interior prayer, where when one is totally abstracted from what is created, as if it was unworthy of attention, what remains is God alone and delight in the love of what is eternal, with no desire for or possibility of desire for being concerned for anything but God. Where your heart is there you will delight in the most splendid light, in gentle sweetness, rapturous peace, in eternal security. Who can describe the most secret pleasure of this profoundest of states concerning which Pope St Gregory the Great wrote: *Gustate et videte. (Taset and see.)* <sup>365</sup>

Such a vision is not given to those who are beautiful or very intellectual but to those who have a loving heart, those who rejoice over being on the journey. Having placed what is created under our feet all of us should distance our hearts from created things and give our hearts exclusively to the Supreme Good. Having been considered

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<sup>363</sup> Cf. S. Bernardus, *Epist. 34 ad Dragonem monarchum*, n. 1 (PL. 182, 140).

<sup>364</sup> In the text the author wrote *perfezzione* then crossed it out and wrote *peregrinazione*.

<sup>365</sup> Ps. 33, 9 (Vulg.). = Nore in the margin: *Vista mystica non si puo narrare, neanche da chi si gusta per eser sopra intellettuale* (This is a mystical vision which cannot be described even by one who enjoys it because it is beyond understanding). – This quotation from St Gregory the Great could not be identified.



worthy of such an exalted gift let us all take care to put beneath our feet what is created and have only God and what pleases Him in our innermost being .

The genuine lover makes no room for anything else or entertains anything else but what he loves and this is not difficult for one who is in love. He instinctively feels attracted to his beloved, without have feelings, desire or love towards anyone else. He could not do this. He does not want anything for himself, but only what pleases the beloved and this mind-set controls and dominates his feelings.

If we are not genuine lovers who have been transformed into the beloved as our good, we will experience something else as the object of our pleasure, love and desire. When the genuine love recognises that he desires only the beloved he immediately becomes blind to the dangers in fulfilling this desire, nor does he see the difficulties.<sup>366</sup>

*Ubi amor nullus labor, et si est, amatur.* (Where there is love there is no hard work, and if there is, it is a pleasure.) Where love exists there is no toil; and if there is it is delightful; as St Augustine said.<sup>367</sup> The Lover does not consider whether something is possible, but as he blind to everything, he hurries wanting whatever the beloved wants, because the beloved's wish is alive within the lover. This kind of discipline is instinctive to the demented genuine lover. He always believes he will obtain what he desires, often losing his reason, power to deliberate and his judgement. He knows no caution and can think of nothing else but about the object of his love.

**4776** Now if created love is so strong how much stronger is uncreated love? (St Ambrose said)<sup>368</sup> Is nature perhaps stronger than grace? *Absit!* (*Far be it!*) Do not let it be mentioned. Why remain on the journey? I invite you to always look towards the sky, to paradise, to the only Good in whom dwells all my good and yours, opening your most intimate longing, love and desire so that your Crucified Lover may unite you to Himself for (like every genuine lover) He needs no company.<sup>369</sup>

Now listen to the beautiful words of St Cyprian: "Why don't we hurry? Why don't we run so that we may see our homeland? Greet our family? It is there that a great number of our most dear brothers and friends await us, all the blessed spirits who already yearn for their secure salvation and are concerned about our salvation. Who are you looking to and chasing in this present state of vanity where we are pilgrims on the way to our homeland, where a happy host is waiting to enjoy forever the beatific vision of our God? Therefore, brothers, let us quicken our steps, flying towards heaven!"<sup>370</sup>

You will say: "Father, I see myself as being very defective and filled with stench so that I dare not call myself a lover of my only good God". Take courage. This is the same stench I detect in myself, the stench of my iniquity, but the one who gives me this vision (a special grace) is the one who at the same time gives my strength and who by absorbing my intimate depths in my God makes me not feel overcome. He makes the misery within me light so that I enjoy what is pleasing to God (together with the blessed). Being most ardently lost in this I fix my gaze completely on the depths of my soul and on nothing else.

**4777** Listen to me with the superior part of your mind. This will be sufficient as you have now been enlightened for your own good. Listen: there is no work that I have performed, even the slightest, that you would not find filled with defects and stench, to such a degree that I do not know how it could have been pleasing to God because to

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<sup>366</sup> Note in the margin: *Armor vince ogni cosa.* (Love conquers everything.)

<sup>367</sup> Cf. Augustine, *De bono viutatis*, c. 21 (PL 40, 448); see also: *In Joannis Evangelium*, Tract. 48, c. 10, 1 (PL 35, 1741).

<sup>368</sup> Cf. St Ambrose, *Liber de mysteriis*, c. 9, n. 52 (PL 16, 423) and above all *De officiis ministrorum*, lib. 1, c. 7, n. 24 (PL 16, 34).

<sup>369</sup> Note in the margin: *Nota* with a finger pointing to it.

<sup>370</sup> Cf. St Cyprian, *Liber de mortalitate*, XXVI (PL 4, 624).



me it seemed like intolerable stench. But along with this insight God conferred strength and lively faith which absorbed me in Him so that it did not leave me overcome. This was God's work. Thus it came about (oh what heaven) so that I did not think about the word anymore, only the stench stayed with me, because of which I was annihilated with my soul secretly on its true centre, God.

This is God's work, by means of which He wishes to confer the special effects of love. When a creature does not smell the stench, the creature attributes to himself the little good contained in the work, feeding himself with it as a reward for the toil involved since *nullum bonum irremuneratum* (no good goes unrewarded) and God removes the stench, reserving it to the moment of death to confer the reward of eternal stench. Since *nullum malum impunitum* (no evil goes unpunished).

Have you understood? What do you say now? Do you smell the stench, am I so rotten? God will reveal a more beautiful vision to you. Now listen to St Gregory: "To recognise is great perfection so that when you have been pleased with the aroma of the work that is the reward".<sup>371</sup> St Augustine said: "It seems to me that a person has reached great perfection when he, as he acquires perfection, recognises how far he is from genuine perfection".<sup>372</sup> What do you say: "Father, "How I stench because of my many defects? Would you like to smell the odour? Never! However a greater stench than this odour will be present in paradise if you lose your soul. When, I say, you pay little attention to enjoying eternity. Now love this *totis visceribus* (with your whole heart). Let it be always in your heart, on your lips and in your actions. Amen.

*Necessary advice for souls who travel the road of quiet prayer and mystical union.  
Chapter 40.*

**4778** Among all the enlightenment that you have been given, now, I hope that He who gives all good things has revealed to you something that is most great and necessary for souls taken up with prayer, souls which are led along paths beyond what is intellectual to intimate and mystical union. This is granted to souls that burn sweetly with the love of their beloved God; souls in whose deepest recesses there is no one but God, so that in such a union by not wishing for too much they give up everything.

Blessed Giles said, when asked how a soul ought to act in divine contemplation: "Brother, do not do anything more or less than flee from the multitude."<sup>373</sup> You know about this kind of flight. Everybody knows how beneficial and necessary it is. Therefore we will pass it over in silence and for your benefit, say a couple of words *non accrescere, ne diminuire* (neither adding nor subtracting)<sup>374</sup> about when the Holy Spirit speaks to me.

Oh words that contain everything that is essential for genuine perfection! Be attentive and listen. No one alive can penetrate uncreated divine Wisdom. It is revealed only to and discovered by those who are annihilated to all that is created. In this divine revelation, so that the soul does not err or promote itself too much, very profound divine enlightenment is conveyed so that the soul knows how to cherish the intimate operation of the Holy Spirit.<sup>375</sup>

**4779** I know that in the depth of your soul there is a divine ray by means of which your eye is totally absorbed and controlled within and without by divine grace. O happy soul, to be found worthy of such control! However that soul is happier which is

<sup>371</sup> Cf. *Moralium lib. XXVII*, c. 37, n. 62 (PL 76, 436). *Dialagorum lib. III*, c. 14 (PG 77, 249) where the substance of the concept is cited.

<sup>372</sup> Cf. St Augustine, *Enarratio in ps. 38*, n. 14-15 (PL 36, 425s), *Sermo 170*, c. 8, n. 8 (PL 38, 931; Etc.

<sup>373</sup> Note in the margin: *Resposta del Beato [Egidio] come l'anima se deve portare nella mystica unione*. Cf. *Dicta*, cap. 13: *De contemplatione*. Ad Claras Aquas [Quaracchi 1905, 49s].

<sup>374</sup> Note in the margin: *In lume di fede (in the light of faith)*.

<sup>375</sup> Note in the margin: *Lume mistico dove l'anima vede ciò che Dio vuole in lei. (Mystical enlightenment whereby the soul sees what God wants of her.)*



found to be blind to every other vision and simply enjoys what is beheld not *active* but *passive*. (Not in an active manner but passively). However, beware that this divine ray neither increases nor decreases. Beware that it does not increase by means of excessive greediness or insatiable presumption or by promoting by your own will through your own activity, which would lead as a consequence to losing all that you wished for. Remain *passive* (*passive*) abandoning thought to that in which the eternal enlightenment absorbs the soul.<sup>376</sup> Let the soul be free of all desire, including wanting God Himself, giving itself up completely to the divine ray which will achieve what God wants and is pleasing to Him while you are enjoying his activity which is beyond what is intellectual.

When this divine ray has entered into the depths of the soul and found a place, oh how, oh how it takes control, *fortiter, suaviterque disponens omnia* (*strongly and sweetly preparing the soul*).<sup>377</sup> Let the soul be absorbed by taking control of all the exterior faculties and senses within and without.<sup>378</sup> Let us then make room for it *passive* (*passively*) not *active* (*in an active manner*). The Saint put it so well: “let us neither increase nor diminish”. To not increase means to increase not more than heaven has allowed. Do not increase it by presuming to want more than has been granted by divine generosity. Do not increase it by performing activities while the Holy Spirit is at work, even though it is the soul who is acting and its aspirations come from the divine ray in a mystical process. The Spirit of God has control in a very divine manner which is beyond what is intellectual and it is better that He works rather than we acting.

If you put this into practice you will understand what I am saying. Do not try to do more, rather allow yourself to be guided, follow his influence so that grace may lead you. Do not try to do more. Act like an infant feeding on the breast.<sup>379</sup>

**4780** O happy soul! You could be called blessed as you see your God always and are with Him continually: *ut iumentum factus est* etc. *Ego semper tecum* (*I have become a beast before you and I am always with you.*)<sup>380</sup> While the divine light is in control, the soul is controlled by divine influence and consumed by the touch of what is divine. It is enlightened by inaccessible illumination and transformed within. However the Saint said well: “Do not increase it through pride, do not diminish it by negligence”<sup>381</sup> Do not diminish it by turning your gaze to something else, however saintly and divine. Let it be fixed on the eternal ray allowing it to rapture you as God wishes. Do not diminish it by negligence, bending your poor soul down when there is no room for the divine light. And it has to wait outside.

What does passionate love ask of us? We are moved by love. Whoever is in love will understand me. Do not demean yourself through false humility, withdrawing into yourself instead of basking in divine enlightenment and thinking that you are unworthy; rather raise yourself up humbly and in annihilation so that nothing is an obstacle, no matter how good and holy, to fully sharing in this enlightenment (as your soul will be completely filled with this, not with God who is infinite). with everything being transformed into eternal enlightenment, beatifying the soul and making it one with God by means of grace. God is not pleased with humility without love or love without humility. However, when these two are found together in the soul how pleasing this is to God since this makes the soul one with God so that it humbly

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<sup>376</sup> Note in the margin: Come si deve portare l'anima in questo lume mistico. (How the soul ought to behave during this mystical illumination.)

<sup>377</sup> Wis. 8, 1.

<sup>378</sup> Note in the margin: Come questo lume mistica opera nell'anima. (How this mystical light operates in the soul.)

<sup>379</sup> Note in the margin: L'anima può esser beata in via. (The soul can be blessed while on the journey). Note the very helpful image.

<sup>380</sup> Ps 72, 23 (Vulg.).

<sup>381</sup> Note in the margin: Che voi dir diminuire, e come l'anima si deve portare in questo raggio mistica. (What diminish means and how the soul should conduct herself while possessing this mystical ray.)



desires to be annihilated by the action of God and lifted up by love in a unique vision towards uncreated light, by means of which, through supernatural resources, it is enveloped and absorbed and annihilated from all desire and craving beyond what the soul could wish for.

Do not demean yourself through lack of confidence, because even if humility makes you feel less worthy, love will lift the soul up to the divine control that takes effect at His pleasure, which means nothing but changing the soul and transforming it through uncreated enlightenment. This transformation is impeded when the soul places an impediment to it by not making way for divine enlightenment by whose warmth many damp passions and affections for created things will be dispersed and consumed by doing away with one's own will which is the cause all our imperfections and serious mistakes.

**4781** Therefore always remain under divine control, leaving it to do its work like a dish filled with water. The water represents many passions. To dry the dish by removing the water requires nothing more than to leave it out in the sun and let the sun evaporate the water.

Let us make way within ourselves for this divine enlightenment. Let us remain like this with a solitary gaze, no more and no less, but doing this firmly and steadily with humility and love. Let us act like this always but especially during customary prayer. Although a truly spiritual person enjoys praying to his Eternal Good always and everywhere, when possessed by the Spirit he is instructed within and without by this divine control under the influence of this divine ray and uncreated enlightenment.

I know what God wants of me. I experience invincible strength within me, the joy of heaven. I experience unqualified peace, heroic progress, detachment from what is created, and exclusive respect for that good which is all-good. A perfume absorbs my soul and yours; casting aside everything else, Let us remain within and without forgetful of ourselves, lost in what is pleasing to God with unshakable faith so that when we come ashore we shall enjoy what this has promised.

My dearest, let us remain lost in this which we ought to love infinitely more than we love ourselves since where there is such love as this how can anything be missing? You should think this over.

*How the soul ought to conduct herself in the state of annihilation and the prayer of quiet so that it may not fall into error. Chapter 41.*

**4782** By way of response to your question I reply. My dearest, if up to now we have dealt with the inferior faculties, now the Spouse is carrying you up to the higher spiritual faculties. Now you are not exercising the activity of the workings of the sense faculties in divine, secret and mystical practices and the intimate contemplation which burnt within you at first, even though that gave you a degree of inner peace (not always). If they then led you to agnostic considerations, they robbed you of the sweet sound of your spouse and your spouse departed.

It often happens (depending on the state of the soul) that you want to perform acts to sustain such peacefulness, to kindle the fire that consumes you sweetly and you fail. The Spirit of God grasps your spirit in a special way. The dream lasts as long as the Spouse wishes. (Some souls enjoy it always, not to say absolutely always.) At that time no thought comes to your innermost being and if the intellect becomes active the sweet dream is lost. You cannot describe this because when the soul is lifted up to this height, this quiet and enjoyment, it reposes *passive* not *active*. It does not work, God alone is at work. The soul is enjoying her Spouse, this is not the work of the soul, but of the Spouse, and thus beyond the intellect. The intellect is shut out, who can speak.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> Mystical experience is indescribable.



**4783** Note, when you find yourself in this state, do not engage the intellect to know or to understand anything about concerning this dream and peacefulness of spirit. To grasp its meaning take up genuine prayer and this will enable you to penetrate the question.<sup>383</sup> When the intellect attempts to perform its usual work, take care not to lower yourself to this, bending your spirit down, cast it away as the work of the devil. Make the spirit rest peacefully without the intellect wandering about. Be careful, I say, if you try to dissect this you will be deprived of it. When he hears that kind of noise the Spouse will wake up and go away since he does not want to hear noise, and you will discover that your Spouse has gone outside and you will never arrive at true peacefulness with God.

Thus do not try to understand or think about it. The way to search for it is not to pay attention to it by abandoning yourself to enjoying it without giving a thought to anything else. In conclusion, do not attempt any activity, no matter how very spiritual. Try to experience the attractiveness of the Spouse as he wants you to and nothing more.<sup>384</sup>

At the time that we are involved with the Spouse we should banish all thoughts. At such a time he alone is active, stimulating us to remain without thoughts, putting everything into his loving hands so that everything may be accomplished in a perfectly divine manner. There was a time when we had to toil to enjoy the Spouse, even then imperfectly. Now, without any toil on our part, he lifts us beyond the intellect he lifts us to enjoy himself. Let all that is created remain outside when he attracts us. If we attempt to toil we shall lose him. Therefore let us remain without thoughts and dead to what is intellectual and toilsome so that the Spouse may attract us and plunge us into himself for his eternal glory.

There are subtle and great illusions in prayer. Therefore beware and tell me everything, being blind to what is extraordinary. Consider carefully what I have told you and I send you my greetings.

*Full deification of the will is conferred while on the journey, not on the other two faculties. How perfect prayer occurs. Chapter 42.*

**4784** After praying for a long time I reply to your question concerning something about which you had a doubt: pay attention. There are three faculties within our soul: memory, intellect and will. I do not experience the source of my strength of will in myself nor in what I choose, but in something outside me. I say that it resides in what has control and dominion over me.

