

The *Art of Union* by Giovanni Pili da Fano

Giovanni Pili da Fano, a tenacious adversary of the Capuchin Reform and then, after he entered that Reform in 1534, its zealous apostle made his "Capuchin" novitiate in the little friary of Scandriglia in the Province of Rome, withdrawn "in anchorite silence" in a "small cell" in the isolation of the forest which surrounded the friary, in accordance with n. 47 of the Albacina Ordinances. Here he meditated upon the maxims of the spiritual life composed by authors who belonged to the *devotio moderna*. He edited these in a pocket edition entitled: *A Devout Work Called The Art of Union which teaches how to unite the soul to God, and is very useful not only for Religious but also for spiritual and devout laity*, which was simple and easily accessible.

In fact this booklet, about which we possess both accurate information, as well as some original copies, was the first to be published by a Capuchin. Written in gothic characters, "in a simple style, in the vernacular of his mother tongue, with fitting brevity" as were all the productions of the early Capuchins, it aimed to appeal to the "simple and devout" brothers as an introductory manual to the contemplative life following the three classical Bonaventurian stages: the purgative way, the illuminative way, and the unitive way.

It was published in Brescia on 8th April 1536 by Damian Filippo and his brother James, and published once more following the writer's death by Damian Zurlino in June 1548 again in Brescia. After being extensively re-edited by Dionysius of Montefalco in 1622 in Rome, it was translated into French in Lyons in 1624. It represents the first systematic attempt to address the desire of the early Capuchins for the life of a contemplative hermit through a reliable outline of the spiritual life, which was designed for contemplative prayer, which, according to Giovanni da Fano, consists in union with God in love. Everything should be subservient to love, so that contemplation always develops in a manner that is affective, reflective and productive of union with God. As an exercise of love it requires absolute fidelity and regular continuity.

The image that dominates is that of nuptials in line with the traditional theme of "mystical nuptials with the heavenly spouse Jesus Christ". The sign of love is the kiss. The Purgative Way, or that for beginners, corresponds to kissing the feet, to a penitential attitude, to a tearful approach, following the Biblical and ascetical tradition of the image of Mary Magdalene. The Illuminative Way or that of the proficient corresponds to kissing the hand, an expression of devout recognition of benefits received from God's hand. Finally, the Unitive Way, or that of the perfect, corresponds to a kiss on the lips, the supreme spousal display of love that unifies the soul to God in a pure and chaste embrace of love.

The whole journey of love is brought together and synthesized in the image of the "interior palace", which is made up of a series of rooms, which correspond to the exercises of the Purgative and Illuminative Ways, through which the soul must pass in succession to enter the throne room of God and of the Lamb where she will live in "the most excellent state of union". This emphasis upon spiritual exercises as the method of the art of prayer precedes the Latin Edition of the *Exercises* by Ignatius Loyola by twelve years and the *Interior Castle* by Teresa of Avila by about thirty years.

**A VERY DEVOUT LITTLE WORK CALLED
THE ART OF UNION
WHICH TEACHES HOW TO UNITE THE SOUL WITH GOD**

3819. [1r] To the most beloved in Christ Jesus, the Friars Minor, called Capuchins,¹ who live the lifestyle of hermits, Brother John of Fano, the most insignificant in the same profession and Order, sends his wishes for the most perfect union with God who is all kindness.

Fecit Deus rationalem creaturam ut summum bonum intelligeret, intelligendo amaret, amando possideret, possidendo frueretur. Arelius Augustine said that our Lord God made human beings so that they might come to know the highest good, having known it might come to love it, having loved it might come to possess it and having possessed it might come to enjoy it.² Indeed he made human beings in his image and likeness, giving them the most splendid faculties of intellect and will, by means of which not only in heavenly glory, where the soul will be perfectly transformed into the image of God through consummate charity and will be eternally happy, but also, to the degree that human frailty will permit, by means of which they would be emotionally involved and united to his majesty even in this life.

But because the human race was not really aware [1v] of the supreme bliss of its condition, and because it thought highly of itself, such bliss was of no interest to it and it was reduced to being akin to dumb beasts and became like them, as the Prophet says.³ The rays of divine light became clouded. As in the creature's point of view the Creator's love had changed the most splendid situation described above became perverted. Therefore the most blessed Son of God *came to seek out and save the lost.*⁴ He came to refurbish our intellect and will: *to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death; for those who lived in the region of the shadow of death a light had risen.*⁵ He came to empower and to dispose the intellect to understand, and the will to love. He came to reunite to God souls that had been cut off by sin to God. He came to make it possible for the soul to be transformed into the sweet God by means of burning charity. He demonstrated this with inestimable love and solicitude through brilliant and wholesome teaching, through admirable example, through inestimable merits, and finally, as it is written in chapter sixteen of John's gospel, when near death he begged his Father with much

¹ This is the original earliest title of the Capuchin Reform, at the time of Louis Tenaglia of Fossombrone. Subsequently the popular name "Capuchins" took over. Cf Edoardo d'Alençon *De primordinis*, 51-61; Urbanelli, *Storia* I/1, Ancona 1978, 252-256, See also above Vol I, pp. 22, 225 (n 149); vol II, 301s (n 2078), etc.

² Cf. *De cognitione verae vitae*: "Constat perfecto naturam rationalem ad hoc solum factum, ut factorum suum verum Deum intelligat, intelligendo diligit, diligendo in eo, qui est aeterna vita, aeternaliter beate vivat": PL 40, 1005. The work from which the quote is taken is attributed to Onorio d'Autun.

³ Ps 48, 21 (vulg.) "Mortals cannot abide their pomp; they are like the animals that perish".

⁴ Luke 19:10.

⁵ Luke 1:79; Isa 9:1.

charity and warmth of heart, to grant to the soul this union with God.¹

3820. My dearest brothers, we should direct all our desires towards this very special gift, [2r] aspire to acquire such a priceless treasure with all the yearning of our heart, and strive for it with all our effort and strength.² The Prophet showed that he entertained such a desire when he said in Psalm 72: *But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge.*³

Although we have written much about these things, nevertheless some people have either abandoned their undertaking and turned back, or failed to begin, because the literary style was too difficult, or the treatise was too lengthy, or they did not understand Latin. Therefore so that devout and loving desires to achieve this inestimable⁴ union might be realized, and their objective more readily achieved, I thought that I would set out in a simple style, in the vernacular mother tongue, and with suitable brevity, what many have written who have been enlightened by God and who are expert in this most worthy exercise.⁵

Let us begin then with the purgative way, in the name of the most sweet Jesus, *who is blessed forever*, who cleansed us and washed away our sins with his most precious blood. *Amen.*⁶

I - THE PURGATIVE WAY

John of Fano develops his treatment of the Purgative Way over sixteen chapters, starting with the fear and the love of God. This fear should not be worldly and human, or natural whether servile or initial, that is something which is half hearted, but filial and chaste (ch 1). This love too, which is the final objective and special method of the art of union with God, should be filial and pure (ch. 2). Because of this complete purification or abnegation, which the author calls mortification, is required. This becomes the principle preoccupation and continuous refrain of the Purgative Way.

We need to mortify worldly, natural, acquired love, that is, the three kinds of love that impede the love of God, in human relationships of friendship (ch 3). We need to mortify our motives. Although these may be upright motives, which undertake everything for the love of God, they are not always unmixed because they are disturbed by too much activity, whereas they should be one with God flying from the multitude of external things. The best motive is that which looks towards God and seeks nothing but the will of God (ch. 4). Such commitment to renewal requires purification of the heart, which is born of a clear

¹ The reference is to Christ's priestly prayer at the Last Supper which culminates in petitioning unity for the mystical body: *that all should be one*, as we read in John 17, not 16.

² These expressions echo the *Constitutions of 1536*, n. 141, 149, etc.

³ Ps 72:28 (Vulg.) = Ps 72:28.

⁴ Our text *reads imprecabile*, it may also be read *inapprezzabile, preziosissima, senza prezzo*.

⁵ Actually this work takes on the character of an anthology, even though overall it has originality. In addition to the holy fathers and the classical medieval authors there are, though never acknowledged, many well know modern authors from the "devotio moderna" such as Garcia de Cisneros (+1510), Henry van Herp (+1477) and blessed Bartolomeo Cordoni (+1535).

⁶ Rev 1:5; Rom 1:25; 9:5.

conscience, achieved by daily examination of conscience, contrition and confession (ch 5).

Mortification permeates the whole person, outside and inside and targets all his senses and appetites (ch 6), and takes away that bitterness of heart which results from arrogance and pride in one's own good deeds, from the desire for self-satisfaction and fulfillment, from hatred, from detraction, from murmuring and malice (ch 7). One even needs to purify scrupulosity of heart which is always disturbing and egotistical since it does not believe in divine love and is not satisfied with God's pardon (ch 8). The same may be said of any uneasiness and impatience, which is caused by the trials through which God puts his children to the test (ch 9). This is how the unfaithful children of God are recognized (ch 10).

This purification grows in intensity, and tends to become more spiritual and interior and develops into perfect mortification of spiritual consolations (ch 11), and of one's own will through the continual exercise of humility of the heart (ch 12), and a living faith, which is active in charity (ch 13).

Balance and experience in the spiritual life indicate that discretion is necessary. Spiritual exercises should be moderate, stable, sure and determined. To achieve this precise discernment a criterion of assessment is required. Above all else such spiritual exercises should be in accord with Sacred Scripture, and the example of the Saints and, most of all, in accord with the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. They should not be multiplied so as not to transform sweetness of mind into bitterness. What is more they should be adapted to the individual person and specific and definite in respect of time and manner (ch 14).

The decision to enter upon the spiritual life requires continuous animation by means of credible and strong motives, which stimulate the desire to acquire virtue (ch 15). The end of the Purgative Way is outlined in seven topics or themes of meditations for each day of the week, recall of sins, of death, of hell, of the final judgment, of the passion of Christ, of the Virgin Mary, and of heavenly glory (ch 16).

Chapter 1

HOW BEGINNERS COMMENCE FROM FEAR, AND ABOUT THE FOUR KINDS OF FEAR¹

3821. Blessed is he to whom it is given to have the fear of the Lord, says the Sage, since the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord². According to Anselm³, beginners commence from servile fear, from which they advance to

¹ This chapter is taken broadly speaking from chapters ten and eleven of *Exercitatorium spirituale* by Cisneros; however, it can also be found in the first book of *Mistica Teologia*, part II ch 65: "Quod triplex est timor foedus, scilicet mundanus, humanus, et servilis, et quomodo licitus est timor humanus", and ch 66. "De timore naturali ac de triplici timore pulcho, scilicet initiali, filiali, et casto", Cf *Theologiae mysticae* D. Henrici Harphii ..., Coloniae 1556, f LXXXXr-XCIr. The underlined words are in the same order used by Pili in this chapter.

² Sir 25:15 (Vulg), Prov 1:7; 9:10.

³ It is not easy to identify the quote from St. Anselm. Cisneros upon whom Pili depends quotes it thus: "Secundum Anselmum in libro doctrinarum" (*Exercit. spirit.*, Ratisbinae 1856, 29). There is an entry in PL

filial fear. In this respect we should note that (according to the Master of the Sentences in chapter 3, of Distinction 34¹) there are four kinds of fear by which we direct ourselves to God, or God turns us towards himself.

The first kind (of fear) is earthly and human, when (as Cassiodorus says)² one refrains from sin because he fears the dangers of the flesh, or loss of temporal goods. This is imperfect fear and has its basis in too much self-interest or too high a regard for the present life.

The second (kind of fear) is servile, when (as Augustine says) someone refrains from sin from fear of hell, or some worldly annoyance. Since this type of fear does not remove the desire to sin, it has no connection with charity, and whoever experiences this kind of fear alone cannot be saved. [3r] It achieves its result out of fear of punishment but not from love and it has no place among the children of God. Although it is not connected with charity, it is still a method of moving towards charity, which banishes fear, because fear of the Lord is the beginning of love. Augustine says: "The fear of God prepares a place for charity, and when charity begins to abide it replaces fear which prepared a place for it; to the degree that charity grows, fear diminishes, the more charity the less fear; in perfect charity there is no fear."³

3822. The third kind is initial (fear), the mid-point between servile and filial fear. Through servile fear a person resists sin for fear of punishment, through filial (childlike) (fear) a person resists (sin) from fear of giving offense, since fear of offending one's father is part of being a child. However, a beginner fears both punishment and giving offense. This (type of fear) says Bernard has two eyes, the right, which looks up high fears being separated from God; the left, looking downwards fears punishment. It is called initial (fear) because it applies to beginners, in whom filial fear begins through the initiative of charity. However, they do not have perfect filial fear, since they have not [3v] yet achieved perfect charity.

The fourth (kind of fear) is filial or chaste, in which they fear offending the spouse, lest he delay in approaching the soul, or abandon it, and this kind of fear has its origin in the love of God.⁴ Ps. *Timor Domini*. Note that there are many things, which we should fear; the insecurity of the world, because of which a person is uncertain whether he is worthy of love or hatred;⁵ until

158, 596.

¹ Cf. *Petri Lombardi libri IV Sententiae*, vol II, Ad Claras Aquas 1916, 701-707 (lib. III, dist 34 cap. 4-9).

² Cf. In the prologue Super Ps 127 (PL 70, 931).

³ Cf St Aug. *Enarrat.* n. 7 (PL 37, 1777); *In Epist. I Ioan.*, tr 9, n. 4 (PL 35, 2047)

⁴ For St. Bernard cf. the work which is attributed to him *Liber de modo bene vivendi*, ch 4; "Volo te scire quatuor esse timores, videlicet humanum, servilem, initialem et castum [...]. Secundus timor est servilis, ut ait beatus Augustinus, cum timore gehennae homo recedit a peccato, et omnia bona quae facit, non propter Dei, sed propter timorem inferni facit [...]. Initialis timor est, quando homo incipit amare Deum quem ante timebat, et sic excluditur a corde servilis timor. Huic initiali timori succedit quartus timor, scilicet castus, per quem timemus ne sponsus, scilicet Christus, taret, ne discedat a nobis [...]. Timor iste, scilicet, castus, de amore descendit, timor iste de amore nascitur" (PL 184, 1204-1206).

⁵ Ps. 18:10 (Vulg) = Ps 19:9: "the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever." Cf also Eccles 9:1 "whether it is

death everything remains uncertain: the battle against the world, against the devil, against the flesh; our weakness in resisting repentance and the perfect practice of virtue; the severity of divine justice, as it appears very clearly in Adam, Cain, Judas and many others; the doubt associated with leaving the present life, because a person does not know when, where, how they will die nor whether they will have a good or bad death; the future judgment; the pains of Purgatory; the repulsiveness of the devils and of the pains of Hell; the most bitter sighs and sobs of those who are damned;¹ perpetual separation from the citizens of heaven; shame over sin; stubbornness of heart; the worm of conscience and similar things. Yet true, naked, simple charity and love conquer and overcome everything. [4r]

Chapter 2

CONCERNING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE LOVE OF GOD AND SERVILE LOVE

3823. Self-abnegation and separation from everything which might impede divine love is necessary, if the soul is to follow our Lord Jesus Christ perfectly and unite herself to God. If the grain of wheat, which falls to the ground, does not die, it will remain without fruit.² He tires himself out in vain who seeks his own comfort rather than God's love, God's pleasure and honour in what he does.

Note that true love of God simply looks to God in everything in order to please him, to be reconciled with him and united to him, and only seeks his glory and praise and to do his will.

There are three ways in which one can recognize servile love.

Firstly, when a person acts only to avoid annoyance or shame or reprimand, or loss of earthly benefits, or from remorse of conscience, or because of the pains of Purgatory or Hell, or to arrive at ease, human praise, earthly advantage, or spiritual gifts, sweetness in devotion, or relish in prayer or divine visitation, [4v] or vision, or revelation, or eternal life or something similar. Acting solely for these reasons, they hate vice, practise virtue, despise the world, family and friends, conquer the flesh, and observe the Rule and the Ordinances of the Order and such like. All such motives are devoid of merit, because they do not promote the precept of divine charity.³

Secondly, when others evaluate their own actions as great, they place

love or hate one does not know".

¹ Reminiscent of the verse in Dante "*Quivi sospiri, pianti e altri guai*" (Inferno, III, 22).

² Cf John 21:24, - This chapter appears to depend on chapter 1 of the first part of *Directorium aureum contemplativorum* by Henry Herp (also known as *The Mirror of Perfection*). Cf *Theologiae mysticae* D. Henrici Harphii, Coloniae 1556, f. CXXXVIII.s.; Enrique Herp, *Directorio de contemplativos*, Madrid 1974, 495s.

³ B. Cordoni, upon whom this text may depend, also speaks of such servile love. Cf *Dialogo* cit., f. 108-109r.

more faith in their own activity than in the generosity of the Son of God. As soon as they taste any spiritual sweetness, using it badly, they fall into pride, vainglory and the like. If that spiritual sweetness is taken away, they become impatient and perverse, and return to useless thoughts, delusions, vain talk and the like and seek satisfaction in these.

Thirdly, if such people have no hope of avoiding the above inconveniences and their consequences, they do not put any effort into loving God. They find themselves back in a very dangerous state.

Chapter 3

MORTIFICATION OF THE THREE LOVES.¹

3824. *Most Sweet Jesus proclaims, whoever loves father and mother or anything else more than me, is not worthy of me.*² The soul [5r] who wishes to please God alone and to arrive happily at the summit of divine union, must mortify three loves with all care, because all the things which we embrace by way of love, often present themselves to our mind's eye, especially at the time of prayer, when we wish to raise our soul to God, and disturb, distract, disrupt and cause stress to the heart, so that it becomes completely indisposed towards divine love and service. However, if we love God with all our heart, and ourselves and all creatures for love of him, we shall hate those things which the Lord mentions in Luke chapter four: *Whoever comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple.*³ Only God should be present to our mind. Only his love can raise⁴ our mind and totally absorb it in the abyss of divine charity. We must cast all other love away from us.

The first type of love is worldly love, which seeks to please the world. This achieves much good and directs one away from many sins in order to obtain human praise or some other good, to flee from shame [5v] or some other annoyance but not to please God. This is vain and fruitless as was said in the preceding chapter.

The second type of love is natural love, and this is directed towards ourselves, family and acquaintances etc., which although it is not prohibited, nor can it be totally eradicated from the heart, should be controlled according to right reason, which will be all the more difficult the more scope it is allowed. Thus because Abraham wanted to sacrifice his own son for the love of God and at his command, by overcoming the natural love which he bore him, he was called a friend of God. Genesis chapter fifteen.⁵

3825. So if we wish to achieve the height of divine friendship, it is required that

¹ This chapter is taken from chapter four of the *Directorium*, (ibid., cf CXXXIXv-CXLr).

² Matt 10:37.

³ Luke 14:26.

⁴ In the text *Ne = ci*.

⁵ Cf Gen 22.

we love God above all else: *Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.*¹ Let us love those who are close to us and friends, without exception of persons, in God and for God, with divine love to acquire virtue and salvation with His help, following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who on the Cross prayed for those who crucified him. And finally let us not hate anyone except our vices and sins and those [6r] of others.

Thus any love which disturbs the soul, especially at the time of prayer, and preoccupies it with the image of any loved one, or moves it with an inordinate desire to seek such a person or speak to them etc, is a vice and seriously impedes the spiritual life, and so must be put aside.

The third type of love is that which is acquired through long conversation or shared friendship, or gifts or reciprocal assistance and the like. Although it is not completely illicit, it is dangerous, since it easily draws the soul towards inordinate emotions, and disposes it to vice, and renders it difficult to achieve spiritual perfection, and so is to be avoided.

In the above-mentioned types of love we can appreciate the virtues and gifts of God but always in and for God.

Chapter 4

CONCERNING THREE TYPES OF MOTIVATION

3826. To mortify every aspect of one's own comfort, both in doing good, and in rebutting evil, and supporting adversity with patience, it is necessary to mortify one's motivation, of which there are three kinds.

The first is called right motivation, which performs everything for the love of God, having Him as its objective. This [6v] is not sufficient for perfection, because it is not single minded, nor it is always to be found expressed in the same way. I am referring to motives in the active life, in which the mind is forcefully distracted by many things, and disturbed by many things, just as the Lord said to Martha in chapter ten of Luke.²

The second is single-minded (*simplice*) motivation. It is a greater adornment to the soul than the former. It draws one directly to God much more than the former and pertains to the contemplative life. It is called single-minded because in its activity it not only intends to please God, but remaining uniform and undivided, fleeing from all duplicity and confusion, it directs itself solidly, single-mindedly towards God.

Ultimately it is nothing else than a certain loving tendency of the soul towards God, illumined by perfect faith, hope and charity. It is established as the foundation of all spiritual virtues, which tend directly towards God in as much as this is possible. Seeking His honour, it strives to please Him alone. However, because when good actions are performed such motivation seeks

¹ Matt 10:37.

² Cf. Luke 10:41 "Martha, Martha you are worried and distracted by many things".

spiritual consolation and wavers in prosperity and adversity, it is not conformed to God.

The third type of motivation is modeled on God. It is so one with God that it seeks nothing else but the [7r] divine will, pleasure, honor and glory. It is constant in prosperity or adversity, having no thought for its own ease. It places all its desires in God. This is nothing but becoming like God, becoming one with Him and enjoying him in the present life, as Bernard says.¹

Chapter 5

Concerning the Purification of the Heart and of the Conscience²

3827. However wants to train himself for the spiritual life should cleanse his heart and conscience from all mortal sin by means of contrition and confession, since an impure heart is in no way capable of divine contemplation. *Blessed is the one whose help comes from you, in the valley of tears he will strengthen his heart, in the situation where he placed him.*³

From this we understand that by means of the tears and sighs of the purgative way the soul is cleansed of the rust of sin and rises immediately from here to illumination through rays of divine light. Thus our soul is like a mirror which is stained and in which our face cannot be seen as clearly as when it has been well cleansed. So when the soul looks at herself, when it is clean and spotless, [7v] it will behold the image in which it was made; whereas if it is dark and smeared it cannot make itself out.

Thus when the soul is clean and spotless, the spiritual sun illuminates it immediately with the rays of grace and goodness. Just as sunlight strikes a blind without breaking it, but having waited till it is opened, then immediately illumines the whole house, so the true sun of justice, standing at the door of our heart, waits for nothing else but that it be opened, and that He be allowed to enter to abide there. *I stand at the door and knock.*⁴ Thus the soul, which stood in need of being brightened by divine splendour, is spiritually illumined. It is necessary that the soul be prepared and molded for such illumination, that is, that it be cleansed by means of the Purgative Way from all darkness or stain, and from all sin, if it wishes to be united with God.

¹ This chapter also is copied from Herp, *Directorium* chapter 2 (the last part) and chapter 22 (ibid. F. CXXXVIIIv and CLr-CLIr). Our Intentions should be right, single-minded, and conform to God. Cf. St. Bernard, *Liber de diligendo Deo*, chapter 10: PL 182, 990; *Liber de modo bene vivendi*, chapter 56 n. 135; PL 184, 1283; *In Cantica sermo XXII*, n. 2: ibid 114s

² In many places this chapter refers to Cordoni's little work *De unione animae cum supremienti lumine*, or *Dyalogo della unione*, ch 6: "How the person who wishes to be united to God should purify himself by Confession"; ch 7: "How after Confession it is necessary that a person keep himself in good will and perservere in doing good".