The other two faculties are not always concentrated on this but at times wander about (blown about by the wind, not always remaining fixed on what is created), concerned with visible objects. Memory recalls. Intellect sees and knows. Different kinds of imperfections are committed when using idle words, being frivolous, speaking ill of one's neighbour and so on. However the sole object of your will is to enjoy your beloved one and only good.

When an offence has been committed this faculty experiences an inner enlightenment which is beyond anything intellectual. It takes hold of me without another act of love. I can see, not with my physical eye, that my beautiful will is fixed on its beloved Lord without the slightest shadow of passion. At the most it will be slightly annihilated, but at the first experience of that intimate, inaccessible enlightenment all will be made clear,<sup>385</sup> deified, and enlightened in a most divine manner and become increasingly absorbed into and become one with the light itself. Oh what a state! Oh what an eternal state!

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<sup>383</sup> That is to manifest, explain and describe in words.

<sup>384</sup> The term *attratto* (attractiveness) is used by Mattia Bellintani da Salò when he speaks of active and passive loving. (Cf. above n. 4332s).

<sup>385</sup> He has written *annichilata* at first but crossed it out.



**4785** The other two faculties are the sources from which our defects arise. I refer to the spiritual faculties which the Lord admires. It is by means of these that spiritual people gain advice regarding most exalted enlightenment and intimate union. This I experience within myself. I sought to examine why I sometimes feel inclined to gossip, vanity, frivolity, impatience and the like (I am not speaking about inordinate temptations, since they are in God's hands and He alone can remove them when he wishes)<sup>386</sup> and the Lord revealed to me that everything comes from the will when it is not absorbed with strong love for my sole good and beloved Lord. When this is the case these two vessels of the other faculties because of the violence of their clamour impose so much vanity, thoughts, and desires on the will that they draw it down towards iniquity. *In spiritu vehementis contereens naves Tharsis. (With a vehement wind you will break the ships of Tharsis)*<sup>387</sup> says the Holy Spirit. In such a situation love is tepid, or excessively occupied with external matters, no matter how good they may be. Therefore the other two faculties are drawn by the weight of love. When love is insignificant they take over immediately there is any small incident, following corrupt nature. In the meanwhile supernatural love does not absorb you or fill you with God. When your will is loving your Lord most ardently (a situation that is not influenced by small matters) the other two faculties are gently drawn to the same degree of loving.

Thus St Theresa says most accurately when all the three faculties are working together and are united in being absorbed in the only good this is blessedness and glory.<sup>388</sup>

**4786** Note that while on the journey we do not possess the state of consummate perfection but only in our homeland. It is true that the more you enjoy it the fewer defects you commit. The most important state is the state of deification of the will, which I spoke of above, because if this state is lacking no creature can really be called a spiritual person. This is how I feel.

From this you will realise the reason why for many whose will is open-ended or to, put it plainly, overcome and quick to turn to vanities, while not concentrating on loving their beloved Lord, that the other two faculties rob such souls of peace. Memory recalls their iniquity and their inclination towards revenge and hatred and so on. The intellect presents beauty, honour and gratification. It makes them love these things and so they do not admire even God Himself. Every day they practice desperate insanity and naturally fall in love with it. However, when the will is in the state of deification who would wish it to withdraw? Who is more powerful than God? As no one is more powerful, this is impossible.

You might have a couple of things to say, that when I am explaining some spiritual concept it would appear that I cannot unveil the very depths of the idea that I am proposing to you and that what the words say is not reality and so I doubt whether both you and I are being deceived. Beware!

**4787** When a person is writing, his will is touched by God's Holy Spirit and this makes most exalted matters come out, even if he does not wish it. He is not being moved by himself. He is being moved effectively by divine enlightenment which takes possession of him in a mystical manner. This is what takes place in the faculty of the will. Once he has been lost in the wonder of things that are so exalted and admitted his own stench and sees the distance between conduct and words, take it as certain, that by considering things from a speculative perspective, the soul will never

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<sup>386</sup> This replaces: *questo a lui e vuole (this depends on Him and what He wishes)*.

<sup>387</sup> Ps 47, 8 (Vulg.)

<sup>388</sup> From this reference to St Theresa who was canonised in 1622, we can deduce the date of the codex as being copied after 1622 and perhaps in 1683, as was the hypothesis put forward in the introduction to the text.



understand them and thus will never be able to explain what the will so evidently enjoys or reap what it knows in a manner that is beyond the intelligence (dwell on the enjoyment, *Gustate et videte. Taste and see.*).<sup>389</sup> However one never tires of speaking about the concept when the experience is very personal. Yet this is impossible since being personal pertains to the will and not to other two faculties. It is their place to offer explanations. While the soul is not operating through the intellect but through the will, as you have seen, it performs its activity effectively in terms of its native capacity. This is manifested, as far as this is possible, by means of some enlightenment in the intellect. When you see this written down you thirst for something more. However, as I have said, this is impossible within the activity of the intellect because such profound knowledge does not come to the soul by means of the intellect, but through the experience of the will and this is beyond the intellect. Having said such exalted things and if you have not grasped them you may be led into doubt. Be careful.

**4788** It belongs to divine light to disperse our darkness, our obscurity, the many emotions that accompany uncreated love, the many guises of the eternal sun and for the God of infinite ardour to unveil our intolerable weakness and shortcomings. Thus Dionysius the Areopagite says: *Tenebrae lumine vanescunt, et magis multo lumine.* (*Darkness becomes banished by light, especially by much light.*)<sup>390</sup>

To advance further than where the will has gone using the other two faculties is not completely possible while we are on our journey. It will only happen in heaven where we shall be satisfied. *Satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua.* (*I shall be satisfied when your glory shall appear.*)<sup>391</sup> Sometimes such doubts are provoked by the Devil who does this to disturb the will so that once it has been put down and overwhelmed he can lead it where he wishes. At other times they are the work of God so that the soul will not become proud of such deep considerations, a gift of which the Apostle boasted and then said: *“I will glory in nothing but my infirmities and passions.”*<sup>392</sup>

When the doubt comes from God the soul is humbled and submits herself to her spiritual father. However she is not put down, overwhelmed nor in darkness. Indeed, by a path that is more intimate and most hidden from the intellect she penetrates into the abyss where the other two faculties cannot venture and enters a space that is free of any creaturely disturbance where there is only her Creator.

The state of perfect deification of the will takes place while we are on our journey. However it is not given in full to the other two faculties since something will always be lacking in them while on their journey no matter how spiritual they may be. There is no one holier than St John the Baptist who was sanctified before birth and yet he fled from the occasions of sin that could arise from these two faculties, *ne levi saltem maculare vitam famine posset* (*lest they were able to stain his life.*) He went into the desert so as not to stain his soul with such failings. We ought to be more prepared to do the same because we are born and raised in sin and dwell in the midst of so many disturbances from created things. How else can we escape unharmed?

**4789** There are two aspects of such a misfortune. It means that God is not at the centre of our heart to absorb our heart in Himself. This results in the other two faculties not being absorbed in their beloved Saviour to a greater or lesser degree according to the potency of grace

Be alert and take note of this situation in the deification of the will. The Lord will do the rest. Pay attention to persevering in following grace, since, as Blessed

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<sup>389</sup> Cf. above, note 385.

<sup>390</sup> These are the first words of the letter to the Monk Gaius Therapeutes. Cf. *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*, John Parker, Forgotten Books, 2007.

<sup>391</sup> Ps 16, 15 (*Vulg.*)

<sup>392</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 12, 5. 9.



Giles says:<sup>393</sup> To follow grace is more virtuous than to endure tribulation with patience, since there are many who possess patience, but do not follow grace.

Note the strong control exercised by the will. The will loves anything. Let us not be like that. Let us not hold anything in contempt. Let us not be appalled. Let us not replace the Creator with what is created and be destitute of both. May God alone be in our heart! Let every mortal creature be excluded, excluded.

Whenever a thought or desire about a mortal creature comes to you cast it aside as you would a thief who was stealing your honour. Let only Jesus be with you, and if this causes you to suffer, it would be a blessing were you to die from such suffering. Suffering comes from passion. However, take no notice of it since once it has been overcome (even with the accompaniment of the angst associated with death) there will be that peace and freedom of spirit which could not have been achieved without alarming conflict.

Let us never seek, consider nor wish to have what is created next to our heart, but rather let Jesus alone be entrenched there. If we do this we shall be so truly consoled, happy and blessed that no one can take it from us.

**4790** Be careful to follow grace under the glow of the light which glows within you in a most divine manner. When I refer to the glow of the light I am speaking about the intellect. It is the function of the will to love, not to see. Yet I have said that the will can see. How is that possible? It does so by loving. Love enables it to see what it wishes to love most clearly by means of an inner light and from a divine perspective. This is enlightenment that is beyond the intellect and only possible for the will which, having been endowed with this perspective sees very clearly. This is seeing by means of experiencing. However I insist do not cast a glance elsewhere or act apart from the divine will which we know takes precedence in the deified state if you wish to enjoy inaccessible enlightenment. If you do this the other two faculties will be very gently prepared and filled with God even though not seeing God and God's deepest secrets.

You say Father: "Thus a brother prays perfectly when during and after prayer he does not know that he has been praying". I reply: "Don't you think that certain saints who experienced ecstasies, such as Blessed Giles, and who after these ecstasies revealed what they had seen, experienced perfect prayer? To which I reply: "Note that perfect prayer has nothing to do with what are the things of God but only with enjoying gazing on God. Our soul possesses three faculties. The activity of simply gazing on God in perfect prayer belongs to the will in which the other faculties never play a part. Saints and ecstasies do not reveal God (this is impossible by definition since the intellect cannot engage in activity such as this while we are on our journey). They reveal God's activity such as the Goodness and the justice of God etc, which God Himself has revealed by means of a special enlightenment of the intellect. Even though the will enjoyed this at the moment, it was absorbed in God in a manner beyond the capacity of the intellect. Such enlightenment is sometimes given to the intellect without the will being concentrated on her true God, something that never takes place except when God wants it. I regard as certain that the dignity of the will, as was the case with Blessed Giles when in ecstasy and absorbed in the enjoyment of God, was most eminently above whatever the other faculties could achieve."

Note this and the Lord be with you.

*If it is experiencing heaven, engrossed in divine matters and the cross, we cannot discover what a soul is like when it is in mystical union. Chapter 42.*

**4791** My dearest, *cuius est imago et superscription animae tuae?* (Whose image and inscription is on your soul?) <sup>394</sup> Tell me whose image and inscription do we carry on our soul. See if you can say, if you have suitable words. Oh how beautiful it is! Oh

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<sup>393</sup> Cf. *Dicta* etc., 94.

<sup>394</sup> Cf. Mt 22, 20; Mk 12, 16.



how fine it is! Oh what can be as pure! What can be so sweet! What is so profound, secret, divine and mystical that it satisfies all my desires and yours! What is so far beyond understanding as to be above any human intellect!

The intimate, unknowable message which is beyond what the intellect can know but which we receive in mystical union, what a gift, a favour beyond any other! O grace given to so few! Why was it given to us? It was given only because of God's generosity. O love, make us thankful. While you give one give the other since one without the other is useless. Fortunately the one who confers such an exalted gift will bring it to perfection.

Pay attention to the quiet life with Magdalene who was detached from the concerns and cares of the world. Only approach your eternal Spouse (place the world under your feet, for everything is madness and transitory). Our soul is ablaze with the pure desire to simply behold his most beautiful face, with every wish to praise Him with incessant adoration as do the blessed spirits. If you are unable to see the one you love perfectly, you cannot deny that you are beginning to see him better than you imagined.

**4792** If the rewards (as grace conquers us) which the Spouse confers each day become apparent, the moth within us would consume them. But if they have not been consumed we gain new merit for the journey by simply having faith and most pure love. Through faith we have a share in divine allurements through intimate union <sup>395</sup> (having little or no regard for exterior things that will be left behind at death) since these will never be lost, but are just beginning and will last for eternity in heaven. The flame of divine love which began to burn while on the journey, when the soul has arrived will reveal the face of the One who plunged the soul of his beloved into the abyss of love, and He will become the fire itself, drawing all into itself.

My dearest now that eternal love has been so clearly revealed to us we go along with it casting everything else aside. Whenever they approach us we repulse them because these secret paths mourn (as the Prophet Jeremiah says) <sup>396</sup> since no one is walking these paths. Therefore cast all this aside. How can you talk about things that you have not experienced and never known? Therefore I say cast them aside so that you will not be confused more than necessary. Let the cross be your classroom.

What did our Seraphic Father often tell his beloved Sons? There is nothing but the cross. <sup>397</sup> As you most unworthy son I preached about this and I still preach about it. This is what I want to teach you. This is what I want you to keep in your heart, on your lips, and in your hands. I want this for you so that we may be his true sons and follow him. Let this be our enjoyment, peace and real and true resting place.

If you wish to remain attached to God your Spouse, remain in agony within and without on the cross so that I may await you, and together we may enjoy the Crucified Loving God, and everything that is simply pleasing to God, where we will be lost and annihilated and never depart from this.

*Where the really true mystical light and the sure vision of the divine essence reside.*  
*Chapter 43.*

**4793** My Jesus has endowed you so abundantly with divine enlightenment that you are worthy to understand everything. John the Apostle says: "The city has no need of the sun to shine in it for the glory of the Lord makes it bright and the lamp which makes it bright is the Lamb". <sup>398</sup> Take note.

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<sup>395</sup> The words: *la grazia vincendo* down to *intima unione* (as grace conquers.... Intimate union) were added in the left margin along with three vertical lines running from top to bottom.

<sup>396</sup> Cf. above note 340.

<sup>397</sup> It would take too long to refer to the episodes in which St Francis spoke of the cross. Cf. *The Miracles* 1, 3. FAED II pp. 650, 659; *Major Legend* 4, 3FAED II pp. 550, 542.

<sup>398</sup> Cf. Apoc. 21, 23.



I have often quoted this passage without understanding it. But I understood it this morning. The eternal city is not directly illuminated by God. God is made visible by means of the light and brightness from the lamp which is Jesus, the Lamb. *Lucerna ardens et lucem.* (A burning and shining light) <sup>399</sup> God cannot be found outside this light. Therefore any light, brightness, manifestation or knowledge of God, no matter how exalted, which does not come by means of this lamp and the crucified loving Jesus Christ, is false speculation, natural craftiness that is invented and diabolical. Have you grasped this? Be on guard!

It belongs to the nature of what is mystical to reveal and allow you to see divine brightness (seeing and enjoying God in all things in an intimate and very profound manner). This cannot happen apart from the lamp which is Jesus Christ). Thus we have to admit that the Gospel teaching of Jesus Christ is the brightness and the light of the eternal Father who is both hidden and shining, that teaches us about the mystical union of this divine lamp. Paul the Apostle says: “In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and the knowledge of God.” <sup>400</sup> To whom are they hidden? They are hidden to those who speculate, who only study the letter. They are revealed to and discovered by the simple and those who are pure of heart and single minded.

Paul speaks about this light: “The fullness of the Godhead dwells here” <sup>401</sup>. What a great mistake, therefore, they make who distance themselves from this eternal light and are satisfied with their sharp intellects, thinking that they have been illuminated by divine light. O wretched ones, who are clothed in something that is not more enlightened but which is subtly more intensely and acutely dark!

**4794** My dearest, do we want to possess true and genuine enlightenment by means of which we may discover God? This is the lamp that I have used in all the teaching that I have written down and intend to write down in this book. You ought to know that every mystical thrill, boost, rapture, ecstasy and manifestation involves being lifted up and enraptured in such divine enlightenment.

I only say this. I do not want you to exhaust yourself with exercises, because your beloved Jesus will keep you exercising adequately both within and without. The more you feel caught up in this divine light, which is Jesus Christ, the happier and the more cheerful you should feel. When your enemy sees that you are so happy and light hearted, and that you are disregarding him, he will leave you alone because he is confused and overwhelmed. Be triumphant in experiencing victory and peace. Do not do as a certain person did, when being alarmed by the first beat of the drum, being at a loss, turned face and backed away.

You should go ahead happily along the royal and safe path with your gaze fixed on your beloved Creator. To concentrate on the path of the saints is the greatest thing you can do. Be attentive to prayer and solitude, because if you do not engage in these two things you cannot be a genuinely spiritual person or a true contemplative. <sup>402</sup> Make every effort to ensure that you are led by grace and that you journey with it like a docile and meek lamb, so that in this way the Lord may place his right hand on your head and all that you do may be abundantly rewarded by Him whose divine will lives and reigns in us forever and ever. *Amen.*

*Divine allurement, mystical elevation. The means by which you put yourself in control and become the master of everything. Chapter 44*

**4795** *Unum tibi deest, (you lack one thing)* Leave aside all other exercises and just carry out this one. Which one? *Vende omnia: (sell everything):* divest your spirit of all

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<sup>399</sup> Cf. Jn 5, 35.