³ Ps 83,6 (Vulg) (LXX version) = Ps 84,6.

⁴ Ap. 3: 20.

3828. It is known that mortal sin separates the soul from God: Isaiah chapter 59, *your iniquities have been barriers between you and your God.*¹ Sin makes the soul the abode of the devils, strips the mind of virtue, kills meritorious works, makes other good things neither pleasing nor [8r] meritorious before God, deprives the soul of all good actions done in Holy Church, makes it an enemy of God, and ultimately worthy of hell.

Although it does not deprive the soul of grace, venial sin still makes charity tepid, disposes towards mortal sin, weakens a person and makes fervour tepid and leads to Purgatory.

Such stains are taken away by means of a faithful and humble confession. This was symbolized by the pool of probation, in which the animals, which were to be offered to God, were washed: John chapter 5.² Thus in Confession the soul, which was made beastly and brutish by sin, is washed, and once washed is offered as a sacrifice to God: Ps. 49 *A sacrifice of praise shall honour me.* Ps. 50 *My sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit.*³ Thus the soul makes its peace with God and is liberated from diabolical control: *I was humbled and he freed me.*⁴

3829. Therefore the Prophet lays down two rules in Psalm 14 through which the soul is reconciled to God and prepares for union with him. *O Lord, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill?*⁵

The first rule: *They who walk blamelessly*, those cleansed of sin [8v] through confession.

The second rule: *and acts with justice*⁶, that is lives justly and in a holy manner according to the spirit, not according to the flesh, in the observance of the divine precepts, after confession and penance. The Letter to the Galatians chapter 5: *Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*⁷ Thus it is necessary that the soul perseveres in good intentions, and not fall back and avoids all the occasions of sin. Isidore says: "Penance which is contaminated by a subsequent fall is void".⁸ St. Jerome says: "What is required of a Christian is not that he begins but that he finishes."⁹ Paul began badly, but finished well. The initiation of

¹ Isa 59:2.

² Cf. John 5:2-2.

³ Ps 49:23 and 50:19 (Vulg) = Ps 50:23; 51:19.

⁴ Ps 114:6 (Vulg) = Ps 116:6.

⁵ Ps 14:1 (Vulg) = Ps 15:1. The ending ("who may dwell on your holy hill") has been added by Pili and means: "that is, in you who are the soul's tabernacle (tent)."

⁶ Ps 14:2 (Vulg) = Ps 15:2: "Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right".

⁷ Gal 5:16, 22.

⁸ The gist of this thought is found in *Sententiarum liber secundus*, chapter 13 and chapter 16: LP 83, 615; and also in *Etymologiarum lib. VI*, n. 72; PL 82, 258.

⁹ *Epist. LIV ad Furiam*: PL 22, 552s: "Non quaeruntur in Christianis initia sed finis. Paulus male coepit; sed

Judas was praised, but in the end he was condemned for his betrayal". In the Letter to the Ephesians we read: *Be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and clothe yourselves with the new self.*¹

From these things it is evident that the soul should abound in good works, so that before the Lord's face it may proceed to prepare His ways: Luke chapter 1.² We should prepare the bridal bed of our heart with all diligence, and dispose our [9r] whole life for the love of God and the contempt of ourselves and the world, so that we may live according to God spotless and pure in a holy manner; because it is necessary that the soul which must join itself to such a Master should be very pure and spotless. Leviticus chapter 11 says: *Sanctify yourselves and be holy for I am holy* and the First Letter to the Thessalonians chapter four: *For God did not call us in impurity but in holiness, in Christ Jesus our Lord.*³

3830. The following is the method of purifying the soul and conscience.

It is not expedient for you to remain outside the church or your cell following Compline or to occupy yourself in conversation or activity until after Mass the following day without a very urgent reason, as St. Bernard says.⁴

Then having made the sign of the cross on your forehead say: Jesus and Mary help me. Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. O God come to my aid. O Lord, make haste to help me.

Having said this, hold a chapter [9v] with yourself by diligent examination⁵ thinking whether you have been negligent that day concerning custody of the heart; what have you thought, said or done; how have you spent your time; what motives have you had in acting, whether for the honour and glory of God or some other purpose; how have you said the Divine Office; have you omitted anything of your usual prayers or devotions, or concerning the vows and statutes and their observance.

These things may be undertaken not only by religious, but also by people living in the world, according to their state and condition. It is also

bene finivit. Judae laudantur exordia; sed finis proditione damnatur".

¹ Eph 4:23-24.

² Cf. Luke 1:76.

³ Lv 11:44; 1Thes 4:7.

⁴ Cf. *Varia et brevia documenta pie seu religione vivendi*, 1: "Post Completorium non loquaris, quosque finita sit Missa sequentis die, nisi causa maxima intervenerit" (PL 184, 1173).

⁵ Here John of Fano is teaching how to make the daily examination of conscience. The terminology is interesting "custody of the heart", which has an Oriental hesychiatic flavour; further more the definition of examination of conscience as "to hold a chapter with oneself" suggests a Bonaventurian derivation: cf *Speculum disciplinae* XII, 1: "Et quasi Capitulum sibimetipsis tenentes, in quo proficiant vel deficiant quotidiana secum discussione perquirant" (St. Bon. *Opera Omnia* VIII, 593); however, it was already in *Arnulfi monachi de Boeriis Speculum monachorum*, 1: "Post Completorium singulis diebus capitulum sibi teneat: et convocatis cogitationibus suis, ponat rationem diligenter quid ipso die cogitatione, locutione vel opere deliquerit, publice vel privatim, ..." (PL 184, 1176).

expedient to make a good general confession¹, if one wishes to begin this most devout practice of union of the soul with God.

Then the soul, well cleansed by intense contrition and most diligent confession, can easily come to divine illumination.

Chapter 6

CONCERNING COMPLETE ABNEGATION OF ALL SENSUALITY

3831. If Paul, a vessel of election², as Jerome says³, and one who was prepared for the Gospel of Christ, both by afflictions of the flesh and temptations to vice, chastised his body bringing it into the service of the spirit, so that when preaching to others, he would not be lost himself⁴, the servant of God and any other person who wishes to receive divine illumination should fly from any carnal pleasures, or desires and sensuality, not only those which are enormous and abominable,[10r] but also the slight ones⁵ such as laughter, spinning yarns, dissolute conduct, recreation and all such vane consolations. Augustine says:⁶ "When our heart delights in exterior things, it remains without interior consolation; while the children of Israel had Egyptian flower, they did not have manna". Thus the soul of the servant of God cannot taste the manna of divine consolation until it leaves aside all the sensual satisfaction of the world.

Firstly, with respect to taste, it is necessary not only to scurry from all sensuality, pleasure, superfluity and all the pernicious relish for delicious food and all concern for seeking and preparing such items of gluttony, since through such things the flesh is provoked to lust and the soul is rendered totally incapable of all divine petitioning and of receiving illuminating grace and the divine union, but the flesh should also be conquered by means of fasts, vigils and abstaining from food so that it will not rise against the spirit. Thus Paul says in Romans chapter five: "So then brothers and sisters we are debtors not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh - because if you live according to the flesh; you will die; but if by the spirit you [10v] put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."⁷ The holy friends of God did this, Paul

¹ The suggestion of a general confession is also to be found in the *Constitutions of 1536* n. 20 for the novice beginning his year of probation. This means that the Franciscan Capuchin religious life is a radical decision to enter the spiritual life for reasons of union with God.

² Cf, Acts 9:15; the expression is also repeated in the *Constitutions of 1536* n. 112: "a exemplo di Paolo, vaso di elezione" (n. 363).

³ Cf. *Epist. XXII ad Eustochium*, 5: "Si Apostolus vas electionis et separatus in Evangelium Christi, ob carnis aculeos et incentiva vitiorum reprimat corpus suum, et servituti subiicit, ne aliis praedicans, ipse reprobis inveniatur ..." (PL 22, 397).

⁴ Cf 1 Cor 9:27.

⁵ This same logic is found in the *Constitutions of 1536*, n. 136.

⁶ It is difficult to find the exact quotation. There is something of this kind of idea in *Serm.* 352: PL 39, 1551-53; *Ebarr. in psal.* 77, n. 21: PL 36, 996.

⁷ Rom 8:12-13. The Brescia edition 1536 has erroneously "Thus Paul says in Romans chapter five".

the first hermit, Anthony, Hilarian and my seraphic father Francis, and others who achieved a high degree of perfection.¹

3832. Secondly, with respect to touch, I am not speaking only of the terrible and vicious actions, which often occur, since the Apostle commands that they be not named or even thought about among the servants of God.² It is appropriate that the true children of God preserve angelic purity and live in the flesh but not in the manner of the flesh, as Jerome says.³ Thus the child of God should avoid all hurtful thoughts and all movements of lust in the body and mind. Turn your eyes away lest they see vanity.⁴ Turn also from the face of women and their conduct.

Listening to vane, lascivious and provocative words; smelling vane odors; speaking dishonest words, tasting illicit things, touching anything that could stain angelic cleanliness and chaste splendour, in so far as these pertain to the necessities of nature or of the body, whatever they might be, should be done with such prudence and integrity, that, without unavoidable necessity, one would never touch [11r] any part of their person, which would give the slightest occasion of an inordinate movement or sensuality or from which temptation might arise.

The Apostle commands that all desires of the flesh be put aside.⁵ Beware of all affection, love and behaviour towards women and all others, especially young people, both inside and outside the Order. Beware of giving or receiving gifts or letters and of all things, which might impede divine love, grace, illumination and union.⁶

3833. Thirdly, with respect to honours, not only must a person run from them and despise position, office, and any ambition, but also every craving for human praise and one's own ease. In the sight of God and all others one should humiliate oneself and recognize one's own baseness, misery and nothingness the more he recognizes that he is dust and ashes,⁷ and possibly caught up in sin, or preserved from it by divine clemency, generosity and mercy and endowed with many gifts and graces. He should prostrate himself in great humility and desire

¹ Note the hermit inspiration in reference to these saints from the Thebaid as well as the filial relationship to St. Francis.

² Cf Eph 5:3: "But fornication and impurity of any kind, or greed must not even be mentioned among you, as is proper among saints".

³ *Epist. LIV ad Furiam*, n. 9: "Grandis igitur virtutis est et sollicitae diligentiae superare quod nata sis: in carne, non carnaliter vivere" (PL 22,554).

⁴ Cf Ps 118, 37 (Vulg).

⁵ Cf, Gal 5:16.

⁶ These motives induced austere comportment and detachment towards friendship with seculars; as well as the total dependence of young persons during formation, because of which they could not write or receive letters unless they were first passed through the hands of the superior, lector, director or master of novices. Cf *Constitutions of 1536*, chapter XI concerning familiarity with women and the cloister and chapter X, n. 132: "To avoid if possible anything unbecoming, we decree that no young friar shall send or receive letters, without the permission of his superior".

⁷ Cf Gen 18:27.

to be despised by all, embarrassed and criticised, and regarded as unworthy of all spiritual or physical grace.

To achieve this it is necessary to have three [11v] eyes. With the first eye one sees the multitude, gravity and baseness of his sins, his ungratefulness towards God concerning graces received, the help in the life of virtue saying with the Prophet: *I recognize my iniquity* etc.¹ With the second eye one sees the divine charity, which has preserved us from many sins into which we would otherwise have fallen, as Augustine says.² With the third eye one sees the continual generosity of divine munificence, which has given us so many gifts and graces and continues to do so that if they had been given to others, no matter how great sinners they might have been, they would have been more grateful,³ would have preserved them more carefully and put them to use more effectively. We should run from honours and human praise for the love of God, after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, his holy apostles and other saints.

3834. Fourthly, one should mortify every superfluous appetite, curiosity and sensuality in food, clothing, living quarters and in all things not necessary for our use, laughter, jokes, recreation and the like which impede the spirit of advancement and render spiritual exercises heavy and difficult, and which render all sweet [12r] taste for devotion insipid, because the animal in man has no taste for the things of God, says the Apostle.⁴ Although sensual persons do occasionally have some taste for devotion, still it is either simulated, or comes from natural inclination. However, in general these persons are accustomed to evil and its consequences, so that sensual emotions, carnal pleasure and all human desires are not mortified.⁵

Chapter 7

CONCERNING THE DANGER OF BITTERNESS OF HEART

3835. Bitterness of heart, which is very dangerous, and anxiety should be mortified. They have five manifestations.⁶

Firstly, displays of bitterness are caused by a certain arrogance and contemptuous assessment of good works such as abstinence, fasts and the

¹ Ps 50:5 (Vulg) = Ps 51:5.

² Cf *Liber de diligendo Deo*, chapter 7; PL 40, 856-858.

³ This is a thought from St. Francis. Cf *Fioretti*, chapter 10. The concept of the three eyes is copied from chapter 8 of *Directorium* by Henry Herp.

⁴ Cf. 1 Cor 2:14. - In the text "profetto" means profit or gain.

⁵ This chapter is based on chapter 3 of *Directorium* by Henry Herp.

⁶ This chapter is copied from chapter 7 of *Directorium o Specchio di perfezione*, by Henry Herp, and corresponds to the "seventh mortification" (cf Vol 1, 1513s, n. 1560).

like, together with contempt for others. In the sight of men these things appear to be good and right, but they proceed from an attitude which is not mortified and not very spiritual. In the sight of the Lord they are false, not just and putrid, because these people praise themselves and despise others in thought and word, as did the Pharisees whom the Lord reproved for saying: "God I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers etc., or even like [12v] this tax collector."¹ These people are in very serious danger, since they become worse through their own doing. James says: "If those who are nothing, think they are something, they deceive themselves."² This is even more so since they move against their neighbour with suspicion, judgments, indignation etc. If these people continue to do this they will not deserve forgiveness, and continuing like this will be saved only with difficulty.

The second display of bitterness comes from an appetite for one's own satisfaction, which moves one to indignation and murmuring against superiors, and this is a most damnable vice. As Augustine says, nothing provoked God so much against the people of Israel, as the murmuring against Moses and Aaron. They said, "Your complaining is not against us but against the Lord".³

Detraction is a special child of the devil, which he tries to place in monasteries and congregations to be the destruction of peace, the ruin of the spirit and devotion and all the advantages of regular life, to make the monk the enemy of God and the child of the devil.⁴

3836. The third display of bitterness comes from hatred towards one's neighbour, which begins with words, gestures [13r] or injurious actions. People such as these always have bitterness of heart, and always interpret what they hear or see of others in the worst light. They are always thinking of revenge. When they pray, study, recite the Psalms, eat, or whatever else they do, they always quarrel, argue, bring up disputes, and put up opposing propositions in their minds, and so they are always disturbed, hence the Prophet says that the heart of an evil person is like a storm tossed sea.⁵ These people are so far from perfection, that they are completely unable and unworthy to receive divine illumination and the inner infusion of heavenly grace.

The fourth display of bitterness comes from a certain appetite for seeking one's own fulfillment and comfort. Thus when they see that they have not been praised, and regarded as good and devout by their superiors and others, they are immediately filled with great bitterness of heart, and because of this become tepid and remiss in good works, inconstant and impatient, and murmur saying "It is stupid to do good among these people, because they do not recognize virtue in virtuous people". Such [13r] persons are a long way

¹ Cf Luke 18:11.

² It is not James but Paul in Gal 6:3.

³ Cf St Augustine *In Ioan evang*, tr. 26 chapter 6 n. 11 (PL 35, 1612); for the biblical quote cf Exodus 16:8.

⁴ That "Detraction and murmuring" are a dangerous combination is recorded by St. Francis in the *Later Rule* 10:8.

⁵ Cf Isa 57:20: "But the wicked are like a storm tossed sea".

from God, *since salvation is a long way from sinners.*¹

3837. The fifth display of bitterness comes from one's own perversity and malice through which some have become depraved in sin and acquire a callous conscience, and become almost incorrigible and dangerous to themselves and to others. Because they continually become worse, it seems that they despair of their own salvation, always living in bitterness of heart, and *they have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God,*² or in divine illumination, but their lot is with sinners and those who rebel against God. They will be regarded as a wobbly wheel or straw driven by the wind.³ They live in bitterness. They die in bitterness and their place is in the lake of fire. The venom of the dragon is their wine, the deadly venom of asps,⁴

Therefore if we wish to make progress along God's way, and to prepare ourselves for divine illumination, it is necessary to mortify and detach ourselves from all bitterness of heart, and be so consumed in the furnace of divine love, that we may worthily offer our heart cleansed, purified and inflamed with divine love to our Lord Jesus Christ, since the tidy guest seeks and loves [14v] a tidy dwelling. *Who is blessed forever and ever. Amen.*⁵

Chapter 8

Concerning Dangerous Scrupulosity of the Heart⁶

3838. The tranquil and quiet rays of divine illumination seek the quiet and serene tranquility of the mind and heart. Thus all disturbing scrupulosity should be completely cut out.

Thus there are some who have such a disturbed conscience that neither by contrition nor confession nor penance may they pacify it, but always afflicted by a tremulous and timid heart, have little or no confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ. Although they confess often because they are troubled by scruples, they do not amend in any of the things, which offend their conscience. Clearly their scrupulosity has two causes.

The first is a defect in their love of God, because only unshakable charity produces confidence in God, not any good quality, whether penance,

¹ Cf Ps 118; 115 (Vulg).

² Cf Eph 5:5.

³ Cf Ps 83:14 (Vulg); Ps 83:14.

⁴ Cf Deut 32:33.

⁵ Cf Rom 1:25.

⁶ Cf Herp, *Directorium*, chapter 10: it corresponds to the tenth mortification in a work which the Capuchins loved to publish in their pocket editions of *The Rule and Testament of our Seraphic Father St. Francis* (I use the edition from Venice, published by Guinti, 1597), entitled "Dodici mortificationi cavate brevemente dallo Specchio della perfezione di Henrico Herpe" (cf in Vol 1 section IV/3, document 3. pp. 1505-1519, nn. 1553-1556) See specially chapter 22 in *Dyalogo della unione* by Cordoni "Come la moltitudine delli peccati non impedisce l'unione tra Dio e l'anima, se l'uomo vuole", which John of Fano uses in many passages literally.

or toil, and nothing is as necessary for the soul that strives for perfection as perfect confidence in God, which one cannot have without charity. The more [14v] confidence one has in God, the more he strives to please him and ingratiate himself with him. Because of this he pays greater attention to his own justification, purification and amendment.

3839. The second is inordinate love of self and one's own ease, from which comes a certain servile fear through which the scrupulous person fears things which go against his nature, such as the divine retribution in this world and the next. Indeed he fears what he has no need to fear and judges that to be a sin, which is not.

Although such people observe the precepts of God and of the Church, and conduct themselves honestly on the outside, they do not observe the precept of charity and divine love, because they are not motivated to perform good works because of the love of God, but because of fear, and to avoid punishments in this life and the next. Thus they can have no confidence in God. Because of this their inner life can be nothing but fear, anxiety, toil, disquiet, scrupulosity, worry, sighs, bitterness, and fruitless compunction, which are without merit, because they lack trust in God. Indeed these people may be called martyrs [15r] of the devil, not servants and friends of Christ, who live a fruitless Purgatory and a first installment of Hell.

Therefore let us love God with all our heart, and serve him with trust and thus having the highest confidence in him, we shall possess a tranquil and quiet heart and be free of all disquieting scrupulosity. This is necessary for purification and preparation to receive divine illumination.

Thus anyone who wishes to undertake this most wholesome work should preface it with a good general confession.¹ Then leaving aside all scrupulosity, proceed with much confidence in the divine mercy regarding the things confessed.

3840. Let us suppose that one has good will, and is contrite for and has confessed all past sins, and his conscience does not reproach him about anything, yet he judges himself unworthy of divine union out of humility and says in the emotion of his heart: "I, miserable one that I am, have committed so many sins, and know myself to be so imperfect, that I am not worthy that the God of infinite perfection would unite himself to a rancid and abominable soul." I question whether such humility [15v] is good or not.

I reply that this is not humility, but diabolical deception. It does not give honour to God, but through deficiency in faith detracts from God's clemency and seeks to set limits to his infinite goodness and assesses that human perfection is greater than God's mercy and clemency. How is this different from Judas? How is this different from Cain? Of whom Genesis says in chapter four: "My iniquity is greater than can be forgiven".² Thus they are in the depths of Hell. Oh how many there are who under the pretext of

¹ Cf above.

² Gen 4:13.

humility fall into this ditch, from which they never emerge. They do not try, through having trust in God, to rise to the high states of the spirit. Indeed they might be of little consequence in this world, but they are of no consequence in the next.

These people loathe those to whom the divine goodness and infinite mercy has communicated and given itself, that is those who have faith formed by charity, and who trust in his clemency. *Steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.*¹

3841. This mercy is so great that neither the angelic intellect nor the human can comprehend it perfectly, since it is without quantity, measure, time, limit or end, as Ambrose [16r] says.² Thus if one had committed all the sins that have been committed since the beginning of the world and that will be committed up to the end of the world, and returned to God through real penance, contrition, that is by confession and satisfaction, with a real and firm resolve not to sin again, he has made his peace with God. God will receive him into grace and to the divine illumination and union and this is only as it should be because he loves, believes and hopes.³ Because of this Magdalene merited hearing from the honey sweet mouth of sweet Jesus: "Woman, your sins are forgiven".⁴ Because of this the thief merited to hear: "Today you will be with me in Paradise."⁵ These outstanding virtues of love or real charity, faith and hope fill⁶ Paradise. Their opposites fill Hell. This comes about firstly because of the character of the divine nature, which is clement and pious and more inclined to pardon than to vengeance (as St Jerome says) and does not desire the death of the sinner, but that he converts and lives. Secondly, this comes about because God loves the soul, which he freely unites to himself so strongly. Thus if an old derelict who was always rebellious and an enemy of God all his life, and who had always offended [16v] Him by every imaginable kind of sin, and if all his sins exceeded in number and enormity all the sins that had ever been committed and will ever be committed, if such a one wished to turn to God and repented (as has been said), God would receive and pardon him and such a conversion would not be considered to have been too late. Believe in God, hope and love and that is enough.

3842. St Jerome says: "We are confident that for a sinner confession is never too late. Nothing offends God more than an impenitent heart. Only the sin of

¹ Ps 31:10 (Vulg); Ps 32:10.

² I have not succeeded in identifying the quotation from St. Ambrose. However, it is cited without a precise reference by Cordoni: "Misericordiae Domini nec mensuras possumus ponere, nec tempore deffinire".

³ Note how Pili takes up, with more accurate theological refinements, a passage from the *Dyalogo* by Cordoni, chapter 22, f 86r-v: "*Anima*: Hor poniamo che sia uno, il quale habbia fatto tutti i peccati et tutti i mali del mondo, se questo tale si pente del male che ha fatto et torna a Dio, io dico che costui ha fatto subito pace con Dio, subito lo receve, subito torna in gratia di Dio, subito è fatto atto alla divina unione, pur che egli creda et spera".

⁴ cf Luke 7:48.

⁵ Luke 23:43.

⁶ "impeno" = riempiono, from the Latin *implere*.

despair cannot be pardoned."¹ Therefore have real repentance and good will, and faith and charity will unite you to God. There is no other way in which a man of the world can be united to God since no one is without sin: Ps 129 *If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?* 1 John 1: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.*² If one had the sins of a hundred thousand worlds, he should not doubt God's mercy, which is so great that neither heaven, earth nor the abyss can overcome it.

Thus the happy, faithful, single-minded and pure soul, who (having laid aside [17r] all weakness and faint-heartedness) wishes to practice this state of love, because it has discovered a treasure beyond all treasures, loves God above everything and is prepared to acquire great states of grace and glory. Such persons bear much fruit in the Church militant and make the Church triumphant rejoice. Although they are still in their mortal body, they have become almost divine, and live a divine life, because they are completely transformed into Christ through faith and charity, and offer God a spiritual sacrifice never ceasing night and day. *Amen.*

Chapter 9

CONCERNING THE PERFECT MORTIFICATION OF ALL DISTURBANCE AND IMPATIENCE WHICH RESULTS FROM TRIALS.³

3843. *If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me,* cries our Lord Jesus Christ.⁴ The cross, its suffering⁵ and trials are the sure way to come to divine illumination, inner union and eternal life. Therefore all those who wish to fully live in Christ, suffer persecution says the Apostle.⁶

It is necessary for you who wish to prepare yourself for [17v] divine illumination to completely dispel all uneasiness and impatience, which often accompany trials, or incomprehension, or ridicule, or detraction, or damage to temporal goods, or sickness, or any other trial you like. *The sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to*

¹ These two quotations from St. Jerome are to be found in the Latin of B. Cordoni: "Divinitatis natura clemens et pia est magisque ad indulgentiam prona quam ad vindictam, quia non vult mortem peccatoris sed magis ut convertatur et vivat". "Confidimus, probantes esse vera quae dicimus: numquam est peccatori sera conversio. Nihil sic offendit Deum sicut cor impenitens. Solum desperatio crimen est, quod veniam consequi non potest". (*Dyalogo*, f. 87rv). For the last quotation cf. Ep. 147 *ad Sabinianum lapsum* (PL 22, 1198).

² Ps. 129:3 (Vulg) = Ps 130:3; I John 1:8.

³ The first part of this chapter comes from Chapter 14 of *Dyalogo* by Cordoni ("Come è molto utile che l'uomo sia esercitato in molte tribulazioni"), and also from chapter 11 of *Diectorium* by Herp ("De impassibilitate in adversis habenda, et de tribulationum utilitate").

⁴ Cf. Matt 16:24.

⁵ *el cruciato* in the text: that is the torment, the affliction, the suffering.

⁶ Cf 2 Tim 3:12.

us.¹

We can do nothing more pleasing to God than support adversities, since the Lord will confer greater things on us because of this than because of anything else. Those who like reproofs and chastisements² work towards salvation in a marvelous manner and weave crowns. It is of the nature of trials to humiliate people and turn them back to God and make the soul clean and resplendent. Augustine says that trials achieve in the just person what the furnace does for gold, lime for iron and the thresher for grain.³

Although a person sometimes thinks that he has been deserted by God, he should never doubt in God's grace because of this, since he who is all good will never abandon the soul that confides in him. In fact because of this he will love him and protect [18r] his soul even more. In his hidden judgments he permits trials for our good.

3844. The divine goodness also brings about in us that through trials temporal goods become a nuisance and we long for our heavenly home with greater fervour. Augustine says that the Lord God makes the way of the world bitter to his elect, so that while they enjoy things along the way they do not forget things in their homeland.⁴ The road of trials is the royal road, because it was along that road that the heavenly King and the other saints traveled. James chapter one says: *Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love him.*⁵

Note that when trials come we should humble our soul under God's powerful hand⁶, and consider that everything happens for our good. Indeed we should receive them with joy; James chapter one says *My brothers and sisters whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have its full effect;* and Timothy chapter 2 says: *No one is crowned without competing according to the rules;* and John [18v] says: *One cannot compete without there being a prize, without a prize there is no victory, without there being a victory no one is crowned.*⁷ Augustine wrote: *Gold cannot be said to be good and fine unless it has been tested by fire. The same*

¹ Rom 8:18.

² Prov 3:12; Rev 3:19; Heb 12:5.

³ Cordoni quotes: "Quod flagellum grano, quod lima ferro, quod fornax auro, hoc facit tribulatio viro iusto" (*Dyalogo*, f. 52r). Cf *Sermo* 15, *de versu* 8 ps. 25 (PL 38, 118); *Serm* 10 *ad fratres in eremo* (PL 40, 1252).

⁴ This is an unidentified quotation given by Cordoni "Electis suis Deus iter asperum fecit, ne dum delectantur in via, obliviscantur eorum quae sunt in patria". (*Dyalogo* F. 52v).

⁵ James 1:12.

⁶ Cf. 1 Pet 5:6.

⁷ Cf respectively James 1:2-4; 2 Tim 2:5. The final quote from John does not exist. Pili wrote in Latin *Certari non potest sine prelio, sine prelio victoria non habetur, sine victoria nemo coronatur*. We can see that Pili did not check his hurried notes. Cordoni says in Italian "One cannot fight if there is no battle, without a battle there is no victory, without a victory no one is crowned" (*Dyalogo* F. 54v).

*may be said of the soul.*¹ First Peter chapter one says: *In this you rejoice even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire -.*²

3845. Further Divine Clemency often tests those who wish to mortify all inordinate emotions with various trials. He does this to see if they will persevere in their good resolve. Thus the angel said to Tobias: "In order for you to win favour in the eyes of God, it was necessary that you be tested by temptation."³ Job, to whom there was no one similar in the world, when he had lost his sons and daughters and property, and was unhealthy from the sole of his foot to the top of his head, and was provoked by his wife and friends, said with much patience and calm of soul: *The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; as the Lord wished so has it been done. Blessed be the name of the Lord.*⁴

Thus the greatest freedom of rational creatures is only to fulfill the will of God. Thus in all that [19v] comes from God the soul becomes almost unassailable and immortal, in such a way that even if it had to suffer the pains of hell for the love and glory of God it would be prepared for anything (without any mental reservation). Because of the loving desires which it feels towards God, the soul is completely ready not only to suffer the withdrawal of all experience of devotion and of grace, in order to be better conformed to God's will, but also because of such fervour of divine love, that it wishes to remain completely in naked charity and pure love of God all the days of its life, even with all kinds of inner desolation and anxiety of heart which might occur. Its sole desire is to resemble the most sweet Jesus and the most benign Son of God.

3846. This is that most perfect state which most pious Jesus himself wanted to teach by his conduct when, after his most bitter passion, scourging, persecution, ridicule, insults, crowning with thorns, unhurt in mind and steady, unshakable, and very calm of heart, while hanging on the cross, he prayed in a loud [19v] voice, with loving desire and copious tears for those who crucified him.⁵ They did not cause such embarrassment and injury that he would not have been prepared to suffer even more for his Father's honour and the salvation of mankind.

Thus from the moment of his prayer to the end of his life Jesus was as deserted and abandoned by God, as if God had become his most deadly enemy, retaining only the pure, absolute, essence of the love of God. We think that this was the sense of what he said in most intense anguish on the cross:

¹ Cordoni quotes this passage in Italian without saying that it comes from Augustine: "Non può essere detto oro buono e fino, se non è provato dalla fornace del fuoco. Così non può essere detta anima fedele, se non è provata al fuoco delle tribulazione" (*Dyalogo* f. 54v-55r).

² 1 Pet 1:6-7.

³ Cf. Tob 12:13 (Vulg).

⁴ Job 1:21.

⁵ Heb 5:7.

"My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"¹ This was why his inner suffering was greater and more intense, and shows how his absolute love of God was all the more inexpressible and incomprehensible. This was the highest moment of Christ's life on earth, that is undergoing the passion, so that everyone could imitate him, and those whom he wished to lead to the state of perfection and to the apex of merit should want to be tested by adversity alone.

3847. If we only knew with what ardent love God permits adversity and trials to come upon his friends, [20r] we would certainly receive them with ardent desire and loving embrace, since they are precious stones and dearest gifts, by means of which God's most secret friends are transformed into the image of his blessed Son. There never was a sculptor or painter so talented that he knew how to create the likeness of someone with as much excellence as God does when through his infinite power, wisdom and goodness God creates the image of his most sweet, unique and beloved Son in his beloved secret friends by means of transforming them through his Passion, so that they may happily receive the most pleasant embrace of the most kind Jesus. *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*²

Chapter 10

HOW ONE RECOGNISES THE UNFAITHFUL FRIENDS OF GOD

3848. One may recognise God's unfaithful friends in many ways³. Some when they find themselves lacking divine consolation become tepid, without the fervour of charity or virtue and weak in good works they seek sensuality and bodily rest more than is necessary [20v] and beyond the measure of discretion. This is no wonder, since they want spiritual consolation, but do not want to endure the toil of acquiring it. When they do not have it they look for solace in creatures and thus run many risks.

Others are so faint hearted, that they claim that every comfort and human indulgence, which they allow the body, is necessary. But remember that the Lord does not dwell in pleasures and is not to be found in the land of those who live with ease.⁴ Although such persons who run the risk of mortal sin do not always fall, still the ardor of devotion is diminished, interior exercises are impeded and the taste for divine sweetness and for virtue is weakened.

Others become so impatient over the withdrawal of spiritual consolation, that they become disturbed and perverse so that no one can

¹ Matt, 27:46.

² Matt 5:10.

³ This whole chapter is copied with much liberty from chapter 48 of *Directorium* by Henry van Herp: "Quomodo amici infideles se gerant, quando ad tempus derelinquuntur (cf *Theol. mysticae D. Henerici Harphii ...*, Coloniae 1556. f. CLXVva-CLXVrb).

⁴ Cf. Job 28:13.

speak to them, and they become disturbed and scandalized at anything (no matter how small).

3849. Others, having lost the divine consolations, which they had before, neglect themselves, though not completely. Thus through instability they are always on the move and weary themselves with various, inordinate desires, [21r] now seeking one manner of life, now another, changing their aims. This is because they do not seek God single-mindedly, but seek something exterior as well as their own comfort. Thus in everything that they do nature seeks its own end covertly, in such a way that they appear to seek God when actually they do not.

Their intention (even though secret) is not to delight in God with naked and simple love, but to delight in the experience of his gifts and graces. Not wanting to be united to him in the cross of his passion, suffering, ridicule and dereliction, and being really deaf to the suffering and rejected Lord who says; "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves", that is seek their own comfort in nothing, "and take up their cross (not only in doing penance, but in whatever adversity and trial) and follow me¹, accepting all adversity and anguish and all that is contrary to their nature with ardent desire, for love of me, and not seeking to advance themselves unless it be in my passion and cross, just as I, while not looking for my bitter cross, passion and death, freely [21v] accepted it".

3850. Since the above do not have this pure and single-minded purpose, when the experience of grace is withdrawn they become inconstant, always seeking a new way of life, through which they can regain the experience of grace and devotion, which they lost. To them this appears to be good and holy. However, in fact it is nothing but human nature, seeking its own ends and its own comfort, and to lull itself in the experience of grace, pleasure and devotion.

Such persons put all care and diligence into exterior exercises, penances, vocal prayer and not into their own mortification, destruction and renunciation, and do not seek the love of God single-mindedly, nor His pleasure, nor to approach Him more closely through naked and simple charity. They seek exterior exercises (as we have said) undertaking various ways of life, but not committing themselves to any of these strongly, or with perseverance.

They seek a great variety of counsel with great insistence but put nothing into practice. Today they seek one confessor; tomorrow another and they obey none. They regard themselves as wiser than others and try to defend their own opinion [22r] and excuse their actions. The reason for this error is their secret love of themselves, and a certain spiritual pride of heart. These are the two things, which nourish this instability and expose the soul to many dangers.

3851. Thus these are not true faithful and grateful friends of God, because they do not seek Him with pure love, but seek His gifts and their own comfort.

¹ Cf. Luke 9:23.

Although the Lord often gives such persons spiritual consolation, the greatest fear is that the Lord intends to reward them for their few good works in the present life, as we read about a certain Duke who was tyrannical and oppressive towards the poor, and who experienced such grace and consolation twice on Christmas Eve, that he said that if someone else had tasted it then, they would have willingly given up half their property. Nevertheless he was cosigned with Maxentius the tyrant to eternal damnation.¹

With respect to the abundance of grace and devotion which they experience, some go so far beyond their [22v] strength, both in contemplation, and exterior works of virtue, not assessing their strength, and considering that whatever violence they do to human nature is licit, that they destroy their capacity to be human through indiscrete overwork and do not wish to accept the advice of those who are discrete and expert.

When divine grace finds the capacity to be human so weakened and lacking in strength, it can make no use of it, or work with it, and these persons lose all feeling of devotion and divine love. Thus when the heart dries up and natural virtue appears to be cut away, such that a feeling of grace cannot make its way to the heart or soul, people experience great trouble and almost limitless depression, and various thoughts and fantasies weigh upon them and their whole life is almost infernal suffering on earth. Divine clemency will not allow that these people be lost forever since, in this spiritual desolation, they do not return to the pleasures of mortal sin. Such weak heartedness, scrupulosity and temptation to despair, infidelity and so on will take the place of their time in Purgatory.

3852. Those who wish to arrive at the heights of special love of contemplation [23r] should beware not to destroy human nature through the indiscrete works of penance mentioned above. They should moderate the impetuous rushes of devotion so that they will not succumb. We read concerning Brother Roger² who, once he had experienced the vigorous workings of divine love and grace, moderated his austerity, abstinence and heavy penances, even though he was very inclined to such things, because he had experienced that they impeded inner devotion, when they were undertaken indiscreetly. He did not wish to work against divine grace through bodily exercises. Those who have not been struck by such love of God put all the more effort into such bodily exercise and austerity.

¹ Herp also mentions the name of this Count: "Legimus de comite Iuliancensi Guilelmo, qui erat malus tyrannus" (*Theol. cit.*, f. CLXIIa), but he does not mention the source.

² This is Brother Roger of Provence of whom we read in the *De Conformitate*: "Devotio eius erat sine lacrimis, sine multis verbis et sine absconsione, sine abstinentia; et si desideraret eam facere, non tamen erat ausus, eo quod per abstinentiam conoscebat remitti devotionem suam et debilius mentem in Deum surgere" (*Conf. IV*, 319); and in the *Chron XXIV Gen.*: "Abstinentiam enim magnam timebat facere, quamvis sibi esset facillimum, quia per talem abstinentiam remittebatur interior devotio, in qua recipiebat a Domino gratias singulares ..." (*AF III*, 384).

Chapter 11

CONCERNING THE PERFECT MORTIFICATION OF SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION¹

3853. Spiritual consolation takes place in two ways, namely, simple spiritual consolation and a feeling of consolation.

Firstly, there are some who put their entire effort exclusively into reasoning in subtle and obscure speculation concerning the mystery of the Trinity, the origin of the Divine Persons, of the blessedness of heaven, of the state, condition and ranks [23v] of angels, the conception of Christ and the like.

Others want to see the angels, hear their singing, see the baby Jesus in the manger, or the Blessed Sacrament, or to have visions of appearances, representations, and likenesses or to know God in as much as this is possible in this world and similar things. They call these things contemplation, and they beseech God with great insistence to grant them these things. They tire themselves out with fasting and much discipline, thinking that all inner spiritual consolation consists in this and that it will lead to the perfection of the contemplative life.

However, these are greatly mistaken and a long way from real contemplation, since it is necessary for the contemplative life to be based upon the purest, most ardent, naked love of God, where a person can desire to be united to God with the most zealous fervour, and be absorbed into the abyss of his infinite goodness, and be transformed into him by sincere and simple charity. In order to attain to complete mortification and destruction of self it is necessary to achieve the drying up of yearning for one's own comfort and consolation, both spiritual and bodily.[24r]

3854. Those who wish to please God with certainty and in a useful manner and become perfect in the contemplative way, should order their exercises in such a way that they do not only attain the knowledge of useless and non-essential things, but so that the divine love will continue to grow in them so that they are focused upon that without interruption. If they do receive some such knowledge or vision sometimes, they should not dwell upon it, or trust in it, or believe it until they have asked advice from an enlightened and expert person as to whether such things come from God or the devil. This is what the prophet intended to say in the psalm "If riches (that is of spiritual consolation) abound, do not set your heart upon them"²

A person should insist on putting all this effort into mortifying and annihilating himself with every effort, so that divine illumination and its loving transformation may be happily achieved.

¹ This chapter is freely summarized from chapter 9 of the *Directorium* by Herp ("De mortificatione omnis inordinatae internae dulcedinis curiositatisque internae dulcedinis curiositatisque intellectus"), and corresponds to the "ninth mortification" of Herp (cf. vol. I, 1516, n. 1562, of *I Cappuccini*).

² Cf. Ps 61:11 (Vulg).

3855. Those who base their hopes and activity only upon intellectual and cognitive pleasures, labour in vain and fruitlessly (because divine love does not build their house). They live in a dangerous [24v] state, chiefly because they are exposed to the lies and deceit of the devils, who because they realize this, trick them with various apparitions. Because they have such self-confidence, self-praise and think so highly of themselves, they become pertinacious and confident in their own judgment and opinion. This is a sure sign of deception and that they are not rooted in divine love. Such people are usually proud, crave honours, love themselves, cultivate their own comfort, and are inconstant. They do not persevere in good works, and under adversity and insult they are impatient.

Secondly, they are attached to certain sensual consolations and indulge in devotions of the heart and emotions and sensual sweetness and delight and pleasure. The lower faculties of the soul delight in such things, and as recipients of such things they are thrilled. This is so much so that even the intellectual faculties of the soul share similar pleasure and feelings.

3856. Such sweetness and sensations are not secure.

Firstly, because people disturbed by and involved in sins and desires usually feel this way also.

Secondly, because such pleasures exceed [25r] the carnal and mundane so much that they create a serious obstacle for a person to overcome. Those who wish to occupy themselves only in these pleasures and thus nurture their spiritual exercises (that is, they persevere in their spiritual exercises more willingly when they enjoy such pleasures than when they do not) sin gravely, and are very misled in thinking that they are in the grace of God because of this. Thus if they lose such pleasures, because they cannot live without pleasure, they immediately return to vain and momentary pleasures.

Thirdly, because there are many who endeavour with all their strength and prayer to obtain the experience of devotion and spiritual sweetness from God, and if sometimes these are withdrawn, their fervour immediately becomes cold so that they can do no good, or if they do something, it seems to them to have no merit, because they think that the experience of devotion and sweetness is real love of God.

However they are certainly misled because God gives his gifts to people at times and removes them either because of sin or in order to prepare them for self-abnegation or mortification, [25v] or so that they may be more easily inflamed with divine love. At the beginning of his conversion a person usually experiences much consolation, and thus the soul should desire such consolations for that purpose.

3857. Fourthly, a person should not focus upon the experience of grace, since the inner desires of nature and natural emotion dispose one greatly for such pleasures, but they are of little merit, coming as they do from natural love and disposition. This is evident in those who have soft hearts and weep and cry over nothing. Thus they are deluded thinking that this comes from divine love, when it actually comes from one's natural character.

As a general rule it may be held that whatever we wish to obtain from God is not good if it is not based upon the perfect abnegation and mortification of self, of our own comfort and of our natural desires, inclinations and feelings, and is not directed towards the pure, sincere, naked, single-minded and ardent love of God. We should neither seek nor ask for such things. Yet note that there are few [26r] who know how to distinguish such tastes, delights, tears and the like from divine love.

Only one thing remains, and that is, that the soul exerts every care to clear away all these things, seeks ardently for what is perfectly spiritual, and aspires with fervour to obtain divine illumination, to please God, to attain his basic love and nothing else. The Psalm says: *Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.*¹

Chapter 12

Concerning the Mortification of One's Will and True Humility.²

3858. Free will is a noble gift of God, by means of which one can do as one chooses. However, it must be humbled³ and mortified, so that, it does not fall into sin by following sensual and inordinate desires, which render a person completely indisposed to divine illumination. No one can suffer greater injury or damage than through the will, because it is the basis of all transgressions, through which the soul is separated from God.

Thus, in addition to all other requirements, holy humility is necessary, that exalted and outstanding virtue, [26v] which, as Bernard says⁴ is a disposition of the mind in the sight of God, by means of which a person, knowing himself, humbles himself before God and in true knowledge of himself becomes despicable to himself. This virtue is so efficacious and excellent that it makes the exaltedness of the divine bend to the depths of human nature. Augustine says: "Behold a great miracle: God is exalted, you are humble, He comes to you, He exalts you, and flees from you." Thus the person who wishes to draw God to himself should humble himself.⁵

¹ Cf Ps 36:4 (Vulg) = Ps 37:4.

² This chapter is very dependent on Cordoni's *Dyalogo* from which it gathers many thoughts which are spread over many chapters, and shows the editorial skill of Pili. Cf Cargnoni. *Fonti, tendenze e sviluppi...*, in CF 48, (1978) 349-360 (where all the references are studied).

³ Cf 1 Pet 5:6.

⁴ In chapter eight of the *Dyalogo*, ("How the soul by means of Humility may Arrive at Union with God") Cordoni quotes the passage of Bernard: "Humilitas est virtus, qua homo verissima sui cognitione sibi ipsi vilescit" (f. 27v). Henry Herp instead writes in chapter 20 of his *Directorium*: "Humilitas est profunda cordis in conspectu divinae maiestatis inclinatio". Cf. St. Bernard., *De gradibus humilitatis*, ch. 1; n. 2; *Tract. de statu virtutum*, 1. *De humilitate*, n. 14: PL 184, 798.

⁵ This is how Cordoni (ibid) quotes the passage: "Vedete magnum miraculum: altus est Deus, humilitas te: et venit ad te, erigis te, et fugis a te". However, the exact quote reads: "Altus habitat in humili, ut humilem exaltet. Excelsus enim est Dominus et humilia respicit; excelsa autem a longe cognoscit (Ps137:6).

3859. Note that there are twelve degrees of humility.¹ The first, in order to show humility in heart and body, is to always look down on the ground; the second, is to speak little, within reason and in a soft voice; the third, is not to speak unless it is necessary; the fourth, is not to be ready to laugh; the fifth, is to observe common life in the monastery; the sixth, is to believe in the heart and confess with the lips that one is inferior to others; the seventh, is to believe and confess that one is unworthy, unprepared and useless for all good things; the eighth, is humble and authentic confession; the ninth, is obedience in difficult things, and patience in unpleasant things; the tenth, is prompt obedience; the eleventh, [27r] is abnegation of one's own will; the twelfth, is to fear the Lord, to remember what he has commanded and to put it into practice.

3860. There are three signs of humility: first, to especially avoid the conversation of those addicted to worldly chatter; second, to receive abuse and insults with a calm mind; third, not to have recourse to sordid things.