<sup>400</sup> Col. 2, 3.

<sup>401</sup> Col 2, 9.

<sup>402</sup> Compare this splendid page with the contemplative thrust of the early Capuchin Constitutions to which it gives magnificent witness.



that is created, both spiritual and temporal. *Omnia (all)* including your own self: *omnia* even God! O what a bitter lesson! *Sequere Deum (follow God)*.<sup>403</sup> Leave aside all that is created, incidental, a secondary cause and all questioning. This is what those who are not enlightened do. *Secuere Deum (follow God)*! Act as if there were no one else except you and God leaving other thought and desires aside. *Secuere Deum* with your eyes closed as if dead to everything. Follow where God's spirit leads your spirit and makes it enjoy the indescribable depths of the divine abyss, events that are beyond comprehension and the search for a reason why and when you have been absorbed in the deep ocean of divine profundity, enjoy what is beyond understanding and what gives indescribable happiness together with peace and the satisfaction of tranquillity, where the smallest arousal of our passions are revealed as well as the intimate purity of the spirit as well as so many divine secrets.

Tell me of the indescribable concepts that make you feel like fainting and which you experience in that most lovable peace and delightful dream in which the Spouse will sometimes make you break into song. Concerning this I must confess that if it lasted much longer I would not know what more I could desire.

Oh how much I often lost this sensation in times past because consolation in love came about by means of the miserable world! Now who would ever want to separate me from the goodness that I have discovered? Now that I have died in God my fortress, neither devils, men, angles, suffering, nor death or life nor any other created thing can rob me of this.<sup>404</sup>

Therefore, my dearest, *sequere Deum cum solitudine et orqione*. (*Follow God in solitude and prayer*). Pay attention to the uplifting experiences which are of the highest quality and beyond what is intellectual and cast the intellect to the ground, not by taking action, which would only be affectation, but by submitting yourself completely to these mystical and divine operations, even though casting what pertains to the intellect to the ground is not our work, but is an intimate operation of God, as we are being mystically absorbed into Him, so that every act and panting breath<sup>405</sup> will be divine not human. To act otherwise, or to seek to understand the divine operation, or to try to banish the intellect so that it might not become involved etc., is always placing us in control. They are our actions. While we are doing this we are acting and not God! Oh what a cruel loss! We ought to submit, not take action.

**4796** Take care to cross this beautiful ocean in a small vessel covered from the sky. Strip the heart. Control it in both spiritual and temporal matters. This needs to be considered seriously. Every creature seeks to be in control of all that it possibly can and thus puts its own life in danger. We want to be in control of all that God created but we should not want this. What a useless life! Oh what insupportable small mindedness! We need to be large-hearted.

Whoever does not have courage will not venture.  
Whoever is afraid of the bow or arrow,  
Will retreat along the road,  
At the first sound of the trumpet.

In the Gospel according to Luke Our Lord Christ says: *Omnis ex vobis qui non renunciat omnibus quae possidet, non potest meus esse discipulus*. (*everyone of you that does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be my disciple*.)<sup>406</sup> Do not be one of them. Try to bring everything under control by giving yourself up completely to the divine will by dying to all that is incidental. Do not submit your heart to anything that is created. Rather act like the son of your Father. I mean Jesus who out of love for you

<sup>403</sup> Note the very spiritual interpretation of Lk 18, 22.

<sup>404</sup> See Rom 8, 38-39.

<sup>405</sup> *Aspiro* in the text = *respiro*

<sup>406</sup> Lk 14, 33.



and to unite you to Himself for eternal ages lost His own life. Seek nothing but to keep everything under control so that you may unite yourself to your loving Spouse without hindrance even though you may have to endure anxiety, sorrow, persecution even loss of life to acquire this control. Do not be concerned about relatives, clothes, lodging, your superior, your family, your cell or the bank or anything else. Putting everything beneath your feet, let your heart take control of everything, uniting you and transforming you into God alone. Pray for me so that I may be free from all negligence and any care that is not required for union with my dear Jesus.

*Divine enlightenment is necessary for those who are sailing the inner ocean of the Spirit. Unum est necessarium. (One thing is necessary.) Chapter 45.*

**4797** I greet you in the deep ocean of what is pleasing to God which, though it is revealed, is always hidden. However, because I see that you are far away from this only the good God knows how sad I am. If you were in the first stage of this condition, my heart would be filled with abundant joy. As you are in the second state I am full of anxiety and concern.<sup>407</sup>

I talk about nothing else. I speak of nothing more and I write nothing else only that you ought to plunge yourself into the peaceful sea of what is pleasing to God with a simple vision that is blind to incidentals and secondary causes and *in lum[in]e fidei* (in the light of faith) fix your eye only on the vision of what is divine, the breast of love, the experience of pleasing God who is the genuine lover.<sup>408</sup> The hour when I came to speak to you about God was wretched and unhappy! Unfortunate hour! It would have been better had I spent on my own concealing the Spouse in my breast while emitting some gestures and sighs exteriorly. Woe upon that hour! However, since I cannot and should not desire anything but the will and pleasure of my only love, therefore, and for no other reason, the hour in which what the one who loved me so much ordained *ab eterno* will be fulfilled, is joyful, happy and glorious, even if I experience anxiety, distress and hurt.

After so much vigilance and effort I still find myself on many dangerous paths towards various things that are of no consequence. This is not the road along which neither I nor God want me to travel. I do not call you to follow a low road, but to travel on the one that is exalted and sublime, to real death, to real peace, to real union and deification, along which your new Spouse wishes you to travel by means of the many graces that he gives you.

**4798** Grace will not place anxiety upon anxiety in my anxious heart but rather relief as it makes you never look beyond this safe and tranquil ocean fixing your gaze on cheerful navigation. In the end disembarking will be a joy since peaceful sailing assures a most beautiful and desirable coming ashore. Oh what happiness!

I do not say that there are no problems or doubts as I reveal divine secrets to you. I only say that you should turn your eye away from all that is of no consequence. In everything fix your gaze exclusively on what is pleasing to God and do not follow what is pleasing and satisfactory to your will, no matter how spiritual it may be. If you do as I say in spiritual things, as you ought to do, you will not often find yourself (with the same anxiety as I have) wrapped up in so many loops that are outside of true happiness. However, you listen to my words, but do not practice what I say.<sup>409</sup>

If you obeyed this, you would always be filled with joy like a blessed soul who is sailing towards the most beautiful port of paradise.

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<sup>407</sup> There is a note in the margin written vertically in large letters: *Leggi spesso* (Read frequently).

<sup>408</sup> Note in the margin: *Lume di fede sicuro, ma di pocci inteso*, (Light of secure faith, but understood by a few.)

<sup>409</sup> There is a vertical note in the margin in big letters: *Lessione divina* (Divine doctrine)



**4799** I wrote to you saying that you had become too involved in exterior matters that were necessary where you were staying. If you kept your eye on what I so earnestly desired for you, you would not have been able to seek anything but the simple will of God and not been exclusively concerned with making your nest perfect. While you say that you have to attend to other things, to look elsewhere, *unum est necessarium* (*one thing is necessary*).<sup>410</sup> (There are many spiritual persons who want to live in hermitages and in caves who do not understand this properly. They back up their interpretation with another passage from Scripture which says: *Ducam eam in solitudinem et loquar ad cor eius* (*I will allure her into the wilderness: and I will speak to her heart*),<sup>411</sup> This too they do not interpret properly. Enough!) You should be single-minded, having one vision, one vision alone. Oh solitude known to so few and practiced by fewer still!

In everything and in nothing seek the divine will. Thus, when you say that, like Martha, you are taken up with many things that are physical and external occupations in doing so you are becoming concerned with something that is other than what is pleasing God. If your eye were fixed on what God wanted, it would never look at anything else. In all that she did Magdalene was concerned with God alone. Martha was taken up with incidentals, as; I regret to say, on many occasions, so are you.

**4800** If you say that nothing but what is pleasing to God reigns in your heart and that you are sailing along guided by that alone how is it that you act against what you have professed and find yourself casting glances outside of that? Oh ungrateful, unfaithful spouse! Oh false, unreal, timid lover of the most faithful beloved Jesus, who in order to win your heart, despising the glory of Paradise, died between thieves in shame on the throne of the cross! Be careful if you always banish what is pleasing to God that he does not do the same with you! Stay alert and beware!

See that you die to everything with only what is the divine will alive in your pure heart by embracing this alone, seeking this alone, sighing for this alone night and day. Let your spirit sail to where it is destined to be, aiming for nothing else during this passage. Then effort will feel the same as rest, pleasure the same as displeasure, temptation the same as quiet. Then to suffer wretchedness, sorrow, torments, controversy will seem not like suffering. Health will feel the same as sickness, to die the same as to live. Hell will seem the same as heaven, going into a Church the same as coming out or remaining in your cell. Engaging in conversation will appear the same as being in solitude. Being separated from all the creatures in the world will feel the same as being among all the creatures.<sup>412</sup> Being disengaged from all the world's affairs will seem the same as being occupied with all the business of the world; being in communication with someone as not being in communication. Viewing a table would seem the same as not seeing it. Fasting<sup>413</sup> would seem the same as eating. To sleep would feel the same as being awake. Thus being lifted up to God would feel the same as not being lifted up. *Qui potest capere capiat. (Let he who can understand, understand).*<sup>414</sup>

**4801** This instruction is not meant for everyone. It is for those who are blind, insignificant and ignorant. The blindness of someone who can see is the same thing as the darkness of those who are learned and wise. The wiser someone is who can see, the more blind he is and in the dark. This is an instruction for those who are dead and it brings those who are dead back to life. The less someone is dead the less it will

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<sup>410</sup> Lk 10, 42.

<sup>411</sup> Hosea 2, 14.

<sup>412</sup> There is an addition between the lines: *Come in mezzo a tutte le creature del mondo.*

<sup>413</sup> The text has *vigilare* (*to watch over*) and we have corrected this using *digiunare* (*to fast*) as this was a slip of the pen.

<sup>414</sup> Math 19, 12. Note in the margin: *Divine lesson* written vertically.



restore life. Whoever wishes to possess life fully must die completely. However, hide this work of mine from those who are alive,<sup>415</sup> wise and who can see and *praecipue* (*especially*) hide this letter which will enlighten you as to how to act without leading you into error concerning the teaching about blindness.

Take flight from all that is not directed towards pleasing God and only embrace what God wants by not considering what is incidental but by considering what God wants, not thinking of what the consequences might be but thinking of the divine will itself. Regard yourself to be an annihilated instrument that has been drown and submerged in the ocean of what is pleasing to God.

However, this situation might give rise to doubt or to subtle deception and so you have to be very careful not to fall into error. Do not think that when you have begun a work that in order to remained submerged in the divine will that you do not have to worry about doing the work properly and only have to think about how you are pleasing God. For it to be pleasing to God you have to be concerned about the way the work is carried out. Few recognise this kind of deception and yet many are afflicted by it thinking it to be genuine uncommon union with God. In the end<sup>416</sup> all shall be revealed.

**4802** People like this are thinking of God as being separate and independent of the activity. Oh what foolish and limited union and how many are deceived in this way! When you perform a work, offer a service, carry out an activity, assist the sick or do something else whatever it might be,<sup>417</sup> do not consider it to be something material, incidental or detached from God, but think of it as being the will of God Himself, as God Himself and therefore force yourself to do it in a manner, with the same reverence, love, care and purity as you would if you were doing it for God Himself.

On such occasions I say that you should take care not to perform the activity for God but as if it was God Himself. Oh what a state, what enlightenment bestowed by the Holy Spirit for no other reason than to lead you on quickly! <sup>418</sup> However, run, fly and as if you were dead, plunge yourself blindly as I have been saying into what is pleasing to God where we shall remain for all eternity.

Whether you are alive or dead, sad, or feeling very bad, anxious, disturbed, upset, distracted, desperate, ruined or lost, pray that you will do God's will in matters which are close to your heart. <sup>419</sup> Keep an eye on yourself, on what you have, no matter how spiritual, so that you do not suffer damage, but being blind to everything, thankful in the faith, you dwell completely in the divine will.

Never omit the usual things such as Mass, Communion, discipline and similar spiritual things, except when you are excused because of necessity or genuine charity. Be involved in everything and in nothing as I have said above and be at peace.<sup>420</sup>

*Concerning infused and acquired tears: Concerning divine nothingness and divine infusing, human and acquired divine infusion. Chapter 46.*

**4803** I greet you in my dear Jesus Christ in whom I hope to see you absorbed and transformed. I wish to discuss the gift of tears which are infused by the Holy Spirit

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<sup>415</sup> The author had already expressed this thought at the beginning of this mystical treatise. See above § 4640. He is aware that he is dealing with matters that are delicate and dangerous and which might sound discordant to the "pious ears" of those such as he alluded to in § 4800.

<sup>416</sup> That is on one's deathbed.

<sup>417</sup> Note in the margin: *Come si deve portar l'anima nelle cose esteriori acciò stia godendo sempre Dio.* (How the soul ought to behave in the face of exterior works so that they are always pleasing to God.

<sup>418</sup> *Durvici* in the text is the same as *condurvici*. Note in the margin: *Come fanno le opera quelli che hanno un occhio.* (How those who are single-minded carry out works.)

<sup>419</sup> Note in the margin: *Spirituale gode il gusto di Dio in ogmo stato.* (A spiritual person enjoys God's pleasure in everything.)

<sup>420</sup> Note in the margin in capital letters: *Finis* (The end). This may have been where the book ended and where subsequent chapters were added.



and are divine. They are sweet, quiet, peaceful, gentle, and filled with resignation and the joy of heaven. They cannot be acquired by spiritual lectures and acts of apocalyptic violence.

Regard this gift as precious and make it valuable by using it frequently by day and by night. Because he was enamoured by such tears, our Seraphic Father did not care if he lost an eye as much as ceasing to cry even after the doctor told him that this would happen if he did not stop crying.<sup>421</sup>

Concerning the statement that the creature can do nothing, note this: if this conviction comes from God it will be recognised by what you do. Such a soul will be very prompt in carrying out what is pleasing to God because he is moved by the Holy Spirit in whatever he does. Such a soul easily carries out the promptings of the Spirit and does not live by commands or rules but is directed and led by what inspires him, not by set times but all day, that is in the time period which is *nunc aeternitatis* (*eternity here and now*).<sup>422</sup> The soul sees God in everything, even what is created, not through human vision, but divine. It experiences punishment which transforms it so that it is flying by means of the enlightened vision of faith to the peaceful harbour of divine pleasure and there it finds rest not in defects. To souls such as these *etiam peccata cooperantur in bonum* (*all things even sin work together unto good*)<sup>423</sup> Here I am not talking about wilful defects, from which we are made free by God's grace. I am referring to what is caused by frailty or weakness.

If such awareness comes by means of speculation or books or some person the soul will remain sluggish and cold, not thinking much about the defects, going about blindly and in a fog, even when it has acquired enlightenment by means of regulations and commands. It attempts to see God but through the imagination. It should walk within what God wants but it is living within itself. It retains defects which it does not like but it commits them without paying attention no matter how much it is crying. It runs on blindly, thinking it is safe. This is more true of the learned than it is of the simple.

We do not belong to this kind of people, my dearest. I want nothing from you except only that you embrace the state of nothingness, but in practice, not in theory, doing what is divine not human. When you have achieved this nothingness you will immediately be totally divine, completely God. Your works, whether they are yours or not, will be God's work, and *realiter* (*genuinely*) divine works. However to reach this state you would require resignation and time. Therefore happily try to aspire to becoming a genuine lover so that you may enjoy your beloved.

*How once our eye has been purified we can see God in everything. Beatific vision.  
Chapter 47.*

**4804** The Holy God is in everything. Therefore nothing ought to disturb your spirit even if it appears to be useful and necessary. You should approach it and follow what you long for, namely, God. Move towards Him annihilated to creatures, enjoy Him in peace and raise your spirit up to God above everything.

How does it happen that I try to look for God and yet not find Him? This happens because I lack spiritual vision and use sense images and can see corporal objects but not spiritual things. If I had used spiritual vision I would have seen God, who is beyond even the most spiritual object. In the same way that I see corporal objects I will see God in things (a vision which is very much desired by genuine lovers) and nothing will be able to impede me seeing God in the same way as nothing can stop me seeing this piece of paper. What stops this from taking place is the lack of purified vision which has been stripped naked.

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<sup>421</sup> Cf. LM 5, 8: FA: ED II, P 565; MIN LEG III, III; FA: ED II P. 695.

<sup>422</sup> This is an original expression which means the present has become eternal time.

<sup>423</sup> A reference to Rom. 8, 28.