Note too that knowledge of God belongs to real humility, because in as much as it is a special virtue, it aims particularly at the subjection of a person to God, because of which a person when humbling himself submits to others. Thus a person should submit himself to God, by considering the divine excellence and infinity, and his own lowliness and wickedness, for a person's justice and perfection are nothing compared to God's.

The consideration of one's own bodily limitation also pertains to humility, since, in addition to our putrid conception and birth, we are more inferior and frail than all animals.²

3861. Thus the person who wishes to achieve divine illumination and union needs to have this virtue of humility, by means of which he will come [27v] to the knowledge of God and of himself. Seeing his position of extreme dependence, the further he plunges into the abyss of inferiority intellectually, by thinking about his dependent condition and nothingness, the more he will feel instructed in the knowledge of God and of himself, and appreciate that knowledge of self will lead to knowledge of God, and knowledge of God to knowledge of self. That is, through the exaltedness of God, he will appreciate his own inferiority, and through his weak inferiority, the height and excellence of the incomprehensible God.

Therefore we read about our Seraphic Father St. Francis that praying with many tears he used to say: "My Lord, who are you and who am I?" Though he prayed the whole night he scarcely said anything else. In fact he told Brother Bernard, that he had seen and heard such things that he had been granted two illuminations. In one he came to know the greatness and

Humilia te, et propinquabit tibi: extolle te, et recedet a te". Cf. *Sermo 279 De Paulo apostolo*, n. 6: PL 38: 1278.

¹ Concerning this classical ascetical distinction which is derived from the Benedictines and St. Bernard cf. D. J. Monléon, *I dodici gradi dell'umiltà*, Milano, 1958. In the Capuchin booklets of the Rule we find only the title *Dodici gradi dell'umiltà*. Cf. *Regola e Testamento...*, Venezia 1597, f. 110r-v.

² These are the classical principles of the knowledge of God and self, wonderfully expounded, for example, by St. Augustine and St. Catherine of Siena.

immensity of God, and in the other his own baseness, lowliness and nothingness.¹ He used to say: "My Lord, who are you? You are the great God and Lord of heaven and earth, Lord of lords, God of gods, King of kings. You alone God are the supreme good, infinite in every aspect. You are all uncreated,[28r] immense, immortal, incomprehensible good. It is clear that you are infinite God in your power of acting, in your wisdom in governing, in your goodness in communicating yourself to creatures."

3862. The infinity of God appeared to be so great that if the human or angelic mind turned its eye to even one of the aspects of God's infinity, it would not finish contemplating it in the whole of eternity, nor discover the source of its infinity. God appeared to be so great that one could not even consider, or discuss, or write about the smallest point of his excellence, so that if I wish to call him the greatest, it means nothing, the best, it means nothing, the strongest, this is a weak expression, the most wise, clement, just, beautiful, rich, splendid, all of these names and the like cannot be said of the real divine excellence and perfection without expressing a great loss of meaning, such is the distance from what exists in reality and what we may say or imagine about him.²

Yet he said in the highest wonder and admiration: "O my Lord, who are you? You are the highest sweetness, the most exalted beauty. You are the glory of the saints. You are the Holy One [28v] of the saints. You are a priceless treasure. You are true light. You are immense splendour. You are the source of life, true life of the soul, light of heaven, light of the world, splendour of the mind."³

3863. He recognized that all creatures are in God and God in all creatures, more perfectly than they are in their own beings. Whoever possesses God has every good. He recognized how by its exulted excellence the divine Majesty renders itself lovable and praiseworthy to all creatures, and how all should serve him with complete fidelity. He recognized how the love, which God bears towards even one soul, is so great and excessive that the love of the creatures in heaven and earth is nothing by comparison. He also saw many other things about the divine excellence, which cannot be explained. Therefore he said: "My Lord, who are you?"⁴

On the other hand knowing his own weakness he said with unquenchable tears and heartfelt sighs: "Who am I? I am a worm and not human; scorned by others and despised by the people.⁵ I am a dark abyss, a polluted and contaminated land, a child of anger, a vessel of abuse conceived

¹ This episode involving St. Francis is also mentioned in chapter 52 of the *Directorium* by Henry Herp, however, with Br. Leo taking the place of Br. Bernard as erroneously quoted by Pili. Cf. *Fioretti. III Considerazione sulle stimmate*.

² Cf. B. Cordoni, *Dyalogo*, chapter 15 ("Concerning the Marvelous Things which the Soul Sees concerning God by means of Divine Light"), f. 55r-56v.

³ *Ibid*, chapter 12 (How the soul finds humility in God by humiliating itself before God"), f43r.

⁴ *Ibid*, chapter 15; f57r-v.

⁵ Ps 21:7 (Vulg) = Ps 22:6.

in filth, living in misery. O miserable [29r] one that I am! Vessel of dung, sink of filth, blind, deaf, dumb, poor, naked, subject to all misery! My origin was filth and my end will be miserable. O Lord, who am I if not vanity and the shadow of death? Abyss of unseemliness, useless, fallow and sterile land, which bears no fruit but confusion! O my God, have mercy on me, remember that I am dust and like straw, nothing in myself, if not simply naught, nay less than nothing".¹

3864. Another humble and devout soul² used to say about himself that having been steeped in the abyss of self knowledge, he had such intimate knowledge of his own misery and human nature and sin, that finding himself in such misery he thought that there was no creature in the world who was as miserable, unhappy and worthless as he was himself. He thought that he had lost the beauty, which he possessed by virtue of being made in the image and likeness of God. He thought that he was dark, ugly, and disfigured, as if he were the devil incarnate. He considered himself to be a dissipater and nullifier of all good, of all virtue of all good conduct. He was a traitor to [29v] God, himself and his neighbour, a hypocrite, unfaithful and idolatrous, a thief,³ assassin and murderer, perverse, arrogant and obstinate, cruel, full of all woe and deceit, and enemy of God and of his saints and of all honest living.

3865. The devout soul said that he had made himself into an idol, which he adored and served. He used to say: "As I am full of darkness, because of this blindness he did not know that he was like an idol of stone or bronze. He had feet but he did not walk, that is in goodness. He had hands without touching, a mouth without tasting and a tongue without speaking and a nose without smelling, and ears without hearing, eyes without seeing."⁴ He recognized that the Lord, by way of speaking, was sicker of seeing me as I am in myself and my malice, than He was of seeing the devils: and all this for my salvation. He saw that my soul, which was made to be God's temple and the dwelling of the Holy Spirit, had become a prostitute, the demon's brothel. He saw my sins as innumerable and without measure surpassing the sins of the whole world. It seems to me that I had betrayed and sold my Lord Jesus Christ, not once but thousands of times, and not for thirty pieces like the [30r] traitor Judas,⁵ but for the smallest price. As often as I sinned I crucified my Lord,⁶ putting him and myself to death at the same time. I scourged him, hit him, crowned him, spat upon him, and abused him. It seemed to me that the first time I sinned I destroyed my miserable soul and from then on by sinning more I saw that I had

¹ B. Cordon, *Dyalogo*, chapter 12, f. 43r-v. - Note the "surrealism" concerning the misery of humanity, which comes from ascetical literature which was typical following the *De contemptu mundi* by Innocent III and adopted by the Capuchins. Cf C. Cargnoni, *Fonti, tendenze e sviluppi...*, in Cf, 48 (1978) 355 note 195.

² This "devout soul" must be Cordon himself, because Pili's text is almost literally copied from chapter sixteen ("Concerning the Wonderful Things which This Soul Saw Concerning the Same, Through the Above Light") of the *Dyalogo*, f. 58r-60r.

³ In the text *fure* that is *ladro*.

⁴ Cf. Ps 115:4-7.

⁵ Cf. Matt 26:15.

⁶ Cf. Heb 6:6.

fallen into such a deep abyss that neither angels nor men could imagine.¹ I thought that for the amount of good that I had not done I should deserve the pains of hell, and if this was so for the good people what could be said about the evil people? I can say for certain that I deserve a thousand, thousand million plus ten hundred million times hell, not as a punishment for all my sins but just for part of them.

3866. When I was given perfect knowledge of myself and of my sins, it seemed to me that they deserved infinite punishment, and so I hated myself completely. It aroused many holy desires in me, the first of these that creatures would work revenge on me.² It was a great joy to me to be rejected, persecuted, tormented and defamed by others.[30v] Taking pleasure in insults, as others do in honours, I did many things because of which I might incur the displeasure of myself and the world."

Thus the soul, by reading the book of self knowledge, recognizes that it has fallen so deeply into the abyss of poverty and misery that it is covered by so much confusion and shame and humiliation that it could never be proud again, nor exult itself, nor boast about anything and regarding itself as the most vile creature in the world says that it is not only unworthy of all grace and benefits, but is amazed, that God sustains it on earth.

3867. As enlightenment grows and reading this book continues, that is the book of self knowledge, the soul falls into such hatred of self, and as virtue is nobly put into practice and this knowledge becomes real, it desires that others will regard it as vile, to be mocked, tormented, persecuted and crushed. Sometimes it achieves such self-hatred that it appears to be mad and to have lost its reason.³

When a person has reached this point, so that he enjoys insults and abuse, then he has reached humility, wisdom and perfect peace,[31r] and from then on no creature can offend him.⁴

In such humble considerations he decides to amend his life and turn to divine mercy in all faith and confidence, and humiliated and confused he hopes in what is written: Ps 101. *He will regard the prayer of the destitute.*⁵

3868. With the greatest change of the mind possible, with all the feelings of the heart, prostrate before the divine throne, he says; *Have mercy on me, O God.* etc. O Lord, pardon my blindness and ignorance through your infinite piety. O most blessed Lord, he is really mistaken who thinks that he can do, say or think anything without you. I am certain that nothing can be carried on or end well without taking you as its origin from whom all that is best comes. This blindness

¹ The word *poria* which appears in the text is the equivalent of *potrebbe* in the dialect of the Marches.

² This appears to be a direct reference to Jacopone da Todi. *Lauda XI.*

³ This is the theme of "holy madness" which associates sanctity with folly. This was wide spread in the Sixteenth Century among Franciscans and supporters of Jacopone da Todi. Cf *Lauda 84, and 193.*

⁴ B. C. Xordoni, *Dyalogo*, chapter 18 ("How One Rises to True Humility and Perfect Peace Through Certain Steps"), f.66v-67v.

⁵ Ps 102:17.

with which you have stricken me Lord like Saul is good for me. Supply, O most merciful Lord, my deficiency in your goodness, and send Ananias, that is your grace, your splendour, and enlighten the darkness of my heart.¹ O Lord, my light and my salvation,² send your light and disperse this darkness, which has covered me. O divine light, enlighten [31v] my eyes that they may not sleep in death.³ O holy light, O true light, which enlightens every man who comes into this world,⁴ enlighten this blind person, who is seated in darkness and the shadow of death.⁵ O Light, through whom all light is made, enlighten my heart, so that I may recognize all that shines. O light without which nothing is true, indeed everything is vanity. O light, which enlightens Paradise, enlighten my eyes, so that I may see what I should see and no longer be proud before you. Enlighten my intellect, so that I may know your will.

3869. My God, illumine my darkness.⁶ Lord, help me in my need; pardon me as I cry out, since necessity knows no law. Remember, Lord, that you are the God of pity and do not withhold your mercy because of my iniquity.⁷

What can a person do that is so great that the Son of God who became human cannot cancel it? Lord, I gain encouragement from the publicans, the prostitutes, the thieves, the lost sheep, who were gathered by you with most ardent charity, most kind Shepherd. Therefore *Have mercy on me O God according to the greatness of your mercy.*"

One can say these [32r] or similar words before the throne of God to implore divine mercy. To do this one may find many things in the meditations of St. Bernard, St. Anselm and John Gerson etc.⁸

3870. Note also that for those who because of tepid charity or loss⁹ of fervour have little or nothing to do with higher divine matters, and are more inclined to earthly and sensual things, and so cannot overcome or mortify themselves, it is necessary that they live under the obedience of others, so that they may be encouraged by instruction, admonition, correction and good example and be helped in the life of perfection, especially when they have good will. It is necessary for them to humble themselves and discipline themselves under the

¹ This is a spiritual interpretation of the conversion of St. Paul. Cf. Acts 9. The image of Saule who became Paul which was applied by the early Capuchin chroniclers applied to John of Fano, is subtly hinted at here for the first time as it will be in the *Dialogue of Salvation*. - The expression "enlighten the darkness of my heart" is reminiscent of the prayer of St. Francis before the Crucifix.

² Ps 27:1.

³ Cf. Ps. 13:4.

⁴ Cf. John 1:9 (Vulg).

⁵ Cf Luke 1:79

⁶ Cf, Ps 18:29.

⁷ This page is copied from the *Dyalogo* by Cordoni, chapter 11 ("How the Soul Sought to Acquire Humility to Find God and Be United to Him"), f. 40v-41v.

⁸ Here one can see the original practical intention of Pili. The suggestion to read these spiritual authors is a clear indication of the sources which were then in vogue among the Capuchins.

⁹ The word in the text is *remesso*, from the Latin *remissus*, here the meaning is deposed, abandoned, lost.

direction of others, so that they can overcome the rebellion of human nature, practice mortification and self abnegation, and, whether they like it or not, be directed by others, so that they can progress from the fear to the love of God in the proper way.

However, those who are perfect and are caught up in such a fire of the love of God, and who lead their lives in great fervour, and who have totally [32v] renounced their own will, and seek God's pleasure incessantly, and are not only ready for but compelled to practice interior union have no need of a superior.¹

Note also that to achieve the above perfection it is necessary not only to flee the company of the perverse and dissolute, but also to cultivate the company of upright persons who are examples of the above virtues,² adorned with discipline, learned in wisdom, renowned for good reputation, maturely grave and well founded in the fear of God, since Psalm 17 says: *With the pure you show yourself pure* etc.³

Chapter 13

How Faith is Necessary⁴

3871. Because some people might despair of achieving such humility and consequently of achieving divine union, the divine goodness has made provisions for all circumstances, so that those who cannot approach God by one means can do so by another. Ps 8 says: *Nothing is hidden from its heat.*⁵ The means provided is faith, presupposing that the soul is well cleansed by contrition and confession and lives in the fear of God. *Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* Hebrews 11.⁶ It pertains to things, which are not seen;[33r] otherwise it would not be faith but knowledge.

Thus when someone believes in divine things, which he does not see, he has faith, since faith is acquired by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Letter to the Romans 10.⁷

Such faith is a special gift of God, through which the soul can draw its sweet Spouse to itself, as often as it wishes and whenever it likes to embrace Him, in order that it may persevere in firm faith and not waver, like the waves

¹ The necessity of obedience for the tepid but not for the perfect is a concept which has been taken in general from the *Directorium* by Herp, chapter 12: "De perfecta propriae voluntatis abnegatione, atque de obedientiae gradibus".

² That is endowed and gifted with virtue.

³ Cf Ps. 18 26.

⁴ This Chapter too is completely dependent on chapter 21 of the *Dyalogo* by Cordoni, ff. 70v-83v ("How a person can unite himself to God by means of faith, and how faith is the strongest of all virtues").

⁵ Ps. 18:7 (Vulg); Ps 19:6.

⁶ Hebrews 11:1.

⁷ Cf. Rom 10:17.

of the ocean. James chapter one.¹

3872. Such faith makes a person just and a friend of God. Genesis chapter 15 says: *He believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.*² Through such faith the Lord deigns to dwell in his faithful. To the Ephesians chapter 3.³ This is the secret bridal bed of the divine Spouse, on which He delights to lie. But since today there are few or none who prepare (even though it is very profitable) this bridal bed for the divine Spouse, He laments in Matthew chapter 8: *Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.*⁴

Faith is such a great thing that it makes everything possible. Mark chapter 9 says: *All things can be done for the one who believes.*⁵ Through faith the Lord forgave sins. Mark chapter 2 says: *When Jesus saw [33v] their faith he said to the paralytic, 'Son your sins are forgiven.'*⁶ He worked other miracles, as appears in the Gospel, and promised eternal life. John chapter 11 says: *Those who believe in me even though they die, will live.*⁷ In the Virgin Mary such faith drew the Son of God from heaven. Thus filled with the Holy Spirit Elizabeth did not say: You are blessed because of your virginity, humility, etc. but because you believed.⁸ This virtue made God become human and can make humans become divine. God could have shown many things to human eyes, such as, the glory of Paradise, Christ in the Sacrament etc.; but for our sake he did not wish to do that, so that human beings could have faith, and merit because of it by believing though not seeing.

3873. Such faith must be informed by charity, by believing to love and loving to believe. When a person does not omit any of those things, which he is bound to do, to believe, to hope, he is safe. He who does good deeds but does not believe is like one who pours water into a broken vase. He who hopes and does good deeds will receive a hundred times more than he who believes and hopes. Blessed is he who does good deeds and believes [34r] and hopes.

The lack of this virtue undermines the perfection of the soul more than one can imagine: Bernard says: "One evil deed loses and ruins many good deeds. Whoever believes possesses eternal life. He who does not believe stores up God's anger for himself".⁹ Mark chapter 16 says: *the one who does*

¹ Cf. James 1:6.

² Genesis 15:6.

³ Cf. Eph 3:17.

⁴ Matt 8:20.

⁵ Mark 9:23.

⁶ Mark 2:5.

⁷ John 11:25.

⁸ Cf. Lk 1:45.

⁹ This is how Cordoni cites St. Bernard: "Utrum malum multa bona perdit. Qui credit habet vitam aeternum. Qui vero non credit, iram Dei sibi thesaurizat" (*Dyalogo* f. 74v).

*not believe will be condemned.*¹ One may have as much as one likes of this faith, and blessed is the one who believes as much as he should. Granted that one had infinite faith in the goodness, generosity and mercy of God, he would still always have reason to believe more than not to believe.

The reason why faith is so pleasing to God is because nothing honours him as much as faith. Whoever really believes proclaims his omnipotence, his wisdom, his goodness and all the infinite virtues of God. Because of this God is forced (in a manner of speaking) not only to pardon sins and to confer very special gifts, but also to manifest himself.

3874. With the feet and wings of faith the soul runs and flies to heaven and overcomes and controls the invincible. The more vigorous this faith is the more treasures it acquires and the more it ascends to glorious and sublime states of grace and glory. Thus in many places in the Gospel [34v] one reads how much it pleased our Lord Jesus Christ, how he bent down more to those who approached him through faith than he did to those without hope.

How can I acquire such faith? I reply that one needs to believe in God very strongly, that is to accept as certain that through his omnipotence he can communicate with everyone.² As a magnet attracts iron, so faith draws God to the soul. As soon as the Blessed Virgin Mary believed, she conceived the Son of God. Thus as soon as the faithful soul is joined to God, she conceives and brings forth Christ and thus achieves the dignity of motherhood.³

3875. Note that the Lord says in John chapter 15: *without me you can do nothing,*⁴ thus giving us the courage to ask anything of him and of his Father in his name, since we can achieve nothing of ourselves. Lest our life and misery discourage us he says in Matthew chapter 7: *Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.* John chapter 14 says: *If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you.*⁵

If we do not trust [35r] the Son of God and the Father, when we ask in the name of the Son, we dishonour both the one and the other and demonstrate that our trust is not placed in the mercy and goodness of God, but in our own works. If we do not have proper confidence and perfect faith

¹ Mark 16:16.

² Cf. St. Bonaventure, *De regimine animae*, "Primum omnium necesse habes, anima mea, altissime, piissime et sanctissime de optimo Deo sentire". *Breviloquium* p,I, ch 2: "fides...dictat de Deo esse sentiendum altissime et piissime" (*Op. omnia*. VIII, 128a, V, 211a. See the same thought in *Quaest Dusp. De Mysterio Trin*, q.1.a.2; *Collationes de septem donis Spir. Sancti*, III, n 5. (ibid, V, 55b-56a, 469a).

³ This thought is reminiscent of Augustine and Bonaventure and is also present in St. Francis in the *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* 8 - 10, (FA:ED, I. p. 42): "We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined to Christ ... We are mothers, when we carry Him in our heart and body with a pure and sincere conscience, and give birth to Him through a holy activity which must shine as an example before others"; St. Augustine, *De sancta virginitate*, chapter 3: "beatior ergo Maria percipiendo fidem Christi quam concipiendo carnem Christi" (PL 40, 398).

⁴ John 15:5.

⁵ Matt 7:7; John 14:13.

let us ask for it seeking pardon for our lack. Let us ask our Lord to help our unbelief, as did the father of the boy who was possessed in chapter 9 of Mark, when the Lord said: "Do you believe? To him who believes all things are possible". He replied, "I believe, Lord, help my unbelief".¹ We should do the same: believe that the Lord wishes² to illumine, forgive and unite himself to us, pray that if our faith be not sufficient that he deign to help us, because he said that without him we can do nothing. He teaches us most kindly to ask with importunity, even if we are not heard the first time, the second or the third, for as long as we need to. He gives an example in Luke chapter 10, concerning the person who asked his neighbour for a loaf of bread and he refused till the other obliged him by his importunity.³ He wishes that we too do the same and that we ask with perseverance for grace [35v] and especially for faith, hope and charity.

3876. We should realize that every time faith remains steadfast and strong, the soul is united to God, since peevishness does not dominate us, and at the time when faith is most vigorous in the soul, God joins himself more strongly to our inner mind. Do not think that this is impossible since the Apostle says in chapter 3 of Ephesians: *Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.*⁴

If at times, through the suggestion of the devil, the soul, which is united to God does not believe that she is united to God, particularly when it feels no taste for spiritual devotion, but regards such things as dreams, then it is no longer united with God, but has shamefully detached himself from God. Then what in virtue of the union appeared at first to be full of delight and like possessing all treasures and nobility is lost, and one comes to much misery and calamity. This is because the soul has lost Christ and all goodness. While faith is in the soul, Christ is there. Once faith leaves, Christ leaves. When Christ leaves, life leaves, as St. Maximus says.⁵ This is the renowned virtue which scales heaven and captures it etc.

Chapter 14

HOW SPIRITUAL EXERCISES [36r] SHOULD BE MODERATED⁶

3877. It is a great mystery that the Lord commanded that all sacrifices be salted,⁷ to make it understood that all spiritual exercises should be spiced with

¹ Cf. Mark 9:23-24.

² The expression which appears in the text is *ne vogli* the equivalent of *Ci voglia*.

³ Cf. Luke 11:5-8.

⁴ Eph 3: 17.

⁵ Cordoni cites this expression of St. Maximo in Latin: "Discendente fide, descendit ab homine Christus, discendente Christo descendit ab homine vita". (*Dyalogo*, f. 83r.)

⁶ The chapter is taken substantially from chapter 5 of the *Exercitatorium spirituale* by Cisneros: "Qualia debent esse exercitia spiritualia, et de eorum moderatione".

⁷ Cf. Lv 2:13: "You shall not omit from your grain offerings the salt of the covenant with your God; with all your offerings you shall offer salt." Ez 43:24: "You will present them to the Lord and the priests will sprinkle

the salt of discretion, and that the servant of God should be temperate and discrete in the choice and practice of such exercises, and not take on so many that he does not reach his objective because of their excessive number.