In us such spiritual vision is the work of the Father of all light.<sup>424</sup> *Beati oculi qui vident quae vos videtis. (Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see).*<sup>425</sup> In another place it says *Multi reges et profetae voluerunt videre quae vos videtis. (Many Kings and Prophets desired to see what you see.)* St Peter saw the eternal generation of the Word<sup>426</sup> with well purified vision. Such a vision could not be impeded by human nature or our miserable state. Oh blessed vision which makes us blessed while on our journey. Even though we have been blessed this is above us while we are still on our journey. *Averte oculos tuos a me, quia ipsi me avolare fecerunt. (Turn away your eyes from me for they have made me flee away.)*<sup>427</sup>

However if we wish to enjoy such vision we have to have many eyes and then we shall be worthy to possess genuine enlightenment by means of which we shall see God in everything and in nothing. Note that mystical vision does not have shapes or images, no matter how spiritual, since it is beyond anything we possess, annihilated from every human activity. It comes about in a manner that is beyond all knowledge, with such a beautiful and blessed vision being activated by divine generosity. The Lord permits this at present through the light of faith and in heaven by the light of glory. *Amen.*

*The best way to obtain God's grace is to remain without thinking about it while remaining steadfast in His loving breast. Chapter 48.*

**4805** The best way to receive grace from the Lord is remain cast down at His feet, humbled and deprived of all consolation, filled with tears and sighs and feeling worthless *coram Deo et hominibus (before God and man)*, unworthy to receive the slightest gift.<sup>428</sup>

Oh when God sees a soul like this He cannot but give it grace. However, be careful not to approach the divine presence in order to gain grace and consolation. Rather throw yourself down without any thoughts remaining annihilated in His divine will and leave the thinking to Him without being bereft of every secret thought.<sup>429</sup>

Like Magdalene never go over past sins or cry about them. Cry over your daily misdeeds, over the graces that you receive each day but fail to correspond with through love and this will please your Spouse much more and make Him come closer to you which is what He desires.

*At the moment of temptation we discover false friends. The way to discover genuine peace. Chapter 49.*

**4806** I answer you out of my crucified love. I beg of you in as much as you love and enjoy my consolation and that of God never stray beyond the very safe port of the will of God.<sup>430</sup>

Be careful not to seek to enjoy your own ease, consolation, peace and union because a genuine and faithful friend would never do this, if he did he would never find it because at the time of temptation and dryness a friend like this (having his gaze on himself and not on his friend) would not feel joyful but sad as he had annoyed his real friend Jesus.

You ought to be a true and faithful friend who enjoys and wants nothing but what pleases and consoles God. When you are anxious you will appear to be

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<sup>424</sup> Cf. James 1, 17.

<sup>425</sup> Lk 10, 23, 24; Mth 13, 16-17.

<sup>426</sup> Cf. 2 Pet 1, 16-18.

<sup>427</sup> Song of Songs 6, 4 (Vulg.).

<sup>428</sup> Note in the margin: *Leggi spesso. (Read often.)*

<sup>429</sup> Note in the margin: *All'amante basta solo saper il desiderio dell'amato. (It is enough for the lover to know what the beloved wants.)*

<sup>430</sup> Note in the margin: There is a small hand pointing to the title of the chapter. *Lezione divina (Divine teaching).*



distracted, ruined and not able to pay attention to anything either to yourself, your defects or your hurt, but being blind to these, try to simply fix your gaze on pleasing God, relishing and enjoying God, instead of thinking about how you are suffering within and without.<sup>431</sup>

When you are at peace, contented, feeling whole and fervent you can experience God. Everyone knows how to do this. When you are anxious, frustrated about being ruined and you experience God's pleasure who delights in drawing you to Himself, and embracing you, then you will take pleasure in Him since this is what Christ the Lord intended when he said: *Et delitiae meae esse cum filiis hominum* (*My delights were to be with the children of men.*)<sup>432</sup> These words were addressed to a friend who was feeling quite the opposite.

My dearest, God reigns within you, not you in Him, so you ought to enjoy genuine peace which comes about through genuine union. Oh how many talk about union and do not know what that is! Be careful about what you are doing and be strong in finding the way without doubting that the Lord will defeat all your enemies, without being frightened and listen with humility taking the most secure path for your journey.

This teaching is such that it will make you an expert in every battle and give you the key to open all your Spouse's secret doors which is the surest way to come to him face to face among the seraphim where you will be permitted to stay in his eternal glory at his pleasure. *Amen.*

*The story of the amazing sufferings of Christ, especially in the garden and how that touched His spirit and soul when He was being tormented. Chapter 50.*

**4807** I greet your crucified heart in the anxious agony in the garden of my beloved Good where alone I hope to see you bemused with nothing else because genuine union consists in nothing else but always being anxious within and without, both by the world, by hell and by the spouse. I expect you to pay attention.<sup>433</sup>

Our Jesus was never, not even for a moment, free from bitter suffering and anxiety, so much so that it was a miracle that He was still alive. Beyond all these things the agony in the garden (where alone your anxious heart may find rest) was so great that it is better to weep over it and endure it than to speak about it.

He did not suffer at that time only, but from the time of His most pure surrender. However from that moment He wanted to demonstrate by being covered in blood how much more He suffered. Oh what anxiety, oh what suffering for my dear Incarnate Word! Oh how you were cruelly tormented! Who could understand, not to say imitate, this in even a small way!

God revealed to someone that the most sublime gift, the greatest grace that He could confer on His closest friends was to give them cruel suffering, fierce torment, pain, punishment, shame and bitter crosses (O what spiritual extremes in our wicked times).

**4808** Now I add, that considering that the Humanity of the Word was the most beloved creature, you should now think of how torn, stretched and crucified it was. Remember that being divine was of no assistance, He died a long and deadly martyrdom. The wounding that was evident in His torso began at the instant of His conception to such a degree that all anxiety, punishment etc., of all creatures put together would not add up to the smallest part of the sufferings of the agony which our spouse suffered in the garden.<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> Note in the margin "Amore profondo (Deep love)."

<sup>432</sup> Prov. 8, 31.

<sup>433</sup> Note in the margin: *Unione vera dove consiste* (Genuine union consists in this.)

<sup>434</sup> We read a similar thought in Angela of Foligno's book.



This (my beautiful love) was so much so that it was felt as intense pain and extreme suffering to the point of agony which was close to death whereas we think we are dying when we feel slight anxiety and consider it insupportable and faint. Oh true and most faithful Beloved one where are your faithful soldiers, genuine followers today, where oh where, my Good? They all love you when they are being amused, consoled, in peace and quiet, when healthy, strong and beautiful, free from pain, anxiety and poverty or distress. Oh my abandoned spouse, disserved by everyone!

O dearest, let us follow Him, consoling Him, offering Him our anxious breast that is painful and wounded. This is the only way we may help our agonising Spouse since *solatium est misero sotium habere penatum*.<sup>435</sup> When in pain it is a great comfort to have a friend.

**4809** Since I have discovered your great resignation to the point of death, and observed you being dumb in the midst of sorrow, peaceful when feeling disturbed, feeling consoled when your felt revolted, joyful when feeling anxious and resigned in the midst of various upsets, how could I not rejoice all the more because you have plunged yourself into my God as you fulfilled my wishes by wanting and wishing to do what pleases God which is what makes us perfect and holy. When you experience good or evil, sickness or health or anything like this lift up your gaze and loosing sight of such incidentals behold what is pleasing to God and fleeing from these things submerge yourself in the divine ocean.

Note that I am speaking about the higher faculties. Do not worry about the lower faculties. Many spiritual persons fall into this trap and never reach true peace of spirit. The inferior faculties operate in their own way causing anxiety, rebellion and boredom. Because the higher faculties are stronger (although they are hidden at times and only genuine spiritual persons are able to keep them in hand) they plunge into the deep ocean without giving it a thought without being concerned about the lower faculties which are filled with temptations. Remain above all of this and do not try to pacify them. Rather pay attention to what is higher and remain always plunged and immersed in the very peaceful ocean of what is pleasing to God.

**4810** See if the pain that you are experiencing is caused by natural idleness or by seeing people filled with resignation receiving visits from the Lord. Banish this as far as you can because wherever anxiety exists there is self-love. You cannot win battles or overcome passion by means of violence and commotion which may easily induce self-love. Do everything sweetly and gently raising your gaze to what is pleasing to God and becoming absorbed in that enjoy what God wants, not what you want which is to have everything under your control.

Be aware of this so as not to seek what you want while longing for God. In this way you will not deceive yourself and you will be content, to remain under the cross and just enjoy God although the cross is still there.

Have patience, if you are really on fire, while you go towards death where you will find real life, freedom and in judgement will discover that the sweetest God will embrace you with the kiss of everlasting peace. I say no more. Ask God to make me never abandon you.

*Divine activity that will detach you from self-love which still accompanies the desire to die. Chapter 51.*

**4811** *Quod tibi displicet, ama: quod placet, disama*.<sup>436</sup> Can you find peace and quiet within the cross? What insanity, madness! What bogus spirituality! O crude self-love, how clever you are! You put on a crown, wear a vile and despicable dress and under

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<sup>435</sup> An old Latin proverb.

<sup>436</sup> Ama ciò che ti dispiace e non amare ciò che ti piace. Love what displeases you, and do not love what you like.



that shabbiness you seek what is pleasing to you, what satisfies you, peace and pleasure. How deceitful and subtle you are when viewed under the enlightenment of the eternal Word!

You do not put yourself in a despicable situation or on the cross but in a comfortable place which involves depravity, poverty, disgrace in seeking your own satisfaction, peace and the search for comfort wherever it is to be found. There is little gain in having a crown or a gown and other despicable things. The fact is that the more you have of such things the less they will please you, the more they will put you on the cross and, on that cross, you will always stay nailed to the cross, and find no peace in that crown or dress. In these things you will be really crucified and when you go in search of peace, pleasure and relief abandon them and search out the genuine cross and be crucified and suffer an atrocious death so that you may be like the Son of God being crucified: *Conformes fieri imagines Filii sui, qui est primogenitus.* (Being made conformable to the image of his Son, that he might be the Firstborn).<sup>437</sup>

O what bitter teaching, but not to your heart which has been strengthened by so many exalted and powerful gifts! These are the two swords that Christ mentioned to Peter (after He had told the Apostles that each of them would suffer) when He said *satis est*, these two are enough.<sup>438</sup>

O what swords! *Quod placet dissama, quod displacet ama.* Pray to God for me so that He may take negligence away from my heart because it stops me from being perfect. My dearest, be careful to go towards God alone, putting everything else under your feet. Heaven awaits us. *Dominus tecum.* (May God be with you!)

*Perform exterior works, but do not worry over them. Take comfort from the next life.*  
Chapter 52.

**4812** My dearest in the Lord, I greet you by warning you that the day will come when our ingratitude will be revealed and how much we should have done but did not do because we blindly attended to the body and thought what was visible to be important.

My dearest, God wants his closest friends to be free of all worry about created things, so that being free they can be concerned with God alone. Martha was reprimanded concerning such worries.<sup>439</sup> My child I want you to be free from such things. My child, throw the things of this world under your feet. Take care of what is necessary for this life out of coercion, not dwelling on it, but dwelling on what is pleasing to God in beloved Jesus. Take this to heart and do not waste a minute without procuring an eternity of some degree of glory.

When someone is sick in the monastery help him as if he were Jesus Christ so that God's spirit is at work within us and not just human sympathy. Let us always go towards Him who always comes to us. Think of nothing but being concerned about love that is eternal and look forward to eternity.

**4813** My son, listen to what I am writing with tears in your eyes. St Gregory of Nyssa says of St Ephraim the Syrian that not a day or a night passed when his eyes were not bathed in tears.<sup>440</sup> Why was he crying continually? Because of nothing else than that he was considering the vanity of this world to which an infinite number of men give themselves. With this in mind he raised his eyes to the Lord whom he saw on a throne and who said to him: "My soul why do you not love me? Why do you not serve me with devotion? Why do you live and pray so negligently? Why do you not

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<sup>437</sup> Rom. 8, 29. The adjective "cristiforme" (like the Son of God) is taken from Clerano.

<sup>438</sup> Cf Lk 22, 38.

<sup>439</sup> Cf. Lk 10, 41.

<sup>440</sup> Cf. S. Gregorius Nyssenus, *Vita atque encomium Sancti Patris Ephraem Syri* (PG 46, 830s). This concept was already mentioned in Chapter 26.



prepare yourself for a rigorous judgement? My beloved, why do you not correspond to the many graces I have given to you and still give you?"

He was so frightened by this vision that he exclaimed: "Let the mountains come and cover me. *Cur utero matris prodii?* (*Why did I come from my Mother's womb?*)<sup>441</sup> Adding more words in a loud voice he began to cry copiously. On account of this he later wrote a treatise.<sup>442</sup>

If someone so holy shed tears, what about us, O my son? Can you image how much glory we forfeit every minute! Therefore do not allow yourself to do anything that would turn you away from heavenly enlightenment. Cursed by every other desire! All else is iniquitous! Every other objective or thought is diabolical! O my son may we love sincerely in such a way as to give love more than receive love. Indeed, how much more! Think about this, how I have to cease writing to you because I am prevented from doing so because I am in tears. *Deus tecum.*

*A person should never trust in anything but divine mercy. Chapter 53,*

**4814** *Loquere Domine, quia audit servus tuus. (Speak Lord for your servant is listening).*<sup>443</sup> Speak, O my God, because my soul is attentive to what you desire. My son it is true that our bodies are better suited now to the other life than to this world.<sup>444</sup> It is a fact that our strength has grown faint and is just ashes looking forward to nothing but going to Him who has reduced us to this state. It is true that our senses have become dull to the point that our spirit desires nothing more than to escape from its prison. It is a fact that the spent body only gazes into the depth of divine secrets, whether within the body or out of it.<sup>445</sup> This is true. This is true. Oh blessed Son!

Oh my dearest, who shall provide us with assurance? Who can guarantee that as we approach the calm sea near the port we will not be swallowed into the deep? St Augustine cried out with tears and said: "Which of us knows which one of us will persevere to the end? My child, when having good intention is not sufficient who knows who will stand beside us, not being occupied with activities, not running around in a hurry, not wishing for something, *sed miserentis est Deo?* (*But only God who shows mercy.*)<sup>446</sup> Everything is the work of the divine generosity and the deliberate mercy of the compassionate and loving God, who shows mercy and generosity to those whom He pleases. He leads us home with His own hand. He hardens and cast away those who are not pleasing to Him. He does this freely without counting merits. The elect are saved by means of the works which they perform which, in turn, are the result of them being elected. They are saved by means of a just judgement whereas the others, although they have received sufficient grace are cast aside by means of just judgement.

**4813** What are you thinking? Perhaps *iniquua Deus? Absit.* (Is God unjust? God forbid!).<sup>447</sup> The Apostle concludes: *Igitur non volentis neque currentis, se miserentis est Dei.* (*So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God who shows*

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<sup>441</sup> Cf Job 3, 11.

<sup>442</sup> In his book *De poenitentia* there is a collection of a number of sermons on compunction, especially: *Sermo XI de compunctione; Sermo compunctionis I e II. Quomodo anima cum lachrymis debeat orare Deum* (cf. S. Ephraem Syri *Opera*, c cura di D. A. B. Caillan, Parisiis 1842, 121-171). There is also a sermon entitled: *Quod non oporteat ridere et extolli, sed piangere potius et nos ipsos deflare* (*ibid.* VII, 167-72). St Ephrem also left a series of "daily prayers" entitled "planctus", (*ibid.* VIII, 223-254).

<sup>443</sup> 1 Sam. 3, 10.

<sup>444</sup> This means that they are old and feeble. This shows that at the time of writing this correspondents, the spiritual director and his disciple, were advanced in age. Since the author died in 1601, this piece of spiritual direction must have taken place at the end of the sixteenth century.

<sup>445</sup> A reference to 2 Cor 12, 2.

<sup>446</sup> Cf. Rom 9, 16. St Augustine expands on this topic in his *De dono perseverantiae*. (Pl. 45, 993 – 1034).

<sup>447</sup> Cf. Rom 3, 5-6.



mercy).<sup>448</sup> My child, whatever in us is good, both in what we wish and in what we do, is a gift from the Lord, not given on account of our cooperation, but independently out of His immense generosity.

My child, it is not enough that He had given us so many gifts, but more grace was required in order to protect what we had received so that it would grow from one degree to another. Now what is there concerning which my soul can boast, *nisi in infirmitatibus meis?* (other than in my infirmities?)<sup>449</sup>

Listen to what St Anthony the Abbot had to say concerning the infinite number of traps that filled the nets laid down by the world. Overcome by these he cried to the Lord: "Tell me, my God, who can escape from so many nets?" He heard a voice from heaven "Sola humilitas (only humility.)"<sup>450</sup> Oh humility, oh omnipotent nothingness, God Himself bows down to you and when my soul has become one with Him who can oppose it? My dearly beloved, I counsel you: a soul which rejoices in divine nothingness in the solitude of its depths will recognise that all is possible when separated and set apart from all that pertains to what is created. Such things are obstacles within the soul to union with our only good which is always beyond us. Thanks be to God. Amen.