Spiritual exercises should have the following characteristics.

First, they should correspond to Sacred Scripture and to the maxims of the saints and the example of the Fathers. Otherwise although at times they may seem to be good, they will be suspect.¹ On this matter it is necessary to seek the advice of an expert person.

Second, they must be tempered, so that they do not contain too much affliction or exertion, because such things cause sweetness of mind to become bitter, and peace of mind is destroyed. Thus it is necessary that they be undertaken with a certain variety for the mind, according to the proverb which says: Read sometimes, pray sometimes, sometimes tire yourself with fervour, and thus the time will appear [36v] to be short and the burden light. Do not be so worried about them that they cause you to be fastidious or ill; otherwise you will not be able to endure them.

3878. Third, let them be so arranged as to correspond to the state and circumstances of the individual, according to his interior and exterior disposition, since all things are not suitable for everyone. Further each should select the exercises, which combat the inclination to vice, and which promote the love of virtue.

Fourth, let them be constant, persevering to the end, so that they do not last for a while and are spurned after a little while longer.

Fifth, they should be set and determined, otherwise a person will accept as much advice concerning his exercises as there are works which he sees others doing,² or be as unstable as his unstable heart, and thus he will change them every day, always having a scattered and vague mind, and thus they will yield little or no fruit and often be set aside. The devout religious will have certain set exercises, so that they do not become negligent in progress of the spirit. Further they will adhere³ more to those exercises which they perceive inflame their progress [37r] the more. When a little is done well, with good motivation and with perseverance, it achieves greater perfection than many things done without order.

3879. Thus it is necessary that the servant of God assign precise times to his prayers, when he can occupy himself with God alone.

The night is a suitable time for prayer: *The night is my illumination for my delight.* The Psalm says: "*At midnight I rise to praise you.*"⁴ So too is dawn:

salt on them; then they will offer them as a holocaust to the Lord".

¹ Compare this expression with the *Ordinances of Albacina* n 67.

² The manuscript text reads *ad altri* whereas our text reads *da altri*.

³ The text reads *astrengano*, that is *si constringano*, *si leghino*.

⁴ Ps 138:11 (Vulg) = 139:11; 119:62.

*He who watches for me at dawn shall find me.*¹ According to Jerome and Bernard night time after Compline is also a suitable time for prayer.² So too is the hour of None. Acts chapter 3.³

There are many different ways to pray. The Lord prayed with his face on the ground, and on the Cross with outstretched arms.⁴ Moses did the same thing.⁵ This method is very efficacious and pleasing to God as he sees the likeness of his Son with outstretched arms. Solomon prayed with his hands joined.⁶ Magdalene prostrated herself at the feet of the Lord.⁷ The Publican and the Prodigal Son did not dare raise their eyes to heaven.⁸ All of these methods are good according to the different kinds of prayers and petitions.

3880. Note also that prayer is most necessary for the servant of God, if he wishes to make progress in his love and service.[37v] Thus the religious who does not practice daily prayer is not only wretched and useless but possesses a dead soul in a live body.

Thus one cannot estimate the worth of prayer in promoting virtue and what is useful and in removing what is hurtful. It makes one overcome trials and temptations, trample down emotions, recognize and overcome the wiles of the devil. It makes one live joyfully in God's service, walk the road of toil and affliction and work at the spiritual life, and not dwell on desires of the flesh. It enlarges the soul in holy sentiments, fervour, devotion and thoughts. It enlarges the heart in pleasing God with a virile spirit and stable and constant resolve. It eradicates vices and implants virtue. It moves towards the ascent to contemplation and enjoyment of the embrace of the Spirit, since the unction of the Holy Spirit is received in prayer, which instructs the mind in everything.⁹

3881. These are the fruits of prayer, which cannot be tasted except through the example of uneducated and simple people, who have acquired a very extensive knowledge of God and of heavenly and natural things through the practice of prayer alone,¹⁰ and enjoy the closest [38r] familiarity with God, through love and the embrace of the perfection of all the virtues.

¹ Ps 8:17 (Vulg).

² Cf. St. Jerome, *Epist 22 Ad Eustochium*, n 37 (PL 22,421). St. Bernard, *Sermo 86 in Cant* n 3 (PL 183: 1196).

³ Cf Acts 3:1.

⁴ Cf. Mark 14:35; Matt 26:39.

⁵ Exodus 34:8; 17:11-12.

⁶ Cf. 1 Kgs 8:54.

⁷ Cf. Luke 7:38, even if this sinner is not to be identified with either Mary of Bethania, or Mary Magdalene.

⁸ Cf. Luke 18:13; 15:11f.

⁹ Cf. 1 John 2:20-27.

¹⁰ This thought is also contained in the *Constitutions of 1536*, n 4. It was very popular among the early Capuchins.

Chapter 15

Concerning the Things which Spiritual Exercises Stimulate ¹

3882. We should give very careful consideration to the things, which stimulate virtue, since the origin of all good is the fervent desire to acquire virtue. The Apostle says: *Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit*, and serve the Lord.² The good religious cultivates many things in his heart through which he will motivate himself to spiritual exercises.

We should acknowledge with all diligence that we are obliged to love God because of his great perfection, infinite goodness, blessedness, grandeur and beauty, etc. Therefore, consider how much you love him, since it is little, in comparison to what you are obliged to. Secondly, we should acknowledge that we are obliged to love God because of the gifts we have received: creation, redemption, preservation, acceptance, vocation to religious life etc, and yet we are so ungrateful. Ps 105 says: *Let us bless the Lord because he is good* (this is the first aspect of the love of God, namely God's goodness); then we should love him through his gifts for he says: *because his mercy endures forever*.³[38v]

Thirdly, we should acknowledge that we are obliged to love God because of the things, which he has promised to us in eternal happiness, yet we work so languidly for such a precious treasure. The Psalm says: *They reckoned the desirable land as nothing*⁴

3883. Fourthly, we should acknowledge that we are obliged to love God because he has forgiven our sins and continues to do so and yet we fall back all the time.

Fifthly, we should acknowledge that we are obliged to love God because we are bound to observe the divine precepts, and never sin mortally, and love God above all else, and our neighbour as ourselves.

Sixthly, we should acknowledge that we are obliged to love God because we are stimulated by so many examples from the saints, yet we do not choose to follow them!

Seventh, we should acknowledge that we are obliged to love God because of the great beauty of virtue, its utility and uprightness, and because of the great ugliness of sin, its baseness and confusion.

¹ This corresponds to chapter 6 of the *Exercitatorium*, by Cisternos: "De his quae ad spiritualia exercitia nos excitant".

² Rom 12: 11. Here, following Cisternos, John of Fano lists 15 motives to stimulate the spiritual life: love of God, gifts of God, promises of God, the Pardon of God, observance of the precepts of God, the example of the saints, beauty of virtue, difficulties of the tepid, difficulties of victory, rare perseverance, shortness of life, severe judgement of God, pain of hell, hidden judgements of God, expectation of the saints in heaven. However, he passes over the motive of Christ's Passion, which Cisternos adds to these fifteen as the second in the series. This may be an oversight, or he may have wanted to emphasize this topic elsewhere.

³ Ps. 105:1 (Vulg).

⁴ Ps. 105:24 (Vulg).

Eighthly, we should acknowledge that we are obliged to love God because of how difficult it is for the tepid and negligent to begin the spiritual life, and whereas the Lord is ever ready to assist the weakness of our will, as far as we are concerned we take no care to do our part. There are few who begin to do well, fewer who continue and very few who persevere. Yet we should tend to perfection with all the strength of our will and trust in divine mercy.

[39r] Ninthly, we should acknowledge that we are obliged to love God because of how difficult it is to overcome conflict with the world, the devil and the flesh!

Tenthly, we should acknowledge that we are obliged to love God because of how few persevere to the end!

3884. Eleventh, we should acknowledge that we are obliged to love God because of how short the present life is! How much merit might we acquire, that those who are lost cannot regain, and yet we do not put the time given us to good use, and come to death and judgment devoid of virtue and full of vice.

Twelfth, we should acknowledge that we are obliged to love God because of how strong and severe is the divine judgment, by which body and soul may be cast into eternal punishment for one mortal sin. Venial sins too will not go unpunished.

Thirteenth, we should acknowledge that we are obliged to love God because of how bitter are the pains of hell, as will become clear below.

Fourteenth, we should acknowledge that we are obliged to love God because of how we should fear God's hidden judgments, which have raged against so many, who displayed great sanctity for a long time, and yet God abandoned them because of certain hidden vices. O how we should fear that divine goodness might abandon us!

Fifteenth, we should acknowledge that we are obliged to love God because of how eagerly the saints in heaven wait for us!

If we try to think about these and similar things, we shall [39v] not only be stimulated, but forced to follow our spiritual exercises.

3885. In conclusion let us note what has been said in the first book, that once a person has undertaken the above teachings with diligence and fervour, he will see how with the help of God his soul will prevail over vice and sin, vanquish inordinate desires with ease, and perform good deeds, especially those which are spiritual and divine, promptly and joyfully. He will be able to cleanse himself with great faith and hope, and to be able to progress to kissing the hand, that is to the illuminative way,¹ through recalling the divine gifts.

¹ The Purgative Way is symbolized by kissing the feet, the Illuminative by kissing the hand. This is a very common symbolism in mystical literature. Cf. St. Bernard, *Sermo 4 in Cant*: "De triplici profectu animae, qui fit per osculum pedis, manus et oris Domini". (PL. 183, 796-798); St. Bonaventure, *De S. M. Magd. Sermo I*: "per osculum pedum significatur devotio subiectiva; per osculum manus, devotio gratifica; per osculum oris

Chapter 16

The Exercise of Meditation for the Week¹

3886. The devout religious, especially the beginner, should undertake exercises in the Purgative Way if he wants to come to divine illumination. In accordance with what has been said in the last 14 chapters he could set out his exercises for the entire week in the following manner.²

<i>Monday</i>		<i>on sinners</i>
<i>Tuesday</i>		<i>on death</i>
<i>Wednesday</i>		<i>on hell</i> [40r]
<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Memory</i>	<i>on judgment</i>
<i>Friday</i>		<i>on the passion</i>
<i>Saturday</i>		<i>on the Virgin</i>
<i>Sunday</i>		<i>on heavenly glory</i>

3887. The servant of God who occupies himself following the Purgative Way, cries over his sins, through which he has offended God, while invoking divine mercy: cleanses his conscience, which is proper for those in the state of beginners. By doing this he prepares himself and is taught without human learning, by studying only heavenly things. Thus no matter how simple or illiterate he may be, whoever concentrates upon this exercise, rather than upon something theoretically acquired through learning, and concentrates on what is practical and acquired through experience, will be inevitably elevated to divine illumination.³

Before the soul can become the seat and very throne of uncreated wisdom, since the soul of the just is the seat of wisdom, it is necessary for the soul to submit to judgment and justice.⁴ The soul should submit itself to judgment because as the soul turns away from the creator by mortal sin, it abandons him and wretchedly attaches itself to creatures by love. It should

devotio amorosa" (Op. omnia IX, 557ss.

¹ This chapter takes its inspiration from chapters 12-15 of the *Exercitatorium* by Cisternos. It is the final synthesis of almost the whole of the preceding fifteen chapters which have dealt with the Purgative Way. However, it is a practical synthesis which sets out in concrete the exercises of prayer according to a spirituality of purification which is necessary for the initial phase of the spiritual life.

² This layout of topics for meditation on the basis of the week was carried on by the Capuchin Friars up to the last century, as one can see from the pocket editions of the Rule. Cf. for example, *Regola e Testamento del P. S. Francesco conli sette salmi e altre devotioni ...*, Venetia, per Nicolò Pezzana, 1690, 252-259 ("Meditationi per i giorni della settimana. Monday: On human wretchedness, Tuesday: On dark death..., Wednesday: On the Tremendous Judgement..., Thursday: On the Pains of Hell..., Friday: The Passion of Jesus Christ..., Saturday On the Blessed Virgin Mary..., Sunday On the Glory of Paradise.")

³ Note the insistence in this way of thinking upon democracy in the spiritual and mystical life, following the Franciscan charism.

⁴ This is an implicit reference to many Scriptural texts, such as, Ps 88:15 "Iustitia et iudicium praeparatio sedis eius"; Ps 96:2 "iustitia et iudicium correctio sedis eius"; or Ps 118:121 "feci iudicium et iustitiam": all of these text from the Vulgate.

completely humble [40v] itself so that through humility it may dispose the divine pity to pardon it and admit that by its temerity it has provoked the vengeance and justice of the supreme Judge. The soul should submit itself to justice so that the soul which has exchanged admirable delight in its Creator for abominable delight in creatures can afflict itself with sorrow corresponding to the degree of offense to the divine majesty and make reparation corresponding to what would be fitting were it a human insult.

So it is necessary for us to submit to judgment and justice.

3888. Following Matins on Monday,¹ kneeling in a suitable place, having made the sign of the cross on the forehead, the lips and the breast, and having repeated the sign of the cross on the forehead with the words; *Jesus Mary*; say devoutly: *Veni sancte Spiritus, reple tuorum corda fidelium, et tui amoris in eis ignem accende.* And say three times: *Deus in adiutorium meum intende. Domine ad adiuvandam me festina etc.*²

Then having placed oneself before God as before a severe judge who wishes to condemn, with the deepest feelings of love and fear, one must recall very carefully [41r] how much a mortal sin offends our Lord God.³ In order to move oneself to greater compunction and devotion using the "method of goading",⁴ at the beginning of prayer call to mind your sins and the wounds of your heart, and say, while accusing yourself very severely: "O my soul, consider diligently how much even one sin displeases God. What can be said of so many that they are almost beyond number? See how pride threw Lucifer out of heaven, how disobedience threw Adam out of Paradise, how Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of lust and the entire world destroyed by the flood".

3889. Consider how the Son of God, your most kind Redeemer, underwent such a bitter death because of sin. Consider how he grieved over all passed sins since the beginning of the world and all in the future till the end of the world, and over each one in particular and how he had a particular wound in his heart for each one, and did penance for each one so that sin would not go unpunished, nor God's justice remain unsatisfied. Think of all past sins and of all that still have to come for each one of which [41v] Jesus was afflicted most bitterly.

Recall how God should judge you for each of your actions. Think of the sins you committed before your conversion,⁵ of how many there were, in thought, consent, pleasure, on your lips, in your actions and that there are so many you cannot count them.

¹ Among the Capuchins it was a custom, which was officially endorsed by law in some Provinces, to make one's meditation after midnight Matins.

² Note the detailed suggestion for devout practices which were suitable for creating a method of prayer.

³ This is an example of discursive meditation which indicates a number of motives to move the heart to perfect contrition.

⁴ The "method of goading" (*via exasperativa*) was a prayer method which embellished spiritual motives in the mind to excite it to compunction.

⁵ The expression *nante a la conversione* means *prima della conversione*.

Think of how ugly and shameful your sins are, of how serious they are, and how they have betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ anew, scourged him, crowned him, spat at him, crucified him etc, especially sins of the flesh, which, however, should not be dwelt on for long, so that while in search of devotion, pleasure may not seduce you.

3890. Think of the sins committed after your conversion,¹ and how you have lived religious life so negligently, without fervour and aimlessly. Think of your sins one by one and confess them humbly before God. When you have made a good examination, consider diligently and thoroughly how little satisfaction you have made for these sins, and consider how in this life or in the next you will have to pay the last penny.²

After this if you feel contrite, full of sorrow, not from fear of hell,[42r] which you deserve, but because you have offended the most kind God,³ humbling your soul, with your face inclined towards the ground, regarding yourself unworthy to look up to heaven or direct your heart to God, you should say with bitter sorrow: "O most merciful Father, I am the prodigal son who have committed so many sins against your immense Majesty and have been so ungrateful. O most kind Lord, you have made me spotless and clean, and I have soiled and deformed and wounded myself with all my sins. O Lord, you were humiliated and crucified and I have tried to exalt myself with all my strength. O Lord, you hung naked on the cross, and I have clothed myself in improper and sensuous garments. You were given gall and vinegar and I have taken pleasure in eating and drunkenness." You might propose such things to yourself with great sorrow.⁴

3891. "What shall I do then? Must I despair? Certainly not, because the Lord does not wish the death of the sinner but that he is converted and live.⁵ The rusty iron and the stained mirror have been cleansed. I shall make the effort to heal myself through contrition, confession and satisfaction.⁶ To the degree that I am exalted, [42v] I shall be a disgrace to people and an outcast to the populace.⁷ I shall fight avarice with poverty. I shall afflict myself with fasting, vigils, the discipline and penance against the flesh. But above all I shall turn with all confidence and hope towards your most bitter passion with sighs and tears and to the burning furnace of your inflamed love."

¹ It is interesting to see how Pili thinks of religious life as "conversion"; and so divides life into two distinct sections, before conversion and after conversion, something like the division of the life of Francis.

² This expression is taken from the gospel. Cf Matt 5:26: "Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny".

³ This is a motive of love. We must not forget that the entire work aims to bring one to the exercise of pure love.

⁴ The reference to contrasts is always Christological, with a special predilection for Christ's passion. Such motivation is common in Capuchin spiritual writings.

⁵ Cf Ec 33:11.

⁶ These are the three basic traditional phases of penance: sorrow for sin, confession and satisfaction, seen as essential elements of the Purgative Way.

⁷ Cf Ps 22:7.

3892. Stir your soul in the first part of the Purgative Way, and filled with bitterness and sorrow because of the memory of its sins, advance to the second part, that is the "method of compunction",¹ and say with lively emotion "O Lord, I am sorry² from the bottom of my heart for having despised your Majesty and lost your friendship; for having given in to iniquity, for having ruined the faculties of my soul and body, wasted precious time; for not having observed your precepts and those of your holy Church and my superiors; for having been negligent and lazy in advancement in virtue and in prayer, meditation, reading and good deeds;³ for having bad habits and frequent intent to sin; for having been most ungrateful to you for having often forgiven [43r] my sins, and I confess, wretched that I am, that I fell back into them almost an infinite number of times; for charity often being extinguished in me because of the multitude of my sins and for having abandoned holy fear of you."

3893. Thus humbled, contrite and ashamed you should say: "O my Lord Jesus Christ, my God, I am a sinful person and the most unhappy sinner of them all, who has committed so many and such great sins against your unspeakable goodness that they cannot be counted,⁴ since they are more than the grains of sand on the seashore." Praying in this manner, or in another manner, as contrition or devotion might lead you, try as hard as you can to emit sighs from the heart, because just as lime purifies iron from rust and makes it shine, so heartfelt sighs completely wash away sins in the balm of divine grace by destroying the rust⁵ of sin.

Thus sighing from the heart you should say: "Where, then, O Lord may I flee from your face? If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I descend into hell, you will be there⁶ etc. What shall I do then? O Lord I am certain that you are most compassionate to all who truly turn [43v] to you, and that your mercy is beyond all the works of your hands."⁷ If you are still unable to motivate sorrow by this method, do not cease to run through the above mentioned things each night, since the Lord will answer our prayer when he sees that we are doing⁸ all that we can, and he will not desert us. Often he does not grant us compunction⁹ or other consolations to test our faith and patience and the aim of our actions in order to then grant us compunction.

3894. When you have performed the method of compunction, do not despair of

¹ Following the method of provocation which motivates towards compunction, comes the method of "compunction" (*via compunctiva*) which consists in heartfelt sorrow for having offended God.

² The text reads *doglio* the equivalent of *dolgo*.

³ These are the four traditional degrees of prayer in medieval mysticism: reading, prayer, meditation and action; *lectio, oratio, mediatio, operatio*.

⁴ Cf Ps 40:13.

⁵ The text reads *rosata* the equivalent of *rugiada*.

⁶ Cf. Ps 139:7-8.

⁷ Cf. Ps 144:9 (Vulg): "miserationes eius super omnia opera eius".

⁸ The text reads *famo* a form of *facciamo* in the dialect of the Marches.

⁹ For *Ne abandona non dandone* in the text read *ci abbandona non dandoci*.

God's mercy, and lift your soul up in hope employing the method of elevation.¹ Lift up your head, which you have so far held bowed, in great trust, and standing upright, rest a little, and bring your soul and mind back to consciousness, and with great sweetness of mind, consciously praise God, while imploring his mercy, and contemplating his grandeur and nobility in the following words which will motivate devotion: "Lord, Father, good, beautiful, sweet, merciful", and so on.² Then to obtain grace, without which it is completely impossible to ask for divine mercy, [44r] cleanse your soul and conscience well, placing the precious death and passion of his most beloved Son between yourself and God, and you should say: "O most generous Lord, through the passion and death of your most beloved Son, who was sacrificed for me on the cross, have mercy on me a sinner."³ You may repeat these words and say: "Through the Incarnation, the Nativity," etc.

You could also recommend yourself to the Virgin Mary by saying: "O most compassionate Mother of God, always a Virgin, you who through your unspeakable grace are more pleasing than all the saints to the eyes of the divine mind, ask God if he will deign to give me his grace." You could say these or similar words as devotion moves you.⁴

3895. When in the oratory on Tuesday, putting aside all the things, which were considered on Monday, think on death and how suddenly it comes. Think on how we prepare for death. Consider that you are to die immediately. Think how death is preceded by a very grave illness, concerning which all other illnesses have been messengers⁵ and ambassadors. Think [44v]on the terror and fear of nature, which does not want to die. When the passing from the present life becomes obvious to you, either from the doctors, or from your own observations, how great will be the clamour of conscience, and how great will remorse be, because you are not prepared as well as you could be. All your sins will come back into your memory. Your whole life, even if it has been a thousand years, will seem like a dream⁶ to you, or like an hour in comparison to eternity which

¹ This is the third degree or phase of psychological or spiritual progress in the meditation on sin undertaken during the night and aimed at repentance and conversion to God. The author calls it "elevation": following Cisternos. Note how the body should parallel this method of prayer; at first prostrate or kneeling with head lowered like a guilty person, then standing with head upright. This bodily posture is recommended by Cisternos in chapter 69 of the *Exercitatorium*: "*Incipientes* siquidem debent flexis genibus orare et oculis in terram deflexis, vel expansis brachiis in effigiem crucis, vel faciendo plures prostrationes; *proficientes* debent orare genuflexi, manus et oculos sursum extollentes; *perfecti* stantes erecti supra pedes, oculis in coelum elevatis cum desideriiis et suspiriis intimis; *contemplativi* jam super se elevati sedentes ad pedes Domini", (ed. Ratisbonae 1856, 228).

² This is already a simple prayer, which will carry over into the Illuminative and Contemplative Ways.

³ If Christ's suffering humanity is always before the contrite soul, it is only because it is the way to the Father and the relationship of love with the Father.

⁴ Note the frequency of this condition of prayer, which submits all to devotion in the meaning given to it by Bonaventure. Cf. Z. Zafarana, *Pietà e devozione in San Bonaventura*, in *S. Bonaventura francescano*, Todi 1974, 129-157.

⁵ The word *messi* in the text is equivalent to *Messaggeri*.