*An invitation to heaven leaving behind so much of this world's misery, and what troubles they cause. Chapter 54.*

**4816** We read how after he had visited all the places associated with our Saviour, a very spiritual soldier finally visited the Mount of Olives from which my only good ascended up into heaven. Here, filled with apprehensive emotion, the soldier thanked God for having allowed him to visit those holy places and said: "Now, my eternal good, I lack only one thing and that is to see heaven to which, my beloved God, you ascended and where you abide. Make me worthy, O my God, to see it. Make me worthy to see this too just as you have made me worthy of other things. Give me the grace to also see this, so that I may praise you for all eternity".

My child, this loving desire was so intense that the heart not being able to endure such joyful emotion, the blessed soul took flight towards that eternal and desired place. What songs, what melodies, what camaraderie, what glory, what happiness, what enjoyment of all that is good and all that could be desired are to be found there! Absorbed in this all the blessed spirits rejoice. Let us aspire to the same thing, oh my dearest!

Oh the joy and consolation of such a blissful homecoming! If we consider this we could not wish for a more desirable port in such a stormy ocean on which all is pain, anxiety, sadness, deception, grief, sobbing and countless illusions, and where there are so many diseases, snares, calumnies, various disturbances, so much anger, avarice, and daily<sup>451</sup> cares and continual attacks. Where, my child, at one moment you feel burning with divine desire and ask God to hold your hand so that you can endure it, and often at the next moment the thought has vanished before the work was completed. In an instant you feel that the sky has turned against you causing inner anxiety, bewildering thoughts and that you are on the high sea out of sight of land, then a light appears in the sky and you are in *terra viventium* (in the land of the living).<sup>452</sup> Your heart is tossed about by the waves without an end in sight or any help or a ray of light. O my child, what a state to be in! I know that you understand what I am saying as you experience the deepest emotions while on your journey. O king of the heavenly kingdom which to our shame has been lost sight of and which cannot be found except without a struggle.

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<sup>448</sup> Cf. Rom 9, 16..

<sup>449</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 12, 9

<sup>450</sup> Cf. *De vita Patrum*, lib. V: Libelus XV, *De humilitate*, n. 3 (PL 73, 953)

<sup>451</sup> *Giornali* in the text means *quotidiane*, *giornaliere*.

<sup>452</sup> A reference to Ps 26, 13 (*Vulg.*)



My child when you are experiencing personal crosses let your spirit often gaze on the divine essence, in a way that you can neither describe nor understand. Behold it under the light of the cross. How reassuring this is! How it perpetrates and consumes us. The less we feel and see it, the more divine it is. Therefore, my dearest, let us always keep our eye on the cross and through it on heaven, where I hope we shall find enjoyment together for eternity. *Dominus tecum. Amen.*

*An invitation to heaven: an admirable devotion. In seeing God we come to know ourselves. Chapter 53.*

**4817** Vanity of vanities, the whole world is vanity.<sup>453</sup> Look towards the other life, my dearest, where there is no anxiety or anything that is of little consequence. If our eyes were looking there we would never be without tears which we would endure as we do punishment: *flebit spiritus et fluent aquae* (the spirit shall weep, and the waters shall flow).<sup>454</sup> What kind of waters? These are waters that contain more sweetness than anything else in the whole world. You say that you would enjoy that. My child, we have no other consolation than to pin our hopes on heaven. What about the present? How is it possible for the soul to find consolation in what is visible while at the same time aspiring to what is beyond what can be seen?

There is no love in that kind of action. How can we live without loving such a lover as this? We would be better off dead. Whoever feels like this is not in love. Genuine love does not permit the lover to have any rest while being away from the beloved. The genuine lover cannot endure being apart from the beloved. To be apart is to be struck with a dart and cut. Now how can we, who are loved by God, call ourselves lovers if we are looking for love elsewhere? If at times we succeed in withdrawing very ardent darts and burning flames from our heart could that happen without us breaking into tears?

My child, how profitable is solitude! How useful and profitable is spiritual reading? How necessary prayer is? A genuinely spiritual person is lost without these three things. If he does not wake up to this he will gradually tie down his inner self and lose divine wellbeing. The longer this goes on the worse it will be. I feel obliged to warn you that this is very important. Pay attention!

It is true that caresses are not necessary to the depths of the soul, but I say (how the devil goes around trying to banish caresses) that it is certain that we should not follow him. However, I say that caresses are like a defence in front of a city wall where once it has been removed the wall quickly collapses. The worst thing is that this may take place without our recognising it.

Oh how much the astute enemy destroys! He deceives us by having us in search of caresses, where we will find rest. After a while he makes us fall as we build castles in the sand. He makes them fall under the pretext that they are not essential things. My dearest, the enemy is astute as he roams continually around; but you have greater enlightenment.

**4818** Such caresses are not necessary, *necessitate assoluta* (with absolute necessity), nor are penances, observing silence, solitude, tears, and so many other things that pertain to the spirit. O God! The doctor advised our Seraphic Father not to cry or he would become blind. Did he stop? Listen my child and tremble. “It is preferable (he said) to lose bodily sight than the tears that reveal my God to me.” I prefer tears to life itself.<sup>455</sup> I conclude: if we do not erect such a defence similar to a wall, we shall not be able to take cover behind it. Let us rather look towards heaven by crying, sighing in solitude, fleeing from the consolation offered by creatures and yearn for heaven with holy thoughts and fresh loving advances and then we shall discover that we have

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<sup>453</sup> Cf Qo (Ecclesiastes) I, 2.

<sup>454</sup> Cf. Ps 147, 18 (Vulg.): *Flebit spiritus eius et fluent aquae.*

<sup>455</sup> Cf. above, note 421.



defences within ourselves and that the enemy has been repulsed from the city walls and the spirit *dormiet et requiescet in Deo suo* (will sleep and find rest in her God) <sup>456</sup>

My dearest, it is true that caresses belong to beginners since later God elevates the soul to greater things, namely to beholding God: *Gustatete videte* (Taste and see). <sup>457</sup> This does not mean that caresses are useless. Indeed they become more efficient in carrying out the function of consuming the soul by deifying it completely so that this is carried over into the inferior and animal faculties.

Because of this teaching be aware, my child, of the subtle cunning of the enemy and bless the Lord who enables you to bring everything into the light. Thus you will enjoy inner peace and travel safely without thinking about rewards. Your God will take nothing away from you and this is sufficient for you against any wind. When you act like this you are not being human but angelic, not living in time but eternity. You are no longer worthless and poor but master and king of everything and of yourself being made omnipotent. Now that you find your contentment in God alone, who can oppose you? Only one person and that is your own self. You have now given yourself completely to God and so who can oppose you. Now sleep, O blessed one, sleep without fear in Him where there is no more stress or upset.

**4819** My dearest, I know that you enjoy solitude. To a great extent prayer itself is a part of the work of the friary. I exhort you to read frequently. Without this the soul will become tepid. Guard purity of spirit as it is the source of genuine peace of spirit.

You say that as we come to know ourselves we discover divine generosity. Keep your ears open otherwise when you see it you will not know what to say. So now pay attention.

By means of the happy discovery of His infinite divine generosity that the Lord makes us worth to receive we gain self-knowledge. <sup>458</sup> My child, such stench would kill us if the perfume of divine generosity did not raise our souls upward. If we are proud we cannot be raised. Nor can we glory in anything but ourselves and our failings and our falls into whatever it may be. O divine action which is known only to His intimate friends! O how many go looking for this and never find it because it is not revealed to them!

Others (including the soul of N) are allowed to find it wherever it is concealed. He does this, not us, even when we flee. Dear child, self-knowledge can never provide a genuine, pure, consummate insight, nor provide divine enlightenment (the enlightenment that accompanies deifying virtues within us) if it was acquired by means of what is natural and highly intelligent even though this could give rise to good moral virtues in us. To the extent that the eternal Sun dawns self-knowledge is infused into us. By means of this we come to enjoy the state of divine annihilation and transformation.

Eternal enlightenment fills the whole vacuum (or the depth of the abyss) that causes self-knowledge which, however, is not only due to annihilation but to divine action. O blessed consummation, which will be enjoyed fully in our homeland, where we shall live beyond ourselves, absorbed by inaccessible enlightenment which is the source of enlightenment, which lovingly possess us now in such a way that we do not desire to possess anything else.

Happily, my child, this is what will take place when the eternal Sun dawns, and day breaks, an eternal day. You will never be deprived of this happiness in your God for it does not exist outside of Him. *Dominus tecum*.

*A daily exercise which promotes perfection. Chapter 56.*

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<sup>456</sup> Cf. Ps 4, 9 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>457</sup> Cf. above, note 365.

<sup>458</sup> This is the classical principle of knowledge of God and self-knowledge which is set out in various ways in the writings of the great spiritual writers.



**4820** Before the sun beams its rays (by means of which we travel safely and work happily) into the dark vale of our exile, o child, once you have risen from bed go immediately to the church to lift yourself up by means of divine rays to the eternal Sun, rousing yourself to devotion by loving words and by examining your inner self. Most of all you should diligently scrutinise your heart and the depths of your spirit regarding vice, passions, defects, and your shortcomings which are due to negligence and think about how far this is from the perfection that you are obliged to follow by your profession. How much we owe to grace and to the love of God who does so much for us!

My child, one day the eternal Judge will call you to account for that obligation. Therefore let us be alert, without making excuses, or being easy on ourselves, to judge ourselves strictly, without becoming stricken with terror, but having pitiful sweet concern so that by thinking about our defects we shall humble ourselves, recognising with our inner eye that we are nothing and of no value, saying: “Here am I, O my God, O my one and only good, here is my poor soul, your wretched creature. I cannot go ahead by myself as I have nothing but vices and failings and so am unworthy of anything that is good even your grace. However, I beg of you, to count me among your dear servants and friends”, and in the depths of your heart prostrate yourself with deep humility at the feet of the God whom you love, considering yourself to be His most unworthy child.

It is not intended that this exercise be performed on only one day but that it be performed every day and forever with love and humility inciting this kind of judgement in the depth of your soul and you may be certain that any act that does not come from that depth, including vocal prayer, is worth little or nothing. Think well about this point.

Beware, my dearest, of the situation in which having chosen unrecognised paths in the depths of your soul, which are well known to the one who is enlightening and guiding you, you follow the wrong path. Someone may whisper in your ear: “Why are you aiming so high? Why are you striving for something which is beyond you capacity and to which you have not been called. Live very simply like many other good souls who will still reach heaven”. Regard this voice as that of the enemy and cast it underfoot.

**4821** Watch out for this, my child, especially if it does not happen by means of a voice but if you see that it has come about by the way you own conduct. Obey what I have said by singing with the Prophet Jeremiah: *In nidulo meo moriar et sicut palma* (but you say) *et cum palma multiplicabo dies*. (I shall die in my nest as a palm tree (but you say) and with the palm tree I shall multiply my days),<sup>459</sup> and I spend my days in psalms and rosaries. Turn to your true Lord: “O, my most loving God, I am completely yours, completely. I want to be completely yours. I want all that is not that, not to be mine. I choose only you, O Crucified one. I embrace only you. O eternally blessed one.”

I warn you and you know that sometimes an exercise works for some souls and is most sweet today and irritating tomorrow. How does this happen? From the burning breast of someone who loves you so much? Why? *Absit hoc!* (*Perish the thought*)! Banish such a thought. It is the opposite for true lovers. The reason why this happened will be made manifest in our homeland. Oh what secrets! What you have to do is to accept the cross from God’s hands, enduring it with patience and humble resignation. The cross will be transformed into joyful happiness. In the meantime the eternal Lover will be doing everything, so that the soul does not boast of its own strength, but about God alone, accepting and simply using what he gives, whether He gives or takes, in prosperity as well as in adversity, while singing: *Magnificat anima mia Dominum*. (*My soul magnifies the Lord*).<sup>460</sup>

<sup>459</sup> This passage does not come from the Book of Jeremiah, but from Job 29, 18.

<sup>460</sup> Lk 1, 46.



My beloved in Christ, hold on to what you have received, not from people, even if it is the opposite to what people would give you, as you well know. Trample all the rest under your feet, and if it comes up again, throw it at me and you will then enjoy greater peace from the experience. With the taste of death that you have experienced in little sparks break into song with these words: “O happy day”! I promise you that when the eternal Sun dawns, bringing with it the day that will have no night, how much more happily will you sing: “O happy day” When I told a very spiritual Father what you had said, he replied: “This is a sign of a peaceful conscience, what a happy soul!”

My child, you can say that you have tasted death, and in doing so have had a taste of blissful, peaceful rest. Look at where this came from! Hold dear what you have received even if you have already wasted many years, enjoy the enlightenment, and relax in its light and leave the rest to me and I will bless you. *Et Deo gratias*

*A method for reaching the mystical kingdom and desirable spiritual happiness. Who is the Lord of all! Chapter 57.*

**4822** Blessed Christ says: *Nisi quis renatus fuerit (unless a man is born again)*,<sup>461</sup> if he has not been born again when he dies and is annihilated he will not be born again and he will never enter the beautiful kingdom. Even the Apostles did not understand these words.

Whoever wishes to be worthy of this blissful kingdom must be born again. My dearest, this kingdom is such that it beatifies all our faculties, so that when we die to this life, the life of the senses and reason, God begins to reign immediately and we are born to another life, divine life. In this state you see God with mystical vision which, the more secret it and the less you know, the more secure, peaceful and blessed it is. You cannot enjoy this vision outside of this state neither by means of a gift from the Holy Spirit or by means of our own industry; all our faculties are at a loss in this state. *Non potes homo me videre, dum vivit. (You cannot see my face and live.)*<sup>462</sup>

You are the master of all. The only good you desire is intimate peace. Surrender all that is within you which is not controlled by God as far as this is possible. For the rest whatever disturbs this blissful peace (which is a gift from the Holy Spirit) throw it at me no matter what it is this appears to be useful and necessary to you. I have told you this many times. Therefore be alert. If your peaceful soul, which is where God dwells, is disturbed, search for God in this quiet place and let no one but God enter there, so that possessing the one who is good you may enjoy him within yourself.

The peace that I love so much generates spiritual happiness that is indestructible and there is no force that can prevail against the one who possesses this. St Anthony the Abbott has this to say regarding this matter: “There is only one thing that can bring you victory over the enemy, and that is spiritual happiness. Wherever this is lacking the enemy can do whatever he likes”.<sup>463</sup>

**4823** Our Father St Francis observed this so well that he wanted all his sons to do the same: He said: “My children always preserve the spirit of gladness within you.”<sup>464</sup> Where this does not exist, the enemy immediately throws the heart around wherever he wills. What precipices! However may there be divine joy in all of you by means of which you may experience the beautiful presence of the Almighty, remembering that where there is not continual recollection of and hope in God everything else is vanity. Once you have been reborn to divine life and have become masters of yourself and the world (which is present through the strength of grace),

<sup>461</sup> Jn 3, 3.

<sup>462</sup> Cf. Ex. 33, 20.

<sup>463</sup> Cf. S. Athanasius, *Vita S. Antonii*, n. 42 (PG 26, 906).

<sup>464</sup> Cf 2 Cel. 125 (FA:ED II, p. 329) *Spc perf.* 95 (FA:ED III P. 341-2).



because of such grace you will trample on yourself and on all creatures. Please pray for me as I bless you in the Lord's name.

How do the masters of this world conduct themselves? They are either anxious or euphoric and because there are an infinite number of inconsequential events they are controlled by whatever is happening. Indeed they are tyrannised and slaughtered by what they are confronted by in the world. They are often made fun of by those who are associated with them. My dearest, how did it come to this! What a shame! This is greater bondage and desperate servitude! What a life of anxiety! How much worse off were we when divine eyes gazed on us in sheer mercy and we were in the grasp of complete servitude, and, whereas before we were thrown about by every breeze, now all the winds put together could not harm us. If the shy fell down and the whole world covered us over with the whole of hell we would survive if we look to the one master no matter how exalted. O happiest of states! O blessed happiness! O eternal beatitude to which, my child, I am inviting you!

**4824** Tell me child, is not Jesus Christ all holy, all beautiful, all good and our only joy, aim and desire? Then why do we love anything else in the world besides Jesus? Do you know why this could be? How could our hearts be turned elsewhere, love anyone else; love ourselves, love creatures or the whole world? Why should souls be reduced to such a wretched state that when they fail, they lose God, and heaven and go to be crucified for all eternity in the fires of hell? O the madness of a blind sinner! For our part, my dearest, we love Jesus alone. He is our God, our good and our true guide. Why do I hate my family so much, flee from all creatures, hate the world while loving with all my heart what I am destined for, where there is strict silence, why, O God? Why do I cast my eyes down to earth? Why do I value the poverty of patched clothing so highly? Why, O God? Why, if not that the love of our beloved Jesus, whom I have not loved most of all since my tender years, crucifies me and torments me. Blessed be the Lord our God who loves us so much!