⁶ The word *somnio* in the text is equalent to *sogno*.

you are about to enter. If you could recapture the past, what things you would accomplish, but this will not be allowed to you! etc.

Think of how great your sorrow will be when you realize that you have lost eternal joy because of a momentary pleasure and have merited perpetual suffering. Think of the appearance of those who are dying, how their body becomes black and cold, the eyes misty, the tongue swollen etc, the devils are present, lions waiting for the kill. When the moment of departure arrives, oh how unwillingly the soul separates from the body. It would return willingly, but it may not. The devils will accuse each one of what they have done. Think of how the soul, once it has left the body, is immediately brought before the tribunal of the most just Judge to [45r] receive an irrevocable sentence. Think how the body is placed in the grave and left to be forgotten forever. In this world its condition has been that of a guest who spends a night in a motel and its memory is lost with the sound of the bell.¹

Think diligently on these and similar things assume the position of a wicked and powerful person before the tribunal of the judge and ask for pardon of all your sins with all your heart through the mercy of God and the merits of the passion of Sweet Jesus, his most compassionate Mother and all the saints.

3896. In the oratory on Wednesday, as above, one should think on the pains of hell in this manner. Think of horrible and frightening chaos, a subterranean place like a very deep well, completely filled with fire. Think of a horrible, large, dark place alight and burning with terrifying and terrible flames, where one can hear cries and screams of the wretched damned and inconsolable cries because of the extent of the pain, all of which are beyond expression. As Augustine says: "The fire of hell is as different from fire as we know it as real fire is from fire in a painting".²

Think of all [45v] the pains in the body, in all the senses, in all the limbs, strongest in those, who have the most sins. Think of the interior pains, the worm of conscience in memory, intellect and will, and in all the soul, which will be imprisoned in inestimable fire. Think of the inner passions, which will dominate all these faculties. Think of the duration of the pains, because since there is no redemption in that place, there is also no end to it. Being contrite because of these and similar considerations turn to the Lord with tears saying: "*Ne tradas bestiis animas confitentes tibi*",³ that is to devils, O Lord! How many are crucified in hell for a single mortal sin, and how much

¹ This is a very vivid description. The subject of death, which is the topic for meditation on Tuesday, is presented with many medieval traits, and yet with substantial truth. Compare what is said here with what St. Francis wrote in the *Exhortation and Admonition*.

² Dionisius of Montefalco does not quote St. Augustine, but St. Anselm, in *Elucidario*: "Tartarei ignis ardor sic istum materialem ignem vincit, ut iste pictum ignem"; and he quotes St. Bonaventure in *Fasciculario Exercit.* chapter 3: "Dicitur ignis ille ad ignem nostrum tanti esse caloris, quanti noster ignis est ad depictum". Cf. S. Bonaventure, *Soliloquium* chapter 3: *Op. omnia* VIII, 54s. - Note also an echo of Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*, canto 3, 22-27: "Quivi sospiri, pianti e altri guai/ risuonavano per l'aere senza stelle/ ... Diverse lingue, orribili favelle/ parole di dolore, accenti d'ira,/ voci alte e fioche, e suon di man con elle...".

³ Ps 73:19 (Vulg) = Ps 74:19: "Do not deliver the soul of your dove to the wild animals".

punishment am I who have committed so many and so great mortal sins obliged to undergo? O most just Judge, I am guilty of eternal damnation, I deserve every punishment."

Say these and similar things from the heart, humble your soul before the Lord, in whose presence you always seem to be.¹ Next refresh your soul with hope and with trust that you will receive forgiveness, with emotions of humility and fear, while recognizing your wretchedness, ask for divine mercy etc.

3897. In the oratory on Thursday, as above, [46r] think about the last judgment. Consider what terror there will be when wretched sinners will hear the Angel's trumpet and the terrible signs, and hear the thunder and lightening, and then they will be disturbed with horrible fear etc. They will behold the implacable anger of the Judge, the bitter divorce and separation, when the just will be gathered on the right and the unjust on the left never more to be united forever.

Then how much terror and amazement shall there be for the proud, the avaricious, the lustful, when they see themselves humbled, poor, despised and embarrassed on the left of the judge, completely desperate, and behold on his right joyful and happy those whom they regarded as wretched. Then they will say with great sorrow: "These were the ones we held up to much derision² and abuse. How insensitive we were! We thought that their life style was insane and their end without honour. Behold now they are judged to be among the children of God and their lot is among the saints etc."³

3898. Think how one has to render an account for every thought and deed. The witnesses will be the angels and the devils, to show how many sins we have committed and what was their nature, their number, place and time. The sinner will be confronted by his own [46v] sins and by the whole world. The Lord will display the marks of his passion and their merits will reprove the reprobate. Think of that terrible and irrevocable sentence: "Go you cursed into eternal fire", and of the sweet repast of the eternal supper to which the just will be invited by saying: "Come you blessed etc". One will see clearly how pleasing works of mercy are to God, when the Lord will demand an explanation from them (sinners) alone. Think of how the just will go to eternal life, and the damned to eternal fire.⁴

After stimulated your conscience by these and similar things turn your heart to God saying with sorrow: "O Lord, who is so just that they can escape your tremendous judgment? O Lord, do not enter into judgment with your servant, because no one alive would be justified in your sight".⁵ You may say

¹ This is the exercise of the presence of God which must accompany all prayer.

² The text which reads *che avessimo in deriso* is equivalent to *che avevamo in derisione*.

³ Cf Wis 5:4-5.

⁴ Cf. Matt 25:31-46.

⁵ It is easy to recognize these expressions as taken from the Psalms. Her Cf. Ps 143:2.

these or similar words as the Holy Spirit will enlighten you.¹

3899. On Friday think on the passion of the Lord, for which you may use the *Meditation* of Bonaventure,² or a booklet called *l'Arte del ben pensare*,³[47r]

3900. On Saturday think of the sorrows of the most blessed Virgin Mother of God.⁴ When in the oratory, as above, think of the sorrow which the most blessed Mother of God felt when she saw her blessed Son crying in the stable from the cold and the roughness of the hay and she had nothing with which to cover him. Think of the sorrow she had at the circumcision, in the flight into Egypt, when Simeon said: "This Child's sword will pierce your soul",⁵ when he was lost for three days, and throughout his life, when she often saw him cry, when he was tired from the fatigue of the journey, when he suffered thirst and hunger, when he was despised, cursed, watched to be ensnared, when she heard him speak of his death and passion, when she found out that he had been sold by Judas, captured by the Jews, abandoned by his disciples. In short, contemplate events up to the burial of the Lord.⁶ Finally, bathed in tears, you should pray to the Madonna with all your heart, that by her sorrows and those of her Son she asks God to give you grace, his benevolence and the remission of your sins.

3901. On Sunday think of the glory of paradise.⁷[47v]

II - THE ILLUMINATIVE WAY

This is the shortest part of the *Art of Union* and it contains only two chapters. John of

¹ This is a variation of the formula "according as you are moved by devotion", which underlines the spiritual freedom which a person must always guard, beyond rules and methods of prayer. This is a special characteristic of Franciscan affective prayer, and especially Capuchin prayer, a certain repugnance to binding the soul with rules and precepts to only one spiritual method, preferring to leave it to the direct action of grace and the Holy Spirit.

² Without doubt John of Fano is here alluding to the famous *Meditationes de vita Christi*, attributed to St. Bonaventure at his time.

³ This is a booklet written by the Canon Regular Pietro Lucca, confrere to Br. Stefano da Fermo, the apologist of Battista da Crema, the spiritual director of Elena dell'Oglio, who died in Bologna in 1522. The exact title is: *Arte nuova del ben pensare e contemplare la passione del nostro Signor Giesu Christo benedetto*, Bologna 1523 (and many other editions, e.g., Venice 1535, 1534).

⁴ This Marian devotion at the beginning of the Capuchin Order is very interesting. For example, at the end of the sixteenth century one of its greatest promoters was Father Francesco di Chambéry. Important also is the pastoral missionary work of Father Cherebino Fournier da Maurienne (+ 1609/10) under the protection of Our Lady of Compassion in imitation of the seven sorrows of Mary. Cf. Charles de Genève, *Les Trophés sacrés ...* 3 voll., Lausanne 1976: CF 49 (1979) 149-152.

⁵ Cf. Luke 2:35.

⁶ This is a review, in meditation, of all the sorrowful mysteries of Christ's life, seen in his Mother's soul. Pili has re-worked in brief chapter 17 of the *Exercitatorium* by Cisternos: "De materia meditationis Sabbato post matutinalem synaxin".

⁷ Here he is contented to merely hint at the topic of meditation without expounding the points, which may be read in chapter 18 of Cisternos: "Quae meditaturus est exercitator die Dominica expleto matutinorum officio". Perhaps he did not want to develop the meditation because it is a subject for the Illuminative Way, as is suggested in the Sunday meditation of "beneficio della glorificazione".

Fano repeats the necessity for purification in order to remove any obstacle to God's action (ch 1). Once again if "true perfection" consists in the pure love of God, without any other consideration, then, for the Illuminative Way as for that of beginners, meditation on God's gifts as topics spread over the week and special practical exercises of prayer are very advantageous (ch 2): Monday, the gift of creation; Tuesday, "the conferral of grace" (*gratificazione*), that is the gift of baptism and the Christian life; Wednesday, the grace of religious vocation; Thursday, the gift of justification; Friday, the "particular gift" of numerous endowments of nature, fortune and grace; Saturday, the gift of "guidance" (management) (*governazione*) or preservation in existence with nourishment of the body and all kinds of protection; Sunday, glorification, that is the gift of eternal life, the vision of the Redeemer and the glory of the angels and saints.

In undertaking these exercises, John of Fano recommends that there be no haste, but rather that they be carried out in freedom of spirit and, above all, using the word of God.

Chapter 1

CONCERNING THE ILLUMINATIVE WAY

3902. *Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui Domine.*¹ With the soul cleansed of all passions and all impediments which would not allow divine union removed, and, as a consequence, having thus arrived at kissing the feet of the just Judge and Lord, one may proceed to kiss the hand² of the kind Father in the Illuminative Way by readily considering his gifts.

Almost as an epilogue³ to the things stated above, I say that it is necessary for the soul to be mortified and detached from any kind of complacency, if it desires to acquire divine contemplation and union in a proper manner. Having set aside all special comfort and desire for all advantage and pleasure, the soul must pursue divine love with naked, single-minded resolve. It should follow the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, glorying in its perfect imitation and readily accepting any desolation or contradiction rather than consolation and exaltation, since it should set and base all its fulfillment upon faith alone and bare charity inflamed by God, and thus it is prepared to endure all adversity and tribulation without the aid of divine consolation. This is how Paul spoke [48r] about the fire of divine charity: "May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁴

3903. There are two reasons for doing this. Firstly, they desire to imitate the life of our Lord Jesus Christ even in suffering every affliction and tribulation and in losing every consolation of mind and body. This direction of the Lord was discussed above in the first chapter.⁵ Secondly because they are founded upon

¹ Ps 4:6: "Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord."

² The mark of the Illuminative Way is kissing the hand. See above.

³ *Epilongando* in the text is equivalent to *riepilogando*.

⁴ Gal 6:14.

⁵ This may be a mistake since it seems to be more logical to refer to chapter 10 of the Purgative Way than to chapter one.

such humility, that regarding themselves deserving of every dereliction and forfeiture of consolation, they place themselves under every creature without and pretense with all the awareness and motion of which they are capable. They want to be despised, hurt, afflicted, shamed and involved in every kind of worry, trial and dereliction by all creatures, even to the point of death, so that they can imitate their most patient leader Jesus in every desolation, even to the vilest punishment of the cross,¹ to which they are perfectly conformed.

Although they have learned to boast only of the cross, nevertheless they do not presume to impede divine consolation, [48v] infusion,² attraction and illumination through their own fault. Moreover, following the complete disposition of grace, they offer themselves with all their strength as willing and living instruments totally at the service of the divine pleasure,³ so that they will never be found guilty of ingratitude or negligence.

3904. With respect to the exterior person, persons in the Illuminative Way should seek abject and worthless things, which lack any human consolation.⁴ With respect to the interior person, persons in the Illuminative Way should desire naked charity without any satisfaction, accompanied by every affliction and desolation. It should not seem to them that it is as much suffering as they should suffer for the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, when they continually review⁵ with the compassionate and tearful eye of the mind his inexplicable anxieties, desolation of spirit and flesh, bloody sweat and naked love, for God and the human race, while completely lacking all spiritual and bodily consolation. He won a magnificent and excellent victory in that most horrible battle. He redeemed the human race. Thus by following the salvific way of the cross [49r] he taught what made up the basis of perfection.

I conclude that although we should love God simply for himself and for his infinite goodness, since this is what constitutes the real perfection of the human race,⁶ and not chiefly for his gifts, as was shown above, none the less the consideration of the gifts,⁷ both for beginners as well as for those

¹ Cf. Wis 2:20.

² *Influenze* in the text is equivalent to *influssi*.

³ This is an attitude towards giving which is deeply felt by John of Fano which he had already expressed to the leaders of Brescia.

⁴ "Exterior person" and "inner person" are two Pauline expressions, which were extended and developed in Augustinian anthropology, which had great influence on medieval tracts on the spiritual life, for example, David of Augsburg, *De exterioris et interioris hominis compositione*, (ed. Quaracchi 1899) which greatly influenced the spirituality and life of novices. Cf. John V. Flemming *An Introduction to the Franciscan Literature of the Middle Ages*, Chicago 1977, 216-224.

⁵ This is a very descriptive expression which depicts in a marvelous manner the attitude of the Capuchin at prayer concentrating on the contemplation of the crucifix, with affection and tears. In the *Constitutions of 1536* we find the same suggestion: n. 56 ("cuore pietoso", "sentir una particella de li suoi penosissimi dolori"), n. 1 ("abiano sempre inanti a li occhi de la mente"), etc.

⁶ All of Capuchin spirituality with its exercises, devotions and penitential practices, is aimed at the acquisition of "pure, unadorned" love, "real unadorned simple charity and love".

⁷ In the practice of the spiritual life meditation on the gifts and benefits God gives is important, especially during the passage between the Purgative Way and the exercise of the Illuminative Way. All the spiritual

proficient in the Illuminative Way affords great assistance, etc. Thus the following order in this exercise is to be observed

Chapter 2

CONCERNING SPIRITUAL EXERCISES FOR THE WHOLE WEEK¹

3905. After Compline on Monday with diligence consider the gift of creation saying: "I give you thanks, O my most merciful Lord God, who has predestined me from eternity and loved² me with perpetual charity, and when it pleased you made me a most noble creature, that is a human being, not a stone, or wood, or the like.

With respect to the body you gave me healthy limbs, good complexion, preserving me from many things and making me fit for your service.[49v] With respect to my soul you created me in your image and likeness, making me immortal and capable of knowing you, endowing my soul with natural faculties and most worthy enlightenment. At my conception you gave me an Angel Guardian,³ from whom I would receive many gifts, and you ordained that I be born to Christians, not Jews, not pagans". etc.

When you have recognized these and similar things, you should say with great reverence adoring and glorifying God: "*Agimus tibi gratias omnipotens Deus pro universis beneficiis tuis, qui vivis et regnas in saecula seculorum. Amen. Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino, or Te Deum laudamus, or Sit nomen Domini benedictum. Ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum, or Domini exaudi orationem meum. Et clamor etc. Oremus. Gratias tibi ago, Domine sancte Pater omnipotens aeternae Deus, qui me dignatus es in hac die per tuam sanctam misericordiam custodire; concede mihi hanc noctem mundo corde et corpore sic transire, quatenus mane gratum tibi servitium exsolvere possim. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.*"

authors insist on it and find the most compelling arguments in Scripture which teaches us to remember the marvels God works ("mirabilia Dei"). Bernardino d'Asti in his *Orazioni devote* thanks God "for the benefits of creation, redemption, religion and reform and for all his benefits". It is a theme which reappears as a refrain in all his prayers. John of Fano lists seven gifts in the next chapter for each day of the week in this order: creation, the conferral of grace, vocation, justification, conferral of gifts, guidance, and glorification.

¹ This chapter depends on chapter 23 of the *Exercitatorium* by Cisternos ("De modo, quem per omnes hebdomadae ferias ad animae irradiationem religiosus debet habere in divinorum beneficiorum recognitione et pro eis gratiarum actione secundum viam illuminativam"), but it is much shorter. Cisternos proceeds in an orderly manner in divisions of three, like St. Bonaventure: Pili follows him faithfully. The Illuminative Way, which is here dealt with hurriedly in two chapters, is treated at greater length in the work by Cisternos in six chapters.

² Cf. Gen 31:3.

³ Devotion to the Angel Guardian is introduced here, which was savoured by the Capuchins and which, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, was to become a characteristic of popular spirituality through the influence of the Jesuit school as well.. Cf. M. Petrochi, *Storia della spiritualità italiana. II: Il Cinquecento e il Seicento*, Roma 1978, 187-193; already published in, *Una "Devotio Moderna" nel Quattrocento italiano? ed altri studi*, Firenze 1961, 119-131 ("Angeli del Barocco").

3906. Trying to be on guard, signing yourself devoutly with the sign of the cross on the forehead,¹ say: "*Jesus, Maria*, rejoicing in your heart, say: "O most ardent lover, O my love,[50r] O my glory, O my Father, my hope, how greatly I love you with childlike love? How much I embrace you with all my heart?"

If you repeat these words often from the heart,² you will make great progress.

Beware that in this exercise of the Illuminative Way one cannot rush through things in haste, rather one should stop at each step ascending from the fire, which is in your soul until it turns into admiration. When the time for prayer is not enough to meditate on everything, do not rush and do not stumble, nor run one thing into the other, since it is not right that meditation time is passed off in haste. However, if the Lord visits you during meditation, stop, preserving those graces in yourself and maintaining your heart expanding with fervent affection. With regard to the set time you can always take up what was missed at another time, but observe this rule for all steps.³

3907. On Tuesday think on the gift of the life of grace: "I render you infinite thanks, O most merciful Lord my God, in that you deigned to give me grace through your most beloved Son,[50v] not abandoning him, but giving him as a payment, as an example, as a companion for me. You gave me the Holy Spirit as a sign of my adoption, as a wedding ring, as a pledge of union. You gave me the Holy Church as a refuge, where I could rescue myself from the flood of sin as Noah did in the ark. You gave me all the sacraments, very healthy medicine for the soul. To demonstrate to me that I had the life of grace and had received your grace, you called me by your name, which is Christian. In memory of your most liberal mercy you made me a child and heir of the kingdom of heaven".⁴ Following this do what was set down for Monday.

3908. On Wednesday think of the gift of your vocation: "I render you thanks, most compassionate Lord my God, I who have despised you through various sins after receiving so many gifts from you and returning to be like an animal, because you have supported me with such patience, waited for me with such long suffering and have not wished to damn me, nor permit me to die in such a state. I have erred in many ways and you have called me back in many ways. You have deigned to take away from me my hardness of heart, giving me good will, which is the chief of your gifts,[51r] and have taken away from me the obstacles to my conversion. Every time that I wanted to return to you, like the Prodigal Son, in joy you have received me in a fatherly manner hugging me

¹ Note the importance of the sign of the cross and the names of Jesus and Mary evoked at the beginning of prayer with the obvious intention of purification and spiritual freedom.

² This is another precious suggestion, the fruit of an experience of prayer!

³ This piece of advice is also precious, because the objective of prayer is union with God, finding God, meeting him, experiencing him. There is great spiritual freedom in this, not bound by any devotional practice which is only a means. This principle is heavily underlined by Mattia da Salò in his *Pratica di orazione mentale*.

⁴ Note the theological intensity and simplicity of these prayers. Capuchin spirituality, though full of sentiment, does not indulge in sentimentalism, but is based upon biblical and theological foundations.

sweetly with your loving embrace, and have given back to me the original stole of innocence and the ring of faith.¹ You not only snatched me from the evil world, but also placed me in the company of your servants. Allowing me the precious opportunity for penance, you have most mercifully forgiven all my sins through my profession as at my baptism.² Say as above for Monday.

3909. On Thursday consider the gift of justification:

"I render you thanks, O most kind Lord my God, who deigned to change my will in such a way that penance, which previously seemed to be bitter now seemed sweet to me.³ Things which I formerly thought were good now were insipid to me, making me abstemious. I thank you that you gave me constancy and perseverance without which no one can be saved.⁴ So that what had already been undertaken might not cease, you gave me strength, hope of forgiveness, of grace and of glory, hatred of past evil [51v] and the desire for future good. So that difficult things might not be put off, you prepared a very sweet repast for me, from which I derived nutrition, that is the Sacrament of your the most precious Body and Blood as sustenance for the journey, in the Sacrament of Communion, in the Sacrifice of Redemption. You gave me the adornment and the exercise of virtue, with which I could cover the ugliness of my wickedness. So that I might not either lose or be impeded from acquiring justification, you showed me the example of the saints and of Scripture by means of which I could be motivated and informed."

3910. On Friday consider the bestowal of special gifts:

"I render you thanks, O most sweet Lord my God, because you have given me countless gifts of nature, of good fortune and of grace. When I erred, you brought me back; when I was ignorant, you instructed me; when I fell, you raised me up; you gave me the grace to meditate and to rouse myself interiorly by illuminating my mind, inflaming my emotions, by cooperating in this you gave me eternal life. So that the above mentioned things would not be lost or fall away you watched over me in a special way by removing the occasion [52r] of sin, by giving me the strength to resist, and healing my emotions so that I would persevere. If at times you permitted that I was overcome by temptation, you raised me up stronger providing me with strength to resist kindly stretching your hand over me preserving me", etc.⁵

3911. On Saturday think on the gift of guidance (*gubernazione*): "I render you thanks, O most kind Lord My God, for preserving my being to this moment, giving me daily growth, giving me a hale and hearty existence, seeing that of myself I am nothing. You have controlled my life since childhood to the present, and you have preserved me from danger, from illness, from enemies and from

¹ Cf. Luke 15:20-22.

² This is a widely held opinion in monastic spirituality, which also blossoms in the *Constitutions of 1536*, n. 20.

³ Obviously this is an echo of the opening words of St. Francis' *Testament*.

⁴ An allusion to Matt 10:22, which is quoted also at the end of chapter 10 of St. Francis' Earlier Rule.

⁵ Cf. Ps 139:5: "You hem me in behind and before, and lay your hand upon me."

other evils with such care. You gave me sufficient food and clothing for my sustenance as well as other necessities of life. Leading me in prosperity and adversity, you have given me many good things, purging sins, increasing merit. You have been so intensely caring over me that you seem to have forgotten all else, and occupied yourself with my good, welfare and health alone."

3912. On Sunday think of the gift of glory: "I render thanks to you, O most generous Lord my God, because you have promised me the eternal joys of paradise, which is the enjoyment of [52v] the Godhead, of the vision of the Redeemer and of his most beautiful Mother. You surround me with the happiest company of the saints, who are most noble, beautiful and full of charity. You have conferred the stole and dowry of soul and body within me. Outside of me you have placed me in a most pleasant and delightful place overflowing¹ with all that could possibly please. You have promised me many other joys and indescribable benefits which are beyond number, measure or price. I shall enjoy the fulfillment of all my good wishes and the removal of all evil. I shall have all I desire and nothing that I loathe.

3913. Note also that in considering these benefits it is useful to use some passages from and the authority of Scripture, such as: "*To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing honour and glory and might forever and ever. Amen. Or To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.* Or the Psalm *Bless the Lord, O my soul etc.*, or *To you I lift up my eyes etc.*, or other stimulating words, such as, "O highest good, or infinite charity" and the like.²[53r]

III THE UNITIVE WAY

This section is made up of eleven chapters, which in practice represent a treatise on the love of God. "The Unitive Way", means "coming to true wisdom" (ch 1). This wisdom is a lifting up of the person to God at the centre of the soul through loving sentiments without logical reasoning (ch 2). Like the steps to Solomon's throne, there are six effects of such divine: illumination, arousal (*infiamazione*), delight, desire, saturation and excess of mind. Others degrees are security and complete tranquility (ch 3).

In this transforming love the soul feels like "God's living instrument", and is endowed with six "ornaments": quiet, silence of the intellect, loving familiarity with God, abandonment and giving to God and finally contemplation in dark light (ch 4). To reach such love the soul should live in universal submission, which might be called what we know today as "minority" subjecting oneself to God and to all creatures and regarding oneself as most vile, while the three faculties of the soul, which mirror the Trinity, are exalted by the work of the Spirit (ch 5). What is more the soul should always and everywhere practice "aspirations" by means of short stimulating prayers, without, however, doing too much violence to the heart (ch 6). Thus the spirit will take root and be established ever more in the union of God's love.

In this way the lower parts of the soul are raised to the level of the higher parts and form a

¹ *Refertissimo* in the text is a Latinism for *ricolmo*.

² This is an important criterion of discernment for the balance and authenticity of Christian prayer. The biblical quotations are in order: Rev 5:13; 1 Tim 1:17; Ps 103:1; 123:1.

unity with them, even though this will require great effort when grace is not consciously experienced. This is the first step towards "rising with (God)" (*consurrezione*) as Pili explains following the mystical teaching of Henry van Herp. Other steps follow this: delight in God, such that sweetness invades the soul and generates certain "inebriation"; an "arousal of the heart" which makes all that is not in God most vile and nothing. The fourth and last step is "acute love" in which the soul is penetrated by God, receives heavenly revelations, but is also deprived of all consciously felt grace in order to learn to serve God with "pure and naked love and absolute charity" (ch 8).

In particular the exercise of "aspiration" consists in a total offering to God, in seeking God alone enlighten by consciousness of oneself and God, by taking away any difference to Christ and uniting oneself and conforming oneself perfectly to God's will (ch 9). In any case the contemplative life presupposes the active life and this is where the importance of the exercises of mortification comes in since they are expressions of the active life: confession, fasts, vigils, abstinence, manual work, and other bodily afflictions (ch 10). Indeed the contemplative should often interrupt his contemplation to undertake the lesser degrees of union, which pertain to beginners and the advanced so as not to begin to despise them and to make virtue appealing through example. Let him present himself peacefully and without anxiety for manual work and intellectual activity in order not to disturb his psycho-physical balance as well as to lend concrete assistance to his brothers without distinction and in a spirit of obedience to the superiors (ch 11).

Chapter 1

THE UNITIVE WAY¹

3914. To achieve true wisdom is nothing but to unite the soul to God through love. The Unitive Way is operational when the soul being well cleansed and illumined and united to its Creator through love, exulting and rejoicing over his most excellent perfection and infinity, and desiring to please him alone, freely and devoutly extols him, praises him, admires him and languishes in his love, in such a way as to be able to say with the spouse in the Cantic: *Anima mea liquefacta est, dum dilectus locutus est: fulcite me floribus, stipate me malis, quia amore langueo.*² This love, through which you go in search of your beloved, should be very pure, based principally on his goodness and not for one's own comfort, as it says in the Psalm: "*Quid enim mihi est in coelo, et a te quid volui super terram? Deus cordis mei et pars mea in aeternam,*³ that is, I love you simply and not for your heavenly or earthly gifts, O God of my heart and my inheritance for eternity, but for you alone and for your great goodness.

3915. Thus one should understand that one who raises his mind to God through the Unitive Way, excludes all creatures, and withdraws the affection [53v] of his love from everything, as Ecclesiastes says in chapter 1: "*Vidi cuncta quae erant*

¹ This chapter is copied from the first part of chapter 26 of the *Exercitatorium* by Cisneros ("Quid est via unitiva et perfectiva, et de conditionibus ejus, qui ad eum cupit pervenire").

² Cf. Cant 5:6 and 2:5.

³ Ps 73:25-26: "Who have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

sub sole, et ecce universa vanitas,¹ and is totally converted to his Creator. Then like a bird flies high and does not worry about flies, so you not being at all concerned about earthly things, should rise on high: "*Ad solem tendo*, that is to my Redeemer Jesus Christ, who is the true sun of justice, alone Holy, alone Lord, alone most high. I do not want my heart to be miserably occupied with earthly things

This Way is acquired by intimate recollection of the faculties of the soul, ascending from exterior things to interior, from the least to the greatest, from the temporal to the eternal.²

Chapter 2

HOW THE SOUL THROUGH FERVENT LOVE, WITHOUT THE ACTION OF THE INTELLECT ASCENDS TO GOD³

3916. The saints say that true wisdom is achieved when, through fervent love, the soul raises herself to God and draws near to him. As Dionysus says,⁴ this wisdom is recognized in ignorance, since no argument of human [54r] intellect or knowledge could elevate the soul to such loving union, but God alone can deign to communicate to the soul sensitivity towards and taste for Himself without any action of our intellect. As far as understanding is concerned the soul receives divine infusion passively, not doing anything active, since the senses do not have the capacity where only the emotion of loving can hold sway.

St. James has this to say concerning such wisdom: *Omne datum optimum desursum est*,⁵ that is from God. It is not produced within us by study, as the sciences are acquired by human effort, but by the exercise of inner emotions. The Psalms say concerning this: *Renuit consolari anima mea, memor fui Dei et delectatus sum et defecit spiritus meus*.⁶ This means that

¹ Eccle 1:14 (Vulg) = Quo 1:14 "I saw all the deeds that are done under the sun; and see, all is vanity and a chasing after wind."

² One hears the language of Bonaventure. Cf. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, chapter 1, n. 6 "iuxta igitur sex gradus ascensionis in Deum sex sunt gradus potentiarum animae, per quos ascendimus ab imis ad summa, ad exterioribus ad intima, a temporalibus ad aeterna ..." (Op. omnia 297.)

³ This chapter summarizes chapters 28 ("Quomodo anima nostra per fervidum amorem sine aliqua intellectus operatione erigitur in Deum") and 29 ("Quod exercitator plus sentit et diligit quam videt et intelligit") of the *Exercitatorium* by Cisterios. Both refer to the teaching of the Pseudo-Dionysus.

⁴ The Pseudo-Dionysus writes: "There is a most divine knowledge of God, which is obtained by means of ignorance, according to a union higher than the intellect, when the intellect, detaching itself from everything that there is and then abandoning itself, unites itself to rays of superior brightness, and is illumined from these rays to other rays with impenetrable depth by wisdom". (*De divinis nominibus* chapter 7, 3: PG 13, 867 and 871).

⁵ James 1:17: "Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above."

⁶ Ps 77:4-4: "... my soul refuses to be consoled. I think of God and I moan; I meditate, and my spirit faints. You keep my eyelids from closing; I am so troubled that I cannot speak"; as usual the text comes from Ps 76:4-5 (Vulg).

the soul, which removes all carnal and sensual pleasure from itself, is exhilarated and raised on high by the touch of divine wisdom, and so its spirit faints.

3917. Philosophers never arrive at such wisdom, nor do those who occupy their minds with bodily fantasies. Those who wish to taste of the tree of knowledge, as did Adam, are excluded from experiencing divine pleasure. Only those, who place their affections and hopes on the tree of life that is on the cross and the merits of the Son of God, experience it ¹ [54v] With respect to the method of elevating the soul to God through love and to the highest mansion (*porzion suprema*),² this is supernaturally infused into us beyond all other gifts. Thus the soul is not as completely at rest in anything else, not even in a particular comfort or consolation given by God himself, but only in God himself who is supremely lovable. The soul seeks God alone, loves God alone, and asks for this alone, since it feels that God is the highest good to the total exclusion of every wretchedness or defect.

As Dionysus says (*Divini nomi*, chapter 7)³ this wisdom has such a hold on the beloved through love that they do not think about its theoretically or ponder over it or speculate on its fine distinctions, which do not motivate love. If someone is very concerned to speculate over the fine distinctions of truths (for example concerning the Trinity, the creation of the world, in which divine power is manifest) this will not inflame love.⁴ Such wisdom only survives on condition that the soul having inflamed itself to elevate itself and warm itself in the burning love of the Creator, feels him and ineffably understands him without any physical likeness. Thus we can experience things beyond the natural, but not explain them, because they are simply spiritual things.[55r] No material thing can be of any help, since God works this by himself. Each one, no matter how simple or illiterate they may be,⁵ can immediately become

¹ This conviction is part of Christian mysticism, and was strongly emphasized in Capuchin spirituality, as one can see, for example in Bernardino Ochino in his sermon to students in Paris. It also flourishes in the *Constitutions of 1536*. n. 116, 121 and especially in n. 4 and 111.

² According to Henry Herp and the German-Flemish school, there are three mansions to be prepared for the divine Guest by contemplatives: the heart, which is the lowest mansion; the mind, which is the middle mansion which is the source of the three faculties: memory, intellect and will, because of which it is also called soul and spirit; and finally the naked essence of the soul, which is the highest mansion, which Pili calls here "porzione suprema dell'anima". Cf. *Directorium aurem contemplativorum*, chapter 20: "De tribus mansionibus, quas in contemplativo exonorari oportet" (Edition edited by Martin Kelly, *Directorio de contemplativos*, Madrid 1974, 538-541).

³ See above and the short tract *Teologia mistica* by Dionysus the Aeropagite where how one adheres to God through unknowing is clarified.

⁴ It is a known fact to spiritual persons that God is approached through love, not by speculation. In a moment of frankness a modern hermit, who had been engaged in the contemplative life for many years, revealed this truth: "One day he said - I found myself meditating on the mystery of the Trinity. The more I reflected the more I strayed and became dry. I was disturbed, overwhelmed, discouraged. Then I said to myself: I will never know God except by loving him. To love the Father as a Son does; to love Jesus Christ, the Word, as a friend would; to love the Holy Spirit who is my guest. Immediately light, peace and joy returned to my soul."

⁵ This expression, which refers to the charming episode of St. Bonaventure who assured Blessed Giles that a little old lady could love God more than a theologian, resonates in the *Constitutions of 1536*, n. 4 "Although

a great disciple in this love, in accordance with the degree, whether great or small, that the Lord deigns to communicate it to him and that he disposes himself to receive it. Although it belongs to the soul to prepare himself, it could never prepare itself sufficiently to reach this objective.

3918. The Psalm confirms this saying: "*Gustate et videte quoniam suavis est Dominus.*"¹ It demonstrates that every devout person tastes God firstly by loving affection. Then what he has tasted with his interior palate, he knows in his intellect. One observes in many devout contemplatives that they love more than they know or understand, which is obvious in many devout simple people who are more devout than many doctors and more illumined in the things of God and of the soul, where love is greater and extends to more things than does intelligence, and so more things come to them through love than through previous knowledge.

Seek such love, the light of faith, the presence of grace and charity.[55v] Dionysus says in the *Mistica teologia*² that this high wisdom is wisdom that only a true Christian and a real friend of God could possess.

3919. It is clear that, although this love is granted to devout people without previous knowledge, because it is not to be found in the soul except through faith which comes to us from God, yet as this grace is not conferred upon all so plentifully, those who have only recently dedicated themselves to contemplation³ are required to dwell upon the consideration and contemplation of creatures and the works of God at first, before they achieve the perfection of love, which is the aim of contemplation, just as one who wants rise up high has to use a ladder. This is what the Psalm intends to say: "*In meditatione mea exardescet ignis,*"⁴ *quasi dicens*: before the soul is inflamed with divine love, it is required that some knowledge of creatures and of divine words should precede, by means of which as by means of a ladder it is elevated on high. But in contemplatives, who are experienced and accomplished, the higher mansion of the soul immediately raises itself to God through burning love without the ladder of intelligence, speculative meditation or the practice of anything else, which is not God.[56r] He does not undertake any speculative considerations about God, but lifts the higher part of his soul up immediately to God by means of ardent love.

3920. Augustine's dictum does not contradict this when he says that although we can love things, which we do not see, we cannot love the things of which we are totally ignorant,⁵ since all contemplation seeks some knowledge. The love of

the infinite divine wisdom may be incomprehensible and high, yet it so humbled itself in Christ our Saviour, that, without any other medium, the simple and illiterate could understand it with the naked, simple, loving, pure eye of faith. This is an important topic in the preaching of Bernardino Ochino.

¹ Ps 34:9.

² Cf. *Teologia mistica*, chapter 1, 2 "The teachings of divine mysteries are beyond the capacity of the uninitiated", that is of Christians not already advanced in the knowledge of God" (*Tutte le opere*, Milano 1982, 407). As usual Pili quotes the sense and at second hand.

³ That is beginners.

⁴ Ps. 38:4 (Vulg) = Ps 39:4.

⁵ Cf. St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Lib. X, Ch 1: "rem prorsus ignotam amare omnino nullus potest" (PL 42,

which we are speaking is completely centered upon God in as much as he is the highest good and it is a special gift of God, in such a way that it can be had by no other way and in no other manner except through God. It seeks the knowledge of God, which is gained through faith, which is a theological virtue, infused into us by God alone. Such love is produced in us by no other means, neither by any knowledge, effort or human art, just as the love through which we are led towards something, which we love, by a natural inclination of our soul is not produced by us. By way of example we know that one who approaches a fire feels the heat before he sees it. So too at least in the present life, the perfect contemplative feels the heat of divine love before he knows what he is experiencing, although it is different in our homeland, where the soul is inseparably united to that eternal light, who is God.[56v]

3921. What one turns over such speculation in one's mind for the sake of knowledge alone and not to kindle the fire of divine love, produces little progress, since in a person who is well disposed love is the object of every thought. Since philosophers and many theologians have not done this, even though they were great thinkers, they were far from God and his love, fear and devotion, and were involved in great wickedness.¹

Paul says of this sublime wisdom: *Quam nemo sapientiam huius mundi (id est philosophorum) cognovit. Et iterum: Spiritus noster spiritui divino unitur, sentit quae sunt eius; et haec est sapientia quam loquimur inter perfectos.*²

Chapter 3

CONCERNING THE EFFECTS OF DIVINE LOVE³

3922. The effects, which divine love and the spirit of heavenly contemplation have in an orderly manner upon the devout mind, are six, and they are signified by the six steps by which Solomon ascended the throne, which was raised.⁴

971).

¹ This was the ultimate meaning which the Capuchins attached to studies within the Order exhorting the students in the *Constitutions of 1536* n. 123 not to seek knowledge which inflates, but that which is illuminating and confers Christ's inspiring charity. Number 125 of the *Constitutions* advises them to recite Roger of Provence's prayer which says: *Nolo te cognoscere nisi ut te diligam.* - Bernardine of Montolmo used to say that "in spiritual things ... many times we seem to pray and to love God greatly, when we love ourselves ... and appear to perform contemplation beautifully, when we are having a session of deep thinking ... If we wish whatever we do in religious life to be meritorious it should be done for the love of God, otherwise it will be useless in the end." (MHOC III, 63).

² 1 Cor 2:6:8:12.

³ This chapter is completely dependent on chapter 13 of the *Exercitatorium* by Cisternos, although it is translated with a certain liberty ("De effectibus, quos gradatim iste amor unitivus et perfectivus in anima operatur"), even regarding the number and kind of the effects of love.

⁴ Speaking of the six steps for ascending to God, in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, St. Bonaventure adds: "in cuius rei figura sex gradibus ascendebatur ad thronum Salamonis" (*Op. omnia*, V, 297, n.5). - Ubertino of Casale also speaks of these steps, *Arbor vitae crucifixae Jesu*, lib IV, chapter 36; *Jesus spirans afflatibus*.

The first is called illumination. Thus when the fire of seraphic love inflames the soul, it leaves behind a certain experiential knowledge [57r] of God through which one knows that God is a source of goodness, nobility, beauty and most worthy of all honour, glory, reverence and praise. In comparison with that one knows oneself to be as wretched, vile, contemptible and abominable as to be beyond expression by human tongue. Likening God to oneself, one knows how great is his sweetness and mercy, with which he has deigned to deposit the priceless treasures of his wisdom. In such a vile place, namely our abominable conscience and soul, full of wickedness and filth.

3923. The second is known as being inflamed. Once the illumined soul has experienced the divine beauty, sublimity and nobility, it is so inflamed with love that it can think of nothing else, nor take pleasure in anything else, nor does it wish to speak of anything but him, and so all carnal desire, whatever it might be, is held in disgust completely.

The third is a kind of sweetness and pleasure, because once the soul has been enlightened and inflamed with divine love, a certain indescribable pleasure is born within it, which surpasses all earthly pleasure, just as the sweetness of honey surpasses all bitterness.[57v] Thus a little of such divine sweetness is more delightful to the soul than all the carnal delights that were, are or will be.

The fourth is called hunger or desire. When the soul is illumined and inflamed by God and finds pleasure in him, as has been said, it strongly desires to approach him with such assiduous love and feeling, that it would more readily chose all sorts of torments, which do not offend God, rather than be without those heavenly delights, which it experiences in its beloved, even for the shortest period of time. All other desires are dead for this soul and it remains in that fervour and strong desire to enjoy those delights, which it feels in its most lovable Father and sweet Lord.

3924. The fifth is called saturation. The soul is so absorbed in such feelings towards God that it seeks and desires nothing else. Further, to possess anything else is death. Thus all other desires and joys are extinguished in this soul and it thinks that to enjoy God is to enjoy all good, regarding him as the universal ruler of everything that is [58r] or could be.

The sixth proceeds from the above and is called¹ rapture or excess of mind. This does not seek that the person have a vision or experience something material, but that the person know that he be illuminated, inflamed and re-created, and raised by the love of God, in such a manner that what the person feels and sees by reason of God's goodness, sublimity, beauty, purity and nobility, cannot be expressed in any way in words. The reason is that rapture or excess of mind comes from the grace of God and from his immense goodness which wants the soul to be raised on high, since nothing else can raise it, because it is beyond any created faculty. Because this rapture is a kind of spiritual thing our intellect which is weighed down by the weight of

¹ In the manuscript text *chiamasse*.

the flesh cannot maintain it for a long time, but is elevated immediately and let down immediately, as when the bodily eye beholds the sun only for a short while and cannot retain strength without immediately going dark and then reappearing and then turning dark again. The same thing happens to our intellect when it wants to see the sun of justice [58v] in contemplation.

3925. The doctors add two others to this sixth step.

The first is security. When the soul experiences that it is so ardently loved, inflamed, delighted and enraptured by its Spouse Jesus Christ, it receives such security from him and in him that no sufferings or corporal injury, even death, holds any uncertainty for it. Thus it fears nothing. It has such trust in the eternal goodness of God, which it has tasted, that it does not doubt that it will ever be separated from it, further it trusts that it will be with him in glory eternally without any doubt. O what joy continually abides in that soul which foresees and tastes what it hopes for infallibly in perpetual blessedness!

The second is a complete tranquility, because with something like that no trial or corporal injury or fear could frighten the soul, when it is in such complete peace and quiet that it cannot be expressed in words. Richard says in his *Meditatione*: "O Christian soul, being able to rise to this paradise and remain in this life, sell everything including yourself and buy this possession. Don't let it appear to be too dear, since its vendor [59r] is Christ, who offers it to all those who want to buy".¹

Chapter 4

CONCERNING THE ADORNMENT OF THE SOUL THAT IS REQUIRED FOR THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE²

3926. The perfection of a thing consists in its achieving its end. The end of the created intellect is uncreated light. But our soul and our spirit cannot unite with God unless they are first empowered and prepared, and this preparation is accomplished by means of a certain light through which the intellectual faculties are made ready to contemplate God.³ One should know that the human sciences are of no help for this, nor is the cleverness of instinct. Although education in

¹ The quote from Richard of St. Victor is difficult to identify. Cisternos writes: "Unde super hoc dicit Richardus in *suis Contemplationibus*: O anima christiana, cum hunc Paradisum possis ascendere et in hac vita permanere, vende omnia quae possides et scis et compara hanc gloriosam possessionem, nec cara tibi videatur, nam ejus venditor Christus est, qui se offert universis eam emere cupientibus" (*Exercitatorium spirituale*, Ratisbornae 1856, 117s). - These eight degrees of the love of God are also hinted at by Louis of Grenada (+ 1588) in his *Memoriale della vita cristiana* VII, I, 2 9 cf. (A. Levasti, *I Mistici*, II, Firenze 1925, 108).

² This chapter and those which follow up to chapter 9 inclusive depend very literally on the *Specchio di perfezione* or *Directorium aureum contemplativorum* by Henry Herp. In particular this chapter follows chapter 61: "De ornatu vitae contemplativae superessentialis per sex puncta".

³ Henry Herp refers to St. Thomas, *De visione divinae essentiae* or *Sum. Theol.* III, *suppl.* q. 92, art. 1 (*Op. omnia* XII, Romae, 1906, 217-221).

the divine law and sacred letters is very beneficial, no one can rise to true contemplation unless by means of the ladder of humility, as the Apostle says: "If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise",¹ that is let him subject his intellect by becoming humble, regarding himself foolish in comparison to the divine wisdom, since the works of God cannot be comprehended, nor can his judgments. Thus many wise people have not reached this height, because they did not approach by the lowly ladder of humility. Few are capable of such contemplation [59v] because they do not prepare or equip themselves as much as they should. If they were to do so, the Lord in his great goodness would generously give them grace by restoring the necessary disposition.

3927. Six items are required for this adornment.

It is required firstly that there be true peace, quiet and tranquility between the soul and God, which one who desires to love God so ardently needs, so that one may renounce freely and spontaneously all the things which one loved inordinately before. It is then required that one raise himself to God with a certain lively spirit, heartfelt love and simple austerity of mind and all the faculties of the soul, leaving aside all duplicity and disquiet concerning things, making progress in the law of divine love, by continuous desires, having elevated all the faculties of the soul to God with all the effort and endeavour of a pure and sincere conscience, which establishes and preserves our mind in true and unshakable peace.

It is required secondly that one seeks a certain spiritual silence that is purification in all the faculties of the mind of any image, representation or likeness that stands for anything but God who is loved. It is necessary that the mind, that wishes to possess God alone, be empty and devoid of any affective consideration of anything. Having achieved this it will be easy for anyone who [60r] loves God alone, and who loves everything because of him, to raise oneself to God, which leads to pure and austere love, which depends on no image or likeness.