My child, pay attention to prayer and love Jesus. From every perspective our days are suspect and evil. What is the use of talking to ignorant people about mystical subjects and intimate activities? Whoever embarks on mystical journeys among invisible things? Pay attention to the secret prayers that have been revealed to you; and beware of ignorant people. Otherwise your beloved spouse who is so good and so beautiful will immediately appear to you to be so ugly and such a bother. Then (without willing it) your emotions and your heart will turn elsewhere taking a troubled path where before they had been happy and blessed!

**4825** Therefore concentrate on prayer, silence and the divine calling. Break off everything else. *Portio Mariae (Mary's choice)*.<sup>465</sup> Once we are involved in affective prayer, eternal silence as our permanent vocation we shall enjoy secure peace, and peaceful security in the everlasting love of Him who, having chosen you to be His spouse and having paid a rich dowry, took you away from the useless waste of time in this world and freed you from wanting anything else, took you into a corner, which no tongue could describe and made you His favourite child who became even more beautiful. Distance yourself from all but this. Fly towards this, rest there and sigh and, as if dead, enjoy a different life. There is no genuine peace apart from this, only fear, mist and anxiety. Here there is blessed peace, and even if at times this is not our human experience, affective operations in the depth of the soul do not stop, for we have not been called to an everyday life, but to what is invisible (going beyond *speculum et enigma – looking through a dark glass or a mirror*).<sup>466</sup> Let this be your first light, like the Diana constellation, in this stormy ocean.

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<sup>465</sup> A reference to Lk 10, 42.

<sup>466</sup> A reference to 1Cor 13,12.



My dearest, no one can prevent you from praying as you have been taught. You will not be able to carry on, go ahead or be enthusiastic without prayer. You will be unable to see. Therefore pray.

Prayer is essential for the spirit and the divine calling. (Although they are helpful) discipline, fasting and chains are not as essential. Do not listen to anyone who says that it is not the best part of the bread.<sup>467</sup>

**4826** My beloved in Christ, throw all that pertains to this exile under your feet by never seeking any comfort in it, or in any person or in anything below God. Like St Bernard let everything be punishment, and speaking more mystically, say with holy Dionysius throw everything out that is not God making room for what is beyond comprehension and so be happy about the port in which you wish to come ashore, where you will find all that is good. St Jerome says of St Paul that he was happy to die, as if he were a person who had left what was not a part of him and discovered his own self.<sup>468</sup> Where then should you go, O my soul? If you go hither and thither you will never find peace. You have to turn to what is genuinely good and genuinely beautiful.

The real food that gives the soul life is to refrain from loving things. This is impossible for the soul unless it sees God in everything and is blind to everything else. "If I am lifted up from the earth (Christ said) I shall draw everything to myself."<sup>469</sup> However if you want to enjoy everything as given by God you have to see God in everything that you behold no matter how exalted and beyond debate and intellectual reasoning and be like Moses who was led *ad interiori deserti, videbis Deum et in ipso summon bono omnia habentis* (into the depths of the desert where you will see the supreme good that contains everything.)<sup>470</sup>

*Oportet nasci denuo* (you must be born again).<sup>471</sup> If you do not die first it will be impossible to experience a new birth, enjoy a mystical perspective and a divine visitation, and an enlightened understanding without which it is impossible for us to fully overflow, *lucifer oriatur in cordibus vestries* (and the day star arise in our hearts.)<sup>472</sup>

Now go ahead and journey by means of morally good actions and you will achieve nothing but the dimming of the mystical perspective of the inaccessible God which is the source of perfect freedom and adoption as God's sons, which grasps us within and without and blesses us forever and ever. *Amen.*

God makes a soul holy when it has died:

And it is in the kingdom of God who has absorbed it completely.

*Concerning the two kinds of freedom that are to be found in the mystical life, which are the same as two kinds of leisure, which bring about good and bad freedom.*

[Chapter 58]

**4827** I have discovered two kinds of freedom along the mystical journey and they correspond to two kinds of leisure: one which is good and the other evil. The good

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<sup>467</sup> This is why the early Capuchins stressed that prayer was the objective of the Rule.

<sup>468</sup> Cf. Hieronymus, *Ep. 108 ad Eustochium virginem*, n. 28 (PL 22, 904); with respect to the concept of "Divine Gloom" in which we discover God beyond sense objects and objects of the intelligence cf. Dionigi Areopagita, *Mistica Teologia* I, 2; lett. *Al Monaco Gaio* (*Tutte le opera*, trad. Di P. Scazzoso, Milano 1981, 407, 419s). Regarding the quote from St Bernard cf e.g., *Sermo VII, del peregrine, mortuo et crucifixo*; or *Sermo 48 in Cantica*, 1-2 (PL 183, 183-186, 1012s). This concept can be found throughout the works of the "Doctor Mellifluus (as sweet as honey).

<sup>469</sup> Cf. Jn 12, 32.

<sup>470</sup> This expression is similar to the way Bonaventure expresses himself. It is well expounded by St Gregory the Great, *Moralium lib. XXIII*, c. 20 (PL 76, 273-275)

<sup>471</sup> Jn 3, 7

<sup>472</sup> Cf. 1 Pet 1, 19



kind gives real peace, to more one of the soul's faculties, indeed to the whole soul, deifying it. The bad kind gives peace only to the frenzied passions and increases the strength of the enemy giving rise to more battles.

The good king separates us from the world and from ourselves. The bad kind plunges us into the world, into our senses often under the guise of spiritual freedom. To practice the good kind means suffering out of which joy and good things arise. To practice the bad kind produces gratification that may lead to anxiety that consumes true freedom as it grows bigger.

The good kind is unpleasant as it annihilates what is human and deifies everything. The bad kind gives pleasure by delighting the lower faculties and thus weakening the superior faculties and annihilating divine activity. The good kind discovers the true God. The bad kind reveals a false and imaginary God. The good king appears to produce disunity whereas in reality it produces unity. The bad kind appears to produce logical thought patterns but in practice and in reality it divides and produces confusion.

The good kind is not under the control of incidental events and so reigns with the just. The bad kind is under the control of the lower faculties and goes along with the damned. The good kind initiates the first urges and is thus always happy, in control and absorbed. The bad kind does not know what to do and is always in doubt and confused. The good kind does not see but intuitively. The bad kind does not see at all and has lost all insight.

**4828** The good kind has God for its object and first mover, and is blind to all else and so it is always sacred. The bad kind puts arguments forward saying that God is not against its reasoning even though it is acting as it likes *prout vult*. The good kind sees the outer man as possessing angelic characteristics. To the bad kind this is completely foreign, saying that this has nothing to do with being perfect.

The good kind hates any beauty that does not pertain to what has absorbed it. The bad kind goes after such beauty saying that it is from this that we ascend to what we are absorbed by. The good kind avoids discussions. The bad kind loves them. The good kind is afraid of and shies away from all that is defective, while being careful not to be overcome by such things and become shy. It is more pure and in close union with its beloved good. The bad kind does not ever consider this, under the pretext of being in inner union. Blessed is the soul who has been taught well as this is a sign of being in contact with and being chosen for eternal glory.

The good kind loved bonds, chains and rejoices about being imprisoned as this is where true freedom originates, the freedom that God wills. David gives witness to this: *Et ambulabam in latitudine, quia mandata tua exequiavi* (I walked at large because I have sought after your commandments).<sup>473</sup> The tighter I am bound the more freely I run towards my God. The bad kind flees from this, wanting to be free (it claims: *Ubi spiritus Domini ibi libertas* (Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom)).<sup>474</sup> It is ignorant of the true freedom of which the Holy Spirit is speaking. Because of this evil servitude arises which few recognise at first. This is often not recognised by experts and they are placed in a desperate hell which turns out to be irremediable and requires bitter medicine.

**4829** Mankind is torn between good and evil. Man is taken and imprisoned as he allows things to run on. Evil affords him freedom by leaving him to *in manu consilii sui* (by leaving him to his own designs)<sup>475</sup> Oh cursed freedom, what great evil you have caused me to endure, to how many of my enemies have you enslaved me, to how many passions have you bound me, how much good have you stripped from me, of

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<sup>473</sup> )Ps 118, 45.

<sup>474</sup> 2 Cor 3, 17.

<sup>475</sup> Cf. Sir (Ecclesiasticus) 15, 14 *God made man from the beginning, and left him in the hands of his own counsels.*)



how many treasures have you deprived me, with how many intolerable wars have you surrounded me! With what joy you have filled me by means of blessed ropes, happy chains, and divine confinement! With what happiness have you adorned me! What sweetness you have infused! What a hunger you have given me for being satisfied with what is divine!

Oh that you would never free me from  
The sweet bond with which you have bound me!

What rivers of honey flow from such freedom, and who could waste them? This I conclude (not saying as much as I could): good freedom is very strict on oneself and one's senses when it seeks love alone and a life that leads to one's beloved where it will rest in the end. Bad freedom is all softness in search of discretion. This is a waste of time and ignorance to those who are madly in love. They can only choose love as the way to conquer and overcome. Now, my child, drink from divine flowers strongly so that you may discover food that will last for all eternity. *Et Dominus tecum.*

*Who is the truly spiritual person? A divine exercise to be carried out when some sin has been committed. Chapter 59.*

**4830** After I have prayed, while greeting your soul and your spirit I will explain to you, my dearest, what is essential and the main objective towards which you ought to advance, turn towards and dedicate yourself. A spiritual person is one in whom the only act of his higher will, the only essential act of his will, or more important *ad intra* (*within this*) does not involve something which is created. Nothing ought to be declared greater than this or more true or of greater spiritual value no matter how immaculate it appears to be, either considered in itself or in the opinion of other people. A person who performs such unique actions (even though a person is performing them they are not considered to be created objects), even when they appear to be defective, is a spiritual person in God's eyes because God does not measure or calculate the acts in themselves; O lord no! I have described above what makes up such a unique act.

Woe to us if these two moments of enlightenment (as is human) were to judge our actions, without looking within, that is without considering their source, because we should dedicate ourselves to this unique act in a mystical manner so that by means of the act we may be purified and deified completely (I believe that you will understand this from what I have already taught you). If this has not happened turn to prayer, my dearest, during which He who taught me how to speak will give you understanding to the extent that is pleasing to Him.

When an error or defect or sin or anything trivial has occurred anxiety, disturbances, regrets and great interior unrest break out and the exercise which is best of all and that ought to be put into practice to put the soul on the level of the blessed is to lift up your gaze, as I said above, in a unique act beyond the senses. Once you are lost and blind in this enjoy Him who loves you most obviously in everything and beyond everything. If at times you do not feel blessed immediately on account of the violence of the disturbance you are experiencing, and you feel like holy Job, *venientibus ut turbo ad dispergendum* (*they came out like a whirlwind to scatter me*)<sup>476</sup> take care to never lower your eye, but keep it fixed firmly, as I have said above, because little by little it will be enlightened with divine splendour and your whole soul will be blessed. When you have prayed and not received this wait and it will come.

Child, what makes the soul blessed? The sight of God! However, I urge you to carry out the above exercise with which you are already familiar in part. We shall speak about the signs that characterise this state latter. I have no time now.

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<sup>476</sup> This is not in the Book of Job, but in the Prophet Habacuc 3, 14.



*Concerning the higher and lower faculties and how there were four kinds of will in Christ. Chapter 60.*

**4831** So that you may understand more profoundly the intimate unity of the spirit, in addition to what I have said and written concerning the higher and lower faculties, listen to St Bonaventure who said something about the prayer in the garden that will move you.<sup>477</sup> Here it is.

Christ possessed four wills: the will of the flesh and this did not want to suffer anything; the will of the senses and this complained and was afraid and so He sweated blood; the rational will and this obeyed *ad literam* (literally) and accepted everything. Because this always sensed the divine essence, it willingly threw itself into obeying what the Eternal Father wanted. It could never distance itself from this, but always obeyed without caring about its own life. Thus He went to death willingly: *oblatus est quia voluit* (he was offered because it was his own will)<sup>478</sup> This was His food. He was completely absorbed by this through His rational will that we know as a superior faculty.

There was also divine will in Christ. This commanded and dictated the sentence: “Let Christ be scourged, spat upon, mocked and killed”.

Have you understood, my child? Be careful about the lower faculties lest they crucify you, break you and burn you with temptation. It is sufficient for a spiritual person that the higher faculties remain steady. The anxiety that so many suffer and which disturbs them when they experience rebellion in the inferior faculties comes about through hidden pride which is very subtle. Such persons never experience genuine spiritual peace which is a necessary gift. My dearest, if you have this praise God’s infinite goodness, *et Dominus tecum*.

*Treatment of various spiritual exercises. First tract: Concerning unitive love and the way to acquire it. Chapter 61.*

**4832** With the exception of charity no virtue has the strength to unite the soul to God. Charity alone cancels sin, restrains passion, and gives the soul enlightenment that is beyond what the intellect could give by uniting and transforming it into God. This happens in various degrees. The first degree is to love God because of His majesty and what He deserves and because He deserves infinite love. This is what is due to Him. The second degree is to love God because He is present to us although inaccessible. This is the love which is enjoyed by the blessed. The third degree is the love given to those who are on the journey who the more that they are united to God as if He were present, the closer they become to those who are in heaven who are in fact in His presence. The mystical theologians call this degree of love ‘unitive’. This has the strength to unite the lover with the beloved so that he cannot rest or find any joy when apart from the beloved as the heart yearns for the object of love.

Consider the heart of a person who is in love. Such persons can neither eat, drink nor sleep, but are always taken up with the thought of this since the wound of such deep affection never leaves them in peace. They are not bothered because they cannot overcome this. Indeed, since they have been so completely transformed by this they do not feel any torment. Sometimes they may fall sick or even die. The Philosopher states the reason: *Anima magis est ubi amat, quam ubi abit.* (The soul exists more where it loves than where it lives.)<sup>479</sup>

Thus a genuine divine lover is so absorbed by divine love that he is able to find no rest outside his unique beloved good. He always exists in that state desiring nothing but to be possessed by love. He does not think about his proficiency. He

<sup>477</sup> Cf. S. Bonaventura, *Sententiarum lib. III*, dist. 17, art. I, quest. 1-3 (*Op. omnia* III, 361-370).

<sup>478</sup> Is 53, 7.

<sup>479</sup> Cf. above note 219.



admits no limit. He does not calculate using his reasoning. He does not consider what is possible, since he is not thinking about what he is doing, nor about what he could do, but about what he desires. (Unitive love has the power to form such a bond and once this has been achieved it transforms the lover.)

**4833** St Bernard <sup>480</sup> says: “When someone is embraced by this divine love, he is equipped for every good. He works without becoming tired. He toils and does not feel it. They laugh at him and he does not care. A soul that loves God so much becomes transformed into him in such a way that what he wants is what God wants. Once his will has been changed his whole life changes the same as when you cut a branch from one kind of tree and graft it onto another kind of tree the fruits that are produced no longer are those of the old tree but of the new tree even though you have cut the branch from the former tree.

In the same way once man’s will has been cut away and inserted into God’s will the fruit which consists of words, thoughts and deeds no longer belong to the former will which belonged to man, but to the new will which belongs to God. Holy Dionysius <sup>481</sup> says love has the strength to unite things to each other and does not allow the one who loves to be in control but makes him subject to the beloved. The will is no longer called human but divine. Love rules the will and the will controls the person. Thus the lover gives all his love to God and consequently the will immediately goes in the direction of love and Man becomes God and God man.

The preoccupation of the genuine and mystical lover and the most effective and fulfilling exercise to achieve such divine wisdom and secret union with God is, according to holy Dionysius, <sup>482</sup> and many others after him is to remain united to God always, by means of genuine love and, as far as possible, to raise your heart to Him with affectionate and ardent loving desire for His love, conversing and speaking to Him about all that can cultivate love, stripping yourself and standing alone detached from your own will and self-love.

**4834** The more you detach yourself from self the closer you come to God. If you want to travel to Naples and you are in Nola you will never get to Naples if you do not leave Nola and walk to Naples. The further you go from Nola the closer you get to Naples. Thus the further you detach yourself from your will the closer you will be united to the divine will. This is what constitutes consummate perfection namely always wanting or not wanting what God wants in every place and at all times. Loving Him and not being able to rest apart from Him. St Augustine says that the perfection of charity consists in strongly resisting and casting away from yourself whatever makes you tepid and separates the soul from this love of the holy God.<sup>483</sup>

One does not come by such divine wisdom and mystical theology by reading books, but by praying and lifting oneself to God by coming to know God through simple affection that comes with experience and not through reading or investigation. This is how you recognise the great difference between scholastic and mystical theology. One seeks knowledge through acts of the intellect: the other through the loving affections of the will. These emotions convince the intellect of how good and sweet the Lord is so that travelling along this path of wisdom always means meeting God and speaking with Him night and day.<sup>484</sup>

Here it is necessary to give some very important advice, and that is that you ought to be careful to put restraints on the intellect so that it does not become too

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<sup>480</sup> Cf. S. Bernardo; *Ep. XI ad Guigonem*, n. 8; *Liber de diligendo Deo*, n. 39 (PL 182, 114, 998); see also *Sermo 83 in Cant.* (PL 183, 1181-1184).

<sup>481</sup> Cf. *Nomi divini* IV, 13 (Dionigi Areopagita, *Tutti le opera* cit., 310s).

<sup>482</sup> Cf. *Gerarchia celeste* I, 1-2; *Gerarchia ecclesiastica* I, 3 (Dionigi Areopagita, *Tutte le opera* cit. 77-79, 152).

<sup>483</sup> Cf. e.g. S. Augustinus, *Sermo 179; e. 10, n. 11* (PL 38, 965 s) ect.

<sup>484</sup> This is why the Capuchin Constitutions of 1536 even when referring to the study of theology give pride of place to experiencing the spirit. Cf. *Const. 1536*, n. 123 (n. 387).



speculative and impede the will's affections and movements. Here I am speaking not so much about the knowledge of God but of the love of God since it is a better and more excellent thing to love God than to know Him. In this I take issue with St Thomas <sup>485</sup> when he says that in heaven beatitude consists essentially in knowing God and so it is a better thing to know God than to love Him. I reply to this: in heaven we shall see God as He is in Himself and this will be enough to make those who see Him blessed. In this life we do not see Him as He is, but according to our limited capacity, making Him akin to the capacity of our intellect.

**4835** Love is not like this. One of the properties of love is that it transforms the lover into the object of his love, so that forgetful of himself he is transformed completely and becomes one with the beloved. For this reason it is better to love Him than to know Him since in this we can know Him only as much our capacity permits while we can love Him as He is. In the first case we restrict God to the limits of our intellect. In the second case we are transformed into God as he is. This is why we say that it is better to love the things that are exalted and divine than to know them and better to know inferior things than to love them because by knowing them we make them nobler and more spiritual as they come into our intellect. When we love them we downgrade our will, connecting to base objects. On the other hand by knowing exalted and divine things we do not improve them, but lower them to fit our intellect so that we may be able to grasp them. This is not how it is when we love something since by loving them we do not change them, rather we are changed into them. A person is the same as what he loves; if it is good, he is good, if it is bad he is bad.

St Augustine said: "A person is what he loves. If he loves earth, he is of the earth. If he loves God (what am I saying?) he is God, since love is life that unites the lover with the beloved and makes the two one". <sup>486</sup> What strength is there in love!

A philosopher said that the beginning and the end of a blessed life, indeed of a perfect and blessed life, is beholding God, heartfelt affection for Him and embracing His will. However, whoever wishes to attain to such divine wisdom has to trample all earthly things underfoot and never rest, nor find delight in anything created instead of the uncreated beloved one and cry out with St Bernard: "my soul is dead, my Lord, not only by sharing the death of the just, but even that of the angels", that is dead to created things no matter how spiritual they may be. <sup>487</sup>

**4836** All of these desires, sighs and affective prayers are acts of charity which have been highly praised by all the masters of mystical theology. Because of this they take a great roll in promoting charity, which, as Prosper said in his book on the contemplative life, <sup>488</sup> is true liberty, which is detached from everything that is transitory and united to God, inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit, from which comes delight, and from delight desire (whoever possesses this has completed a great part of the journey), from desire to satisfaction, from satisfaction to inebriation and from this to peace.

Whoever seeks divine wisdom in this way is in possession of a constant inner tendency to love God in such a way that he is not able to rest in anything or desire anything apart from God. When he sees, senses, smells, tastes or touches something it all appears to be a reason for loving God, as if he were looking through coloured glasses and that is what he is seeing. Therefore any one who is lost in this kind of love appears to see everything as a matter of love with everything leading to love, just as when something is touched by fire it is consumed.

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<sup>485</sup> Cf. S. Th., I-II, q. II, a. 8.

<sup>486</sup> Cf. S. August., *Sermo 131*, n 1 (*PL* 38, 678). However this is not an exact quote. This is a splendid example of the principle of the dynamic primacy of love as this is understood in Franciscan spirituality.

<sup>487</sup> Cf. S. Bernardus, *Sermo*, 52, in Cant., n. 4-5 (*PL* 183, 1031s).

<sup>488</sup> This book was written by Giuliano Pomerio, but was attributed to Prospero d'acquintania in the past. Cf. *De vita contemplative*, lib. III, cap. 13 (*PL* 59, 493).



This state of being in love with God is the definitive object of the study of mystical theology. It consists in the loving knowledge of God which is the product not so much of intellectual debates as of affections, sight and desires in the will to which the divine good never fails to respond by extending his personal invitation. He stirs and draws towards his perfume: *in odorem curremus* (*we will run after the odour of your ointments*).<sup>489</sup> How can anyone turn away from what they are seeking when they desire nothing more than to communicate?

From what has been said about this we may deduce that we ought to increase thinking about loving God more than about knowing Him. Let us not do what some do by speculating in subtle debates and become preachers rather than lovers of my beloved and dear Lord.

**4837** In support of what I have been saying I want to quote a letter that the famous Count della Mirandola<sup>490</sup> wrote in which he stated to a friend how it is much more excellent to love God than it is to know Him. He wrote: “See, my friend how foolish we are. Think about the faculties that we have to bring about our union with God and to enjoy Him. We can achieve much more by loving with the will than by knowing with the intellect. We gain more with less effort through loving and our efforts are precious. In all of this, because we act with urgency, we prefer to proceed by means of premeditated study and searching by means of the intellect without being able to find what we are seeking. If we do not love we will do ourselves an injury”. These are his words.

In order to provoke more strongly and to cultivate this divine wisdom I want to show you another letter which was written by St Gregory Nazianzen that he sent to some people who were approaching him to make him Bishop. He states that the reason why he is running away is that he wants to give himself more to prayer where he can enjoy God. “A quiet life and the pomp of being in touch with the world are the reasons why I am running away. I have been greatly attached to these since my early years and having already experienced them I have become completely disenchanted with them. For this reason you cannot expect me to depart from this safe port and expose myself to the tempest that would come with the office of pastor. It would seem to me that no one in the world could be happier, or more blessed than he who having cut off the bodily senses and withdrawn into himself, and having placed himself outside the flesh and the world, would spend his whole life with God, speaking and conversing with Him and raising himself above everything that could come through the eyes, would welcome the splendour and image of divine things into his soul, making himself in this way a pure and limpid mirror which reflected the things of heaven, each day adding light to light, one brighter than the other, and so begin to enjoy the goods of the future life conversing with angels, abandoning the earth though living on earth and united to the Holy Spirit in heaven. If any of you have been touched by such love, you will understand what I am saying.”<sup>491</sup>

**4838** St Bernard confirms what has been said above in his “Treatise on Divine Love”<sup>492</sup> where he says: “Finding myself alone in a solitary dwelling like a lone animal that lives in a sterile desert as I began to put my love into practice I opened my mouth and sighed. On one occasion as I stood with my eyes closed and sighed after you, my Lord, you placed on my heart’s lips something that I did not understand. I experienced joy and felt sweetness that comforted me to such an extent that if perfection had been conferred upon me there would be nothing more that I could desire. Whoever is in love will know what I am talking about. I realise that whoever is not in love will, like anyone who has not studied Latin, will not understand this Latin

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<sup>489</sup> Cf. Ct I, 3.

<sup>490</sup> That is Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494).

<sup>491</sup> Cf. S. Gregorio Nazianzenus, *Oratio II Apologetica*, n. VI-VII (PL 35, 414s)

<sup>492</sup> Cf. S. Bernardo, *Sermo 79 in Cant.*: n. I (PL 183, 1163).



language or know whether it is Latin or Greek. Love's language is barbaric to anyone who is not in love". This is how St Bernard puts it.

Whoever does not love will not understand this teaching on love even if he pretends to understand it. Indeed he will not even believe it. The lives of the Saints trumpet more than this. On account of divine wisdom the saints left high positions, abandoned customs, occupied hermitages, forgot to eat and gave pride of place to prayer and relished torment and discomfort. In order to enjoy this more, many of them pretended to be mad, but with divine folly. However the day will come when everything will be revealed. We shall see who was mad when they cry out in a desperate voice: *Nos insensate, vitam illorum estimabamus insaniam et finem illorum sine honore. Ecce, quomodo computati sunt inter filios Dei et inter sanctos suos sors illorum est.* (We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints.).<sup>493</sup> He who said: *Petite et accipietis, querite et invenietis, pulsate et aperietur vobis,* (Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you)<sup>494</sup> condescended to grant this to us. May He be blessed forever!

In divine union the soul should turn towards God, clearing everything from the memory and the intellect and with loving affection *in lectulo meo per noctem quiaesivi* (seeking him at night on my bed).<sup>495</sup> A Doctor explained that the word "bed" meant sacred leisure, simple contemplation. When we hear in the Cantic that the bride is seated in the shadow of her spouse, shadow means that she is forgetful of creatures. When night falls she totally forgets creatures.

**4839** Oh blessed night, brightest night, night that gives rise to true light! *Et nox illuminatio mea in deliciis meis* (night shall be my light in my pleasures).<sup>496</sup> Oh what a night, the more intense is the darkness, the greater is the light that you give me. *Sicut tenebrae eius, ita et lumen eius* (darkness and light are alike to thee).<sup>497</sup> Oh night that ushers in the eternal day! *Nos sicut dies illuminabitur* (the night will have light similar to daytime).<sup>498</sup> Oh beautiful, happy, sweet, quiet blessed and divine night! Oh night that my heart loves so much that I could live and die within you! Oh night that is the cause of all my true good, the most perfect object of all that I desire! My dearest, this is the makeup of this night. It is caused by the fire of love which no one knows and which the soul cannot recall because it is totally absorbed in sighing for the highest, uncreated eternal good, which it loved most brilliantly.

. The more that divine revelations, messages, reminiscences and visitations are beyond the intellect the more pure safe and free from illusion they are. From this experience and the soul's contact with God, every good, every message and revelation that is not concerned with something trivial but with nothing less than God follows on. This is not possible if the soul is not united with God.

O most pure and delicate touch! O how you have touched me with such freedom and ardour! O most sweet touch which by means of the delicacy of your divine being subtly penetrates into the substance of my soul and, by a gentle touch lifts me up into a divine kind of sweetness! O touch that is so subtle and sweet for me! O breeze that is gentle and like touches that are unnoticed and delicate! How fortunate and thousand times happy is the soul which you touch since you are so powerful as to be able to level the mountains of passion and shatter the rocks of hardened hearts!

**4840** Tell the world, my soul. Share it, my heart, with mortals! Yet do not say anything about it to the world because the world does not feel the gentle breeze, the

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<sup>493</sup> Wis 5, 4.

<sup>494</sup> Cf. Mt 7, 7; Lk 11, 9; Mk 11, 24.

<sup>495</sup> Cf Cant. 3, 1.

<sup>496</sup> Ps 138, 11(Vulg.)

<sup>497</sup> Ps 118, 12c (Vulg.)

<sup>498</sup> Ps 138, 12 b (Vulg.)



delicate touch. It does not feel it because it cannot scale such heights. Oh my God and life, those who are gentle will feel and behold you in your touch as you make them gentle with the gentle, delicate with those who are delicate. In those whom you touch more gently, you hide, absorbing their soul *in abscondito faciei tuae* (hiding them in your face)<sup>499</sup> from the confusion of men.

Oh a thousand times delicate touch which you allow with the strength of your gentleness to prepare the soul and detach it from all other touches and reserve it for yourself alone, by implanting in it such a delicate disposition and enjoyment that any other touch of anything else, high or low, would appear dangerous and abominable, and be offensive even if it were miraculous and would cause distress if it touched or came into contact with the soul! Oh divine touch, living and effectual, *penetrabilior omni gladio ancipiti, pertingens usque ad divisionem animae ac spiritus!* (More piercing than any two edged sword, and reaching into the division of the soul and the spirit).<sup>500</sup> Oh touch which the more delicate you are, the more you penetrate, since when something is more subtle and gentle the more it infiltrates and shares itself. Oh most loving touch that is more than delicate and beyond anything that can be described! Because of your very pure and shining touch, the vase of my soul already finds itself simple, pure and prepared for you! Oh delicate touch that, as the soul sees nothing that consists of matter in you, touches the soul more and the more deeply it causes what is divine to change what is human the more it is touched by your divine being and this touch is beyond what is usual, beyond what is material, and free from all shape or form!

Finally, oh delicate touch, because you touch the soul with your most pure and delicate essence, which because your essence is infinite, your touch is infinitely delicate, it gives a real taste of life eternal which fulfils all the soul's desires and appetites, but not as they will be fulfilled in our homeland and in glory!

*Nihil potentius homine orante (Joannes Christostomus) (No one is stronger than a man who prays). Treatise on vocal, mental and mystical prayer. Chapter 62.*

**4841** You ought to engage in vocal prayer without a break and unite your heart to your unique Spouse as often as you want to, not to meditate in the strict sense but to promote union. Once the Spouse comes leave aside vocal prayer immediately and be united with your Spouse. When the Spouse hides himself, return to vocal prayer, and by means of this then return to mental and unitive prayer, which is the fruit of vocal prayer, meditation and unitive prayer which is beyond what is intellectual and is mystical.

If the Spouse often pays you a visit, go along with it and do not perform your ordinary devotions on that day while you are pursuing this.<sup>501</sup> Know that whoever performs vocal prayers as they should without omitting them is performing mental prayer as well. By means of divine mercy, divine prayer (which is beyond description) in which God is seen comes about as well.

How many there have been who went in search of a method of prayer and when they had it within their grasp so much self-love came in that they wanted to become ecstasies or exalted people without knowing what it is to be unlimited exalted people or ecstasies in practice and they became always anxious and full of self-love. Do not become like this, but remain as we have said above *in simplicitate cordis quaerendo Deum* (seeking God with a simple heart).<sup>502</sup>

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<sup>499</sup> Ps 30, 21 (Vulg.)

<sup>500</sup> Cf Heb 4, 12

<sup>501</sup> The objective is union with God, not the fulfilment of a duty or a practice of prayer. In this regard consider, for example, what William of Novara did as described in Volume II, 1682, n. 344).

<sup>502</sup> That is: *seeking God in simplicity of heart.*



Mental prayer is the objective of meditation. In essence prayer is raising a pure heart to God. Purity of heart is not produced by a person meditating. Rather, in the process of praying a person is united to God with burning love and a pure mind.

One comes to such purity of mind more easily by means of ejaculatory prayer coming from a burning heart and zealous will which is detached from all that could bind it. If at times (without being anxious over this) one is not totally free it is better to become free by means of these burning flames than by long meditation as Cassian says so well. I recommend that ejaculatory prayers be the normal practice.<sup>503</sup>

**4842** Beware that of all the exercises you attend to this one is the first and most special. You should return to this with love resting in the divine bosom uniting your spirit to God. You will be stripped, lifted up and thrown into union by these ejaculatory exercises. This will enable you to undertake long journeys which are practical not speculative. Following speculative meditation we often find that not only have we not begun but have gone backwards, retreating into ourselves and being confused finding it difficult to discover the true path, the real death, true union and the genuine peace of perfect deification. There are some who feeding themselves on long discourses and beautiful meditations think that they are ecstasies but without seeing their error as do those who are wounded by continuous darts.

If you still wish to meditate occasionally go wherever you are led by the Holy Spirit, and when you are able, immediately send these flames to the Spouse so that he does not desert you but feeds you during the meditation.

Continue these ejaculatory prayers continually night and day particularly at certain special moments. When you feel comfortable perform them with greater excess of love which will be given to you, extending your arms or placing your face on the ground or raising your eyes to heaven or placing your hands on your heart or sighing or whispering as the Holy Spirit guides you. Note what happens and how you feel, not being preoccupied about the exercise but about union.

Do not stop at the sweetness that these exercises give you, yet do not reject the feeling in your inferior faculties and turn your back on it by either putting prayer aside or undertaking other exercises (because this will never raise you up to God), but with gratitude to the one who has given you this, step up the ladder, going on to greater things. Do not place too much importance on such achievements which the Spouse has given you to strengthen your weakness. Accept it because it pleases your Spouse. Beware not to stop there, because the devil, who is an expert at deception, will try to entrap you and cast you right down. When such fits of emotion arise remain immediately *passive (at rest)* within them and raise your eyes from the gift to the donor, giving yourself completely to him, not rejoicing in the pleasure that you feel but in what is pleasing to the Spouse, being satisfied that he has given you the gift rather than in the pleasure that it has afforded you. Note this circumstance so that your freedom remains intact.

*Ejaculatory prayers that put this into practice. Chapter 63.*

**4843** My only good, you know that I do not take pleasure in such gifts, such sweetness and fervour, but I take pleasure only in you, my dear life. My heart desires only you. It is not such pleasures that please me or that I desire. It is for you, you, that I thirst, O my Crucified good. How could I be contented with gifts, O most generous giver, pushing you aside, unique, betrothed love of my heart? I find repose in what is pleasing to you, O my dear Jesus, and in nothing else.

Give me strong, resourceful, firm and enchanted love in my soul. Oh my Good, I shall enjoy such gifts face to face in heaven. I shall enjoy these gifts in so far as it gives you pleasure and contentment. Oh my Jesus, I feel as if you have wounded

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<sup>503</sup> This is the profound reason why from the first years of the Capuchin reform novice masters always insisted on the practice of ejaculatory prayer.



my heart and thrown many darts into it. Oh one who has been truly struck by love you have set more nets to catch me. Take me, my dear life; I am completely at your service. I give myself to you naked. I have been wounded by these darts to fulfil your pleasure. You are my only pleasure and good, oh live flame that burns my heart! The Spouse who truly loves does not satisfy his beloved with gifts, something more is required. His desire is to be united with him and to enjoy him. He gives and receives in order to give the lover pleasure, and not for self-interest.

If you accept these gifts in the manner mentioned above, you will be lifted up to better things which absorb the senses without staining them, and *inde (then)* on to things which are beyond the intellect. So be alert and faithful. [Faith] is the door to every good and lack of faith is the door to evil in all of these gifts. The practice of what was said above will cleanse those feelings of enthusiasm from seeking their own pleasure and from many pitfalls.

Oh how many souls, at the hour of death, when they considered themselves to be seraphic, would have felt confused and full of self-love had not God allowed them to discover this beforehand? Therefore, *dum lucem habes, ambulba (walk while you have the light)*.<sup>504</sup>

**4844** You will recognise when such sweetness, enthusiasm or exhaustion comes from God when experiencing them is accompanied with peace from heaven, intimate union and indescribable tranquillity. The more (when aroused from resting with the spouse) you are confronted with disgrace, mockery, anxiety and crosses, and these are met with peace of soul, with readiness to plunge into them and with cheerfulness you will know that God is at home. However if these are met with sadness, reluctance, anxiety or a sense of having been humbled, your spirit will have been put to flight and, O dear, the enemy will be at home! However, when we have put aside dryness, being distracted, being frigid, feeling repugnance and grief about suffering and have become light hearted ordinarily it will be doubtful that these things have come from the devil or nature.<sup>505</sup>

If you adopt this method of prayer I assure you that in a short period of time you will discover that you have something very worthwhile without noticing it. You will observe *mirabilia (something marvellous)* in the practices alone. Indeed, sometimes the Lord will hide this from you to establish you in annihilation, allowing you to notice nothing but defects and wretchedness making you one with divine light by means of the workings of inaccessible light.

Perform everything, particularly this method of prayer with happiness and peace, resignation and surrendering everything freely to the Spouse, surrender yourself always to this method of prayer because it is the very best method that I could find for making quick gains. Do not try to find another method imagining that that prayer is an ecstatic experience and beyond the senses, the way the people who are blind to the workings of the Holy Spirit do, (Many of these experience that they should take a step backward). They eye on many saints, they take their inner eye off the Spouse where the beloved wishes the lover to gaze. I do not think that such a left eyed vision exists in you because of the extensive teaching I have provided for you.

**4845** Praying in this manner continually will take you away from useless conversation so that you will find pleasure exclusively in your most beautiful Spouse dear Jesus. Keep your will always unbound and elevated as a means of plunging it into what is divine since this is how Christ our Lord wishes us to pray continually.

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<sup>504</sup> Cf. Jn 12, 35.

<sup>505</sup> This is an important criterion of spiritual discernment that had already been noted by, for example, St Bernardine of Sienna. Cf. S. Bernardino da Sienna, *Trattato delle ispirazioni*, Versione di Dionisio Pacetti, Milano 1962, 31, 63.



*Oportet semper orare.*<sup>506</sup> Try to move on profiting by this union, which is a secure path, and the true method of divinely living the life, passion and death of our Lord.

When you recognise that you have fallen into some failings (since while we are on our journey none of us are free) through superficiality or have succumbed to passion, immediately lift your heart up by means of an inner act so that such failings may serve you to be more annihilated and steeped in God. When the fault is deliberate, as on folio 13,<sup>507</sup> weep like an unfaithful spouse who has turned his heart to another, so that you may have a motive to become more annihilated and come closer to him. Beware to never become disturbed, but be filled with peace and resignation because wherever disturbance and anxiety are present there is self-love, even if this is subtle and not very noticeable as was noted in the first part of this book.

When your soul is bothered by desires say to her: “Oh my soul, *ecce Homo* (*behold the Man*), here is your dearly beloved, go and search for him. See how sad he is just over you. Where are you going, oh my heart which desires rest? Here is your true and only rest for all that you desire. You will always find anxiety outside of your Jesus. He is your centre, and your only good, so place your every thought and good in him.”

**4846** Beware that when you go to prayer that you do not do so to obtain virtue, nor to gain divine love, nor for consolation, nor for union with God nor for any other good thing with your gaze fixed on what is created. Go there to please your Spouse and do his will. After that you may seek virtue and whatever the Spirit of God wants. Always have this intention so that when the Spouse unites himself to you, you will not delight in that but in the fulfilment of the divine will.

Whether you eat or fast, talk or keep silent, walk or keep still, kneel or are seated do everything to please God so that everything may be divine and gain a reward as if the action had been performed<sup>508</sup> by God Himself since He willed what had been done.

When revelations concerning Sacred Scripture are speculative and composed by the intellect they remain theoretical even when actions contribute to forming a habit. This is a good thing. Yet such a way of acquiring insight does not afford me full consolation and it furnishes much darkness and little light. However, when they are a gift from the Spouse action accompanies them and they are put into practice immediately. They are very clear without subterfuge. This gift is given to souls who have given and abandoned themselves to their Spouse with purity and simplicity by means of continual prayer.

Know that God wishes that all of our thoughts, desires, hunger, affection and love be directed towards Him. If this is the case gaze on your Spouse stripped, stretched out, bound to a tree and nailed for love of you.

*Ejaculatory prayers to detach the will from affection for creatures. Chapter 64*

**4847** My Jesus, my heart, my thoughts and desires are about your pleasure, your life during which, my God, you were crucified because of my sins. Therefore when I think, desire or love anything apart from you, oh how I strip you, flog you, consume and kill you. What fresh wounds to my wounded heart! As I have already been dispossessed of my heart and given it to you, consequently I flog and nail you, my dear Spouse. I impart fresh wounds, fresh anxiety, and fresh martyrdom to my burning consumed heart. Oh, my beautiful one, how deeply I feel this.

My sweet Jesus, when you see me thinking of anything else apart from you, I feel very upset and *precipue* (*especially*) when filled with many yearnings for

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<sup>506</sup> Lk 18, 1.

<sup>507</sup> This is a reference to folio 13 where it speaks of how to behave in the face of defects. Cf above *n.* 4651 ff.

<sup>508</sup> *Fosse fato* in the text = *l'avesse fata*.



something other than you, my beloved, this upsets me and is the cause of torment to the heart of my beloved Jesus. How is it possible to send anxious sobs to heaven and yet my God would not give me desires, thoughts, yearnings and affections for loving my dear Crucified one alone?

Oh, how is it possible, my dearly beloved, that I could ever find myself standing apart from you? Oh my God do not allow this. My God by your most holy blood! What sorrow I give you, my Good, when I think about anyone but you! Oh how can I tolerate giving anxiety to someone who loves me and wishes me well? My Jesus, you are all that is good for me, all that pleases me, all that gives me enjoyment and consolation. My life, raise me above creatures! Do not allow me to turn away from your most desirable image! Prevent, prevent that, my God, or let me die.

**4848** O my beloved beauty do not allow the life, which you have given me, to be spent giving you anxiety, O my Jesus. Free me of the evil feeling that deprives me of my beloved beauty. Do not allow me to be without you even for a minute, while it is you alone that my heart desires, seeks, and longs for. Do not allow me, my beloved, to be drawn to other lovers as this is not what I want.

Take the love of family, friends and the world away from my breast. My God, grant me this peace and separate my heart from all creatures. O wretched image that deprives me of seeing my Jesus. If you love me, and do not separate me from this evil vision I will not be able to see you. Because you burn with love for me, do not deny the grace that I desire so much.

Beware not to feed on the memory of any creature. Cast it away from your breast, so that your breast may be free from such a dark prison which holds nothing but sighs and tears, living in anxiety and without profit and turn to a life of joy, happiness and beatitude, resounding with indescribable bliss, which will increase your affection for your true good otherwise you will suffer more anxiety.

Weep over the death of your Spouse and thank him for waiting so long a time for you. While you were offending him, he was preparing to love you to an extent that is beyond the various beauties of this world, the gifts of this time no matter how rare. Think of the gifts which you have received, for example, solitude, prayer, loving Jesus alone, loving nothing in the world, free will, freedom from all voluntary venial sin, even more, the gift of life, which was the greatest thing God could give you, continual strength in battles, the gift of resignation and prompt obedience and of blind obedience, the gift of poverty and, finally, the gift of new enlightenment so that you were carried to the heights with the desire to be more deified. All this is a sign that the means of reaching the desired end will be given in addition to the desire.

**4849** When anxiety, darkness and temptation spins you around with various errors of faint-heartedness, lack of confidence towards your Spouse, this can cause loss of faith, disgust, cursing and other kinds of conflict to arise within you. Immediately the will recognises this lift up your eyes to what is pleasing to God and say with a simple, pious, happy, peaceful and resigned attitude: "My beautiful love, my only consolation, cast away all torment from my dear soul so that I may enjoy your pleasure completely. Do not let me offend you and turn from what is pleasing to you, my beautiful Jesus. My God, granted that you already love me so much and as a consequence burn for my love, how can you allow me to go here and there, bereft of your most desirable affection, immersed in darkness and obscurity? Such an experience could reach the point of doubting you, (O unquenchable thirst, how you have wounded me!) and casting what pleases you to the ground, saying: "You caused this to happen. If you had not let this happen, it would not have happened," to the point where I was fainting because of the misery in which I was involved. I do not doubt that I have offended you while in this state of confusion and caused you much upset. How can you tolerate this O genuine lover of my anxious heart?



Ah that you would do this, O most sweet Spouse, in order to encourage your dedicated soldiers in their various and heated battles and fierce assaults. The closer you hold your beloved to your breast and the more bitter and terrible the battles into which you send him for your greater honour and glory the more you can glory in having such valiant soldiers (like you did for the most faithful Job in situations in which you placed him not for an hour but for years)<sup>509</sup> who fought in such fierce and assorted battles, who stood firm on many frontiers with the knowledge that you were with them and so they were courageous and won you the victory.

**4850** I conclude, my only good, that the more I see that I am anxious, tempted into error against my will, the more you give me greater signs of your ardent love for me. However, my beautiful life, wound, burn, crucify, consume my heart but there is one thing that I desire and that is that I do not offend your.

Know that in all the spiritual battles of whatever kind, when you see that your heart is afraid to give offence, leaving aside anything else, including temptations, anxiety, wandering into error or anything, but that your heart cares only about giving offence to your beloved Spouse (for whom when you are thinking calmly you would acknowledge clearly that you would give your life rather than give offence in the smallest way), then when you become aware of such beautiful and peaceful fear of offending Jesus in the slightest matters, be sure that you will never offend him ever. I say that at most you might be slightly negligent concerning which you need have no concern.

What is more important is the victory that you have won and the glory that you have given to God during those bitter attacks, which would not have happened if you were not enraptured as was St Paul. Therefore, console yourself. Do not fall into scruples. Do not worry! Only patiently endure the anxiety which has been so pleasing to God. I do not say that when you are experiencing anxiety that you should feel this way. At that time it is sufficient that you have resignation. Simply, say with you lips and a most ardent heart, words which contain as much love as possible.

“My good, do not take pleasure in the way I am now. Rejoice, my soul, that in the day of eternity I shall rejoice over you. At present, my dearly beloved, let this suffice for you. Rejoice, O gentle lover, rejoice O my heart, but give me strength”.

*Concerning a beautiful teaching to be carried out in practice, which also matches up to the first part of this book. Chapter 65.*

**4851** St Paul the Apostle said: *Non quod volo bonum, hoc facio, sed quod nolo hoc facio* (For the good that I will, I do not: but the evil which I will not, that I do). The will is oppressed by evil and born into a sea of evil, but it does not will what is evil. Evil grips the will *passive* (in a passive way), never *active* (in an active way). Oh what a state of things! It seems as if God has departed, and evil is inside and outside, so that it seems that the will is no longer in control and evil is in control. *Sed quod nolo malum, hoc ago* (but the evil which is do not want, that I do).<sup>510</sup> I appear to want it, think of it and consent to it. Thoughts against God reach my mouth and at the time I utter them. (This is not the time to look for acts of will, as we are more likely to do something that is evil because we are absorbed with evil). However it is good to repeat with the lips: “I do not want to do this”, or else to say “nothing”. I must admit that this is not necessary, but it would help to ease scruples. However what I have said is good. Now listen to St Bernard: “Do not be afraid, beautiful souls, even if you have been executed a thousand times, do not turn your back because you will never lose the crown.”<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>509</sup> Cf. Job 2, 8

<sup>510</sup> Cf. Rom 7, 19

<sup>511</sup> Cf. S. Bernardus, *In psal. “Qui habitat” sermo II*, n. 2-3. (PL 183, 189s).



*Loving arrows to carry the Heart to Jesus. Chapter 66.*

**4852** Where are you going, my heart? Why are you wandering around so much? Why are you raving so much? Why are you so proud? What do you expect from the apparent glory of the world? What do you want from false riches, from so much waste of time, so many vanities?

Look into the tomb. You will not recognise who was ugly, beautiful, who was a king or a prince, a master or servant, ignorant or learned. Where is all the great beauty, youth, gracious bearing, beautiful eyes, elegant nose, warm lips, shining forehead. Where has what made the earth shake gone? Where is that great beauty? Everything is ashes, disgusting odour and worms. Therefore sleep no longer, my heart, awake now, here is your Jesus. Run, my heart, run and do not waste any more time.

Come, my beloved, come and enrapture me completely. My wounded heart sighs for you alone. I regret, my Jesus having offended you. I would suffer hell a thousand times rather than offend you. Have mercy on poor me, my good. Have pity, my God should you find that I have sinned so much.

**4853** When I talk like creatures do, O my life, I discover nothing but bonds, break down, anxiety. However when I speak with you, O all my good, I discover a certain unity which cannot be broken. Therefore, O my chosen joy, do not allow me to leave you ever again. Do not, O my dear Spouse, allow me to ever return to the world. O my Jesus, do not ever allow my heart to desire anything, or to think of anything but you and the sweet wound with which you have pierced my heart.

I have wasted so much time in enjoyments. Now I live in virtue, O my dear treasure. I lived by the senses. Now make me live by the spirit, so that I will not offend you, O my beloved Lord. I have served you negligently. Now I love you dearly. Cut off impediments from my life, as you have wounded me already, so that I may direct my life to you alone, O truly beloved. If you do not help me, I shall fall, my good. O my most powerful love stretch out your hand to my blind soul which is so weak. Help it, guide it, give it strength so that when it has won so many encounters it may continue most dangerous battles, praising you my eternal Good and not offend you.

*The effect on a deified soul. My God and my all. Chapter 67.*

**4854** My God, you are my solitary Good. In you I enjoy everything that I could possibly desire. You are my sun. You are my breeze, my moon. You are my tasty fruit, my delicate food, and my fresh water. You are my desirable bed, my beloved chair, my dearest. You are my heaven, my earth, my forest, my woods, my pleasant field. You are my palace, my home. You are my city, my cool, me heat. You are my church, my music, my song. You are my hand, my pen, my paper. You are the writer and you are what has been written. You are my mouth, my bread my taste. You eat when anything is consumed. You are my eyes, my glance, and my object of vision. You behold when anything is beheld. You are the vision itself. You are my beauty, my riches, my life, my weakness, my pain, my death. You are my rest, my brother, my family. You are my happiness, my anxiety, my delight. You are my joy, my gem and my treasure. You are my clothing. You dress me. You are the clothes. You are my all; everything is in you, O my Jesus. You are everything in me and I am completely yours, O my Jesus. O my God, the hearts which are worthy to behold you and which enjoy everything in you are blessed. Oh my life, what a gift, what a gift! Those who possess you are very happy! This is a grace which is so great that it cannot be put into words. Blessed are those who have been found worthy of it!<sup>512</sup>

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<sup>512</sup> This is a most original and profoundly contemplative commentary on St Francis' prayer: *My God and my all*.