3928. It is required thirdly that one seek a loving approach to God and perfect renunciation of all one's own comfort, and this is to enjoy God, according to grace, even though not according to glory. This is the fruitful approach to the God who is loved by the bond of charity, which binds more strongly than any creature could achieve on its own.

It is required fourthly, that one has a certain rest and repose in the beloved, in whom is all our delight, since, while the Beloved overcomes and completely possesses the beloved with pure and sincere love, the Beloved comes down to the one whom he loves and the two become one in quiet mutual possession of one another.

It is required fifthly, that there takes place a very happy resting in God, into whom our spirit begins to pass, melting within itself of itself. One does not know how this takes place since it happens in the deepest abyss of charity, with no remembrance of itself or of any other [60v] creature, but only of the

¹ Cf 1 Cor 3, 18.

love, the savour, and the feeling through which by being empty and a simple vacuum it is totally possessed, as oil spreads through cloth and water through wine, so the spirit spreads with immeasurable latitude, and having become capable of receiving the beloved, flows and passes into him. Thus the beloved is perfectly united through the inestimable length, breath, height and depth of charity, to the eternal and uncreated love, which knows no measure or boundary.

3929. It is required sixthly, that there be contemplation in a kind of vagueness, which cannot be understood by reason, nor investigated by the intellect, in which the spirit which is dead to itself and perfectly united to God, becomes one with him and enters into the highest peace, quiet and enjoyment that can be had in the present life. In this union our spirit by often sighing and transcending all activity and affection for creatures continually transforms itself into God.

Therefore the one who has acquired these six things, converting himself to interior things, is able to contemplate and relish contemplation [61r] in the above mentioned manner, as easily as he lives and breathes naturally, since he has equipped himself for the contemplative life and become a living and spontaneous instrument of God,¹ who can perform what he wishes, when and how he likes. As he does not impute the effort necessary to accomplish this to himself, he makes himself ready to do anything God wishes and to support happily all that he permits.

Chapter 5

HOW THE SOUL CAN EASILY ADAPT ITSELF TO REAL CONTEMPLATION.²

3930. The soul that wishes to enter this secret chamber should first submit itself humbly to God and to every creature, regarding itself as a viler sinner than anyone else. It should be dead to the world and to self and have renounced the exercise of all affection, desire, appetite, love and sensuality so completely that, totally empty, it commits itself fully to the divine pleasure, following it as a shadow follows the movement of the body, so that the spirit may operate freely [61v] and without any impediment both in prosperity and adversity. Finally the superior faculties of the soul, especially those involved in loving, are able to rise to the heights of great desire, and move violently up and down under the influence of their source and origin, knocking with a certain importunity,³ as one knocks on a friend's door persistently, being careful to wait with confidence, so that one will be let in and be drawn happily by the Holy Spirit. The soul cannot reach perfect contemplation of God unless it is drawn naked by the Holy Spirit, for whom the faculties of the soul are like servants, which the Spirit leads to the inner mansion of the soul and the chamber of the most high King.

3931. When the soul approaches the highest virtues, and is raised above every

¹ This is a recurring thought in Pili.

² This follows chapter 62 of the *Directorium* by Herp: "Exercitium quo simpliciores in Deum tendant".

³ Cf. Luke 11:5-8.

creature and embraced sweetly by the beloved, then all the faculties of the soul are forced to cease all activity and the Holy Spirit then exercises them in a thousand ways, and one feels the sudden and instantaneous touch of love from the Holy Spirit which flows like a running spring of eternal sweetness. The intellectual faculty receives a brilliant illumination from the eternal Sun [62r] and divine strength. In the memory,¹ which is held in an inexpressible embrace² of union by the Father, one feels a purity, which is despoiled of any image and left naked. These are three doors, which are most happily opened for the loving soul by the most blessed Trinity so that they may know the treasure of infinite goodness.

As proof and confirmation of what has been said above³ it should be noted that with respect to the ascent which is accomplished in the third way, that is the Unitive Way, nothing adequate can be written because of its incomprehensibly subtle character, which is produced in a countless variety of ways through the most secret contact of the most blessed Trinity according to the will of the Trinity and our temperament. Certainly its production is a divine operation since it is beyond human activity⁴, which is elevated and suspended.

3932. Although, as Augustine says,⁵ the works of the most blessed Trinity *ad extra* are one, because all persons equally contribute to each work, yet a particular function is attributed [62v] to each person in the inner mansion of the soul. By his touch the Holy Spirit works on the will where we find the faculty for loving. The Son works on the illuminative faculty where we find the intellect. The Father works on the memory. Then the soul is perfectly disposed to contemplate God. This happens when the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, approaches us, through the influence of the most holy Trinity. The faculty for loving is drawn first, then the intellectual, and lastly the memory.⁶

Chapter 6

CONCERNING THE EXERCISE OF ASPIRATION⁷

3933. To make progress in the unitive and affective way it is necessary that a

¹ The three faculties, the faculty for loving, the intellect and the memory are expressions of the three faculties of the soul, the will, the intellect and the memory, which are afterwards referred to as the three doors".

² *Complexo* in the text is equivalent to *amplesso*.

³ From here Pili follows the first part of of chapter 63 of the *Directorium* by Herp: "De consurrectione vitae contemplativae superessentialis et operatione Spiritus Sancti".

⁴ *Sopra ogni umana actualità* in the text is equivalent to *sopra ogno attività umana*.

⁵ Cf. *De Trinitate*, lib. I, chapter 5 ff. PL 42, 824ff.

⁶ This concept is found also in the *Circolo de carità divina* by Francis of Jesi. Note the primacy of the will and of love over the intellect.

⁷ This follows almost *ad litteram* chapter 32 of Herp: "De aspirationibus et eiaculationibus"

person exercise himself in two things, namely aspirations and unitive love. The former is like the body of this kind of contemplation and resides in the lower faculties of the soul. The latter is like the spirit and life of the soul and resides in the higher faculties of the soul.¹

Anyone wishing to proceed along this way, which Dionysus calls mystical and divine,² leaving the intellect aside, needs to exercise himself in affections alone. However, one needs to have some little prayers, which Augustine calls ejaculations,³ because they are like arrows which wound [63r] the heart of the beloved, as the Canticle says: *Vulnerasti cor meum soror mea sponsa*,⁴ and light the fire more easily. Sometimes they are uttered by the heart, at other time by the lips and speak⁵ to the Lord as if he were present, as he really is indeed. One can do this in the heart or with the lips not only at the time set down for prayer, but at any time and in any place, walking, resting, working, eating etc. by saying: "O Lord, when shall I love you perfectly? When shall I embrace you with the kisses of my heart in pure love? O my most sweet Jesus, when shall I despise myself and every other creature for love of you? When shall my spirit be united to your spirit with all the strength of my soul? Lord, when shall my soul be totally melted and deserve to be absorbed in you? My Lord, I wish to give myself completely to you and lose myself, so that I may possess you inseparably, and rest in you forever."

3934. Each one can compose these and similar prayers as the unction of the Holy Spirit inspires him.⁶ However they must be spoken or thought with fierce desire and burning affection,[63v] so that the soul may become one spirit with God through inflamed charity.⁷ Thus our spirit will be set alight with divine love in the aspiration and disposed to be elevated to divine contemplation. While our spirit will be confirmed in unitive love by continual practice, which joins one to God, our fervent and swift affections will fly to God like lightening in an instant without any previous thought and immerse themselves in the abyss of divine love with countless desires, so that free and detached from everything under

¹ Concerning the prayer of aspiration and the structure of the soul in the theory of introversion see Canisius Jansen, *L'oraison aspirative chez Herp et chez ses prédécesseurs*, in *Carmelus* 3, 1956, 19-48, especially 30ff.

² Cf. above.

³ Cf. *Epsit. 130 ad Probam*, n. 20: "Dicuntur fratres in Aegypto crebras quidem habere orationes, sed eas tamen brevissimas et raptim quodam modo iaculatas, ne illa vigilanter erecta, quae oranti plurimum necessaria est, per productiones moras evanescat atque habetetur attentio" (PL 33, 501). This form of prayer is suggested by all the masters of the spiritual life and has a special place in Capuchin asceticism. Cf. also *Enarrationes in psalmos*, 53, 5: PL 36, 623.

⁴ Cant 4:9.

⁵ This appears erroneously in the text as *parole*.

⁶ See above.

⁷ This "violence" in affective prayer as well as in ascetical exercises (Cf. *Constitutions 1536*, n 139) is a characteristic of the spiritual iconography of the Capuchins and is justified by the fact that "to live according to the spirit is very violent" (MHOC II, 65f). Francis of Jesi insists on this "violence" in affections also. "You should goad yourself with all your strength and effort and drive yourself with maximum force" see near the end of the *Circolo de carità divina*.) See also C. Cargnoni, *I primi lineamenti di una "scuola cappuccina di devozione"*, in *Italian Francescana*, 59, 1984, 111-140, especially 132-136.

God they will possess the beloved alone.

As has been said the soul can do this any time it likes, even a thousand times a day, as long as nature can endure¹ it. There is need for great discretion in such things in order not to extinguish natural strength,² since this exercise becomes so vehement and fervent in some people that they believe themselves to have been elevated in soul and body and that their heart is broken by such violence. This way of progressing in virtue and of acquiring all the things, which are necessary for perfection, is most useful.[64r]

Chapter 7

The Unitive Love of Our Spirit³

3935. According to Dionysius and Hugh one of the properties of love is that it unites the lover with the beloved, and indeed transforms one into the other.⁴ However Augustine says that *anima verius est ubi amat quam ubi animat*, that is the souls discovers itself better in the beloved than in the body in which it dwells.⁵ It is certain that the soul which loves someone ardently, while remaining in control of its primary operations, such as activities which pertain to its essence, and retaining control of its secondary operations that is the faculties of the intellect and will, stretches beyond itself to produce activity which pertains neither to its inner self, nor to the body, but to the beloved. Thus when the intellect knows, when the will loves, when the memory remembers, they produce little or no activity, even with respect to external familiar objects, which pertains to their own soul or body, rather they produce activity which pertains to the loved one. I claim that the same applies to all the senses.

Anyone who transforms himself into a creature is really miserable and pitiable since the Lord will reduce him to nothing in the city of peace, as the Prophet says.⁶ However, he who transforms into God and our Lord Jesus

¹ Sopportare.

² The question of equilibrium is always important in the spiritual life.

³ This partly follows chapter 33 of the *Directorium* by Herp: "De unitivo amore animam puram in Deum transformante".

⁴ Cf. *Nomi Divini*, IV, 13. 15. 17: "Divine love also produces ecstasies, in so far as it does not permit the lovers to belong to themselves, but to the one whom they love ... When we speak of love, whether divine or angelic or intellectual or sensual or natural, we think of a force which unites and binds... There is only one simple force, which moves of itself towards unitive fusion with the Highest Good which extends to the smallest things..." (Dionysius the Areopagite, *Tutte le opere*, 310, 313s) - For Hugh of St. Victor cf. *Comment. in Hierarchiam caelest. Ps. Dionysii, De Modo orandi, De meditando*, ecc. but the text is not easily identified, in Pl. 175-176.

⁵ Also in S. Bernard, *De praecepto et dispensatione*, ch 2 n 60: "Neque enim praestantior spiritus noster est ubi animat, quam ubi amat" (PL. 182, 892); *De septem itin.* dist III, a 4: "Non est praesentior noster spiritus ubi animat, quam ubi amat" (ibid. 164); Joannes a Kastel, *De adhaerendo Deo*, ch 2: "Plus est anima ubi amat, quam ubi animat": cf. Gerson, *De Myst. Theol. Spec.*, condis. 41 (vol III, ed. 1494, 65d).

⁶ Ps. 73:20; refer to the Latin Vulgate: Ps 72,20: "In civitate tua imaginem ipsorum ad nihilum rediges."

Christ is happy, rich and blessed.¹[64v]

3936. We have some examples of this transformation.

The first example is the branch that is grafted onto a tree, which through the strength of the sap of the tree becomes the one with it. Thus the soul, which is transformed into God, through the nourishment of grace and love, becomes one spirit with God. 1 Cor. 6: *Qui adhaeret Deo unus spiritus est cum eo.*² The Lord submits the examples of the vine and the branches. John chapter 15 and Galatians chapter 2: *It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.*³

The second example is that of a drop of water thrown into a large container filled with wine, which immediately loses its own nature, and assumes the nature of wine and is completely changed with respect to taste, odor and colour. Thus the loving soul that plunges into the divine immensity and is transformed into it, preserving only its own nature, is absorbed, like a small drop of water, by the lake of the immense goodness of God, in such a way that all of the faculties of the soul surrender and the divinity acts in that soul and uses that soul as its instrument. Ps *Ego dixi: Dii estis* etc. Augustine [65r] says: *Qualis est hominis dilectio, talis est homo. Si terram diligis, terra es; si coelum diligis, coelum es. Si autem Deum diligis, non audeo dicere quod Deus sis, sed audi Scripturam dicentem: Ego dixi: Dii estis* etc.⁴

3937. This union is of such nobility, excellence and happiness that, were a mortal to experience it perfectly and his attention were fixed upon it, he could not contain his spirit from being wrapped in an excess of mind, as we read about Giles, St Francis' companion, that after his spirit was united to God by a transformation of love, he was so disposed and ready for rapture that when anyone said in his presence: Heaven! Heaven! He was immediately taken into rapture and ecstasy because of being reminded of union with God.⁵

The third example is iron in the fire, which while it remains iron as far as its substance goes, takes on the properties of fire, losing its own properties etc. And although we are led by these examples to know the hidden aspects of these truths, still what we know differs from the reality as much as a grain of mustard differs from the whole world.⁶

¹ Three classical similitudes follow to illustrate unitive love: the graft, the drop of water in a glass filled with wine and the iron in the fire. Herp adds also the similitude of the two converging mirrors which reflect their images into each other. (*Theol. myst.*, lib. II, pars III, c 33. Coloniae 1556, 155vb-156ra; *Directorio de contemplativos*, Madrid 1974, 575s).

² Cf. 1Cor 6:17. But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

³ Cf. Jh 15:5; Gal 2:20. Wrongly cited in the text as Col 2.

⁴ Cf. Ps. 81:6 (Vulg.); August., *In epist. I Jn.* tr. 2, n 14 (PL 35, 1997).

⁵ Cf. *Fioretti*, ed Benevento Bughetti, Florence 1926, 390 (= Capitoli aggiunti, cap. 19); *Chron XXIV Gen.*, in AF III, 98.

⁶ This is the concept of similarities and dissimilarities of Dionysius the Areopagite, *De cael. Hierarchia*, cap 2 (Cf *Tutte le opere*, Traduz. di Pietro Scarzoso. Milano 1981), 80-89).

Chapter 8

THE ASCENT FROM THE LOWER FACULTIES OF THE SOUL¹

3938. The ascent should occur through the lower faculties of the soul in an orderly manner in four stages.

The first stage is that divine grace, descending, like a stream, to the lower faculties of the soul, beings to move and arouse them and excite them in such a way that the soul is raised with all its heart to higher things and to desire to make contact between herself and God, who is tangibly experienced and on whom the lower faculties are focused.²

It is thus necessary that the faculties be prepared and disposed, before a person can arrive at the exercise of higher virtues, so that when the fire of divine love is lit from above, they are lifted up to the heights. However, as no one can exercise the inner faculties, if they have not been withdrawn and removed from exterior distractions, so no one can exercise the higher faculties if the lower faculties are not drawn to the higher, which experience no activity for the time being.³ This occurs better in aspiration and unitive love than in anything else. This aspiration is at times carried out with difficulty, especially when the help of the experience of grace [66r] is not given.

3939. Many are deceived about this, thinking that the raising of the spirit to God through the exercise of aspiration is always accompanied by sweetness and is impossible without it. Thus it is often necessary to draw the spirit to higher things with much effort and violence, as when a person tries to pull out something which is deeply rooted in the ground with all his strength, so that nature is injured in the effort unless the Holy Spirit helps nature with a certain sweetness, and deigns to lessen the weight.⁴

If one should ask the cause of this difficulty, one could say that because our nature is like a beast, or animal, untamed and carnal, it always drags the spirit towards lower things. St. Paul experiences this himself: *Video aliam legem in membris meis*, etc.⁵ Yet it is necessary to dominate it and reduce it to the service of the spirit and to raise it to the things of the spirit, so that it will not impede the works of the spirit.⁶ Just as beasts are overcome through effort and blows and subjugated to human service, so our flesh must be dominated, trained and disposed [66v] so that it may be ready and quite

¹ This chapter follows chapters 40-47 of Herp's *Directorium* synthesizing them. The word *consurrezione* means ascent and designates introversion as it is used in the mystical theory of Ruysbroeck, according to whom one passes from the exterior senses to the higher senses and from these to the essential unity of the soul where union with God takes place.

² The text may be read *ricolte* or *raccolte*.

³ Here *attualità* means *attività*.

⁴ See above

⁵ Cf Rom 7:23. But I see in my members another law.

⁶ Cf. 1 Cor 9:27. - The aim of the spiritual life is to attain inner freedom.

prepared to submit to the rule of reason, and to higher things without falling into repugnance. One reads the same thing about many philosophers who do it to be freer to undertake the study of science. How much more should Christians, and especially religious, do likewise.¹

3940. Thus, when our heart is so humbled by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the spirit is more easily united to God, to taste incomprehensible delights and is drawn to know divine riches more easily.

It should be noted here that in these things a person should conform to God's will and, whether he experiences grace, sweetness, devotion or not, he trusts the Lord in all things giving thanks with a peaceful spirit. Thus it is dangerous to seek the experience of grace or sweetness with impetuous and violent emotion, since the heart might be restricted and suffocated, and become disquieted, disturbed and perplexed because of this and fall into more blindness and alienation of spirit.²

Thus although we should raise our spirit on high with all our strength, if we are destitute of experienced grace [67r] and devotion at certain times, we should thank the Lord, and humble ourselves under his powerful hand, recognizing our lack of mortification and worthiness, correct our evil life, undertake works of mercy, the exercises of the Passion of Jesus Christ and the like.³

3941. When the soul has received the experience of grace according to the divine good pleasure, it is aroused by a certain emotional surge, inflamed by a fire of divine love, and unity of the sentiments of the heart flood the soul, as if it were at rest in a royal bridal bed and gazing on the beloved with loving desire. Because of this there arises a kind of compunction and feeling, not of sorrow, but rather of love, since the soul is alight with a rekindling of love of God in the depths of its heart, to praise him, to bless him and to thank him for his superabundant kindness, so that the things which seemed sweet to it before have now become bitter, and bitter things have turned into sweetness. Because those things, in which as in the supreme Good, all goodness is contained, acquire a sweet taste in God, the spirit places its attention on them and so completely renounces all creatures.⁴

Although this [67v] stage can sometimes reach the lower faculties, it cannot establish a person perfectly in God, since the emotions tire greatly in

¹ The reference to the ascetical exercises of certain pagan philosophers occurs frequently in much humanist literature and even Bernardino Ochino refers to it. However, it is evident that Pili wishes to speak quite strongly to the friars. In fact the Capuchins were compared to cynic and stoic philosophers, a point which has been developed specially by Julien-Eymard d'Angers, *Sénèque et le stoïcisme chez les Capucins français du XVII^e siècle*, in EF 1 (1950) 335-353; other research can be found in: Raoul de Sceaux, *Le Père Julien-Eymard d'Angers (Charles Chesneau). Esquisse biographique et bibliographique*, in CF 43 (1973) 356-360.

² If it is necessary to be violent and impetuous in the exercise of "aspiration", the aim should not be to seek experienced delight which is contrary to pure love.

³ Cf 1 Peter 5:6.

⁴ Here too the memory of Francis' *Testament* is clear. There is also an indirect quotation of 1 Pet 5:7, derived from Ps 55:23.

coming to that experience of grace, which the spirit does not grasp completely, since it is seeking its own comfort, and to rest in the gifts of God. Therefore when the experience of grace and devotion are lacking, which is usually often withdrawn, the spirit finds itself destitute of all interior solace.

3942. This stage gives and takes, enriches and impoverishes, humbles and exalts, with many similar things occurring within its duration. When the soul finds itself abandoned and without the experience of grace, the emotions are dry and sterile, since all sweetness is changed into criminal bitterness, and so one believes oneself reproached by God in spirit and truth.¹ However, this is so only with respect to experiencing devotion and sweetness, because one does not recognize the work of the Holy Spirit and the discipline that he teaches a person who should only rest in the Giver of benefits and not in the gift and concern himself with Him alone both in adversity [68r] and prosperity.

3943. The second stage of this ascent consists in the highest delight of spiritual delights because of the sweetness of its taste, because the heart and virtues² and lower faculties are so absorbed by a great river of pleasure that the spirit of the lover thinks that it is completely wrapped in the embrace of love, because as these delights exceed the delights of the world incomparably by entering the soul through the infusion of these gifts God gives himself to the heart through his gifts. He brings such soothing and savour with him, such sweetness and consolation, and causes such a great flood, that because of the superabundance of joy one is unable to resist the flow and suffers a kind of spiritual intoxication concerning which the spouse in the *Canticle* says: "Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love."³

3944. Because of this intoxication the spirit is coarse and rough, like a person who is not used to drinking wine. The first time he drinks it he becomes intoxicated. Thus⁴ minds which are not accustomed to spiritual soothing, cannot endure it, thus this intoxication [68v] has a kind of wonderful flavour of inner pleasure, through which the human heart which receives it, because of the exultation of divine love, produces perceptible flames of love, whether it wants to or not, which become manifest by external signs that stir, shake and strike

¹ This is the final objective of contemplation as indicated by Jesus Christ himself to the Samaritan Woman (Jh 4:24), and repeated by St. Francis in the *Earlier Rule* chapter 22, 30-32, as well as in the *Later Admonition and Exhortation* 20 (FA:ED, I, p. 80; p. 47). Henry van Herp explains the meaning of this "adoration": "Deum autem in spiritu adorare, est enim honorare et laudare cum intellectiva spirituali admiratione suae infinitae dignationis et commendationis in omnibus obiectis, quae comprehensibili modo nostris oculis intellectualibus ostendunt illam incomprehensibilem Dei laudabilitatem secundum omnem suam perfectionem. Sed adorare in veritate, consistit in duobus: quod in adoratione Dei nullum obiectum sibi ponat, quod Deo non conveniat ... Secundum est, quod in adoratione rectam et puram intentionem habeat, nec illud creaturis inhaerere permittat, quo potissime Deum adorare et honorare debuerat, scilicet amorem suum. Nam proprie cum amore Deus adoratur et honoratur". (*Theol. Myst.* lib III, pars III, c. 19: *De tractu Spiritus Sancti*, Coloniae 1556, 220va). The expression is contained in *Constit.* 1556, n.42 and in *Alb* 8.

² This appears wrongly in the text as *a la virtú*.

³ Cf. Cant. 5:1. This second stage of the "ascent" is taken from chapter 41 of the *Directorium* by Herp: "Secundus consurrectionis gradus per spiritualem ebrietatem".

⁴ In the text: *A cosí*.

the person by their violence, just as the Apostles appeared to be intoxicated because of the violence of the Spirit.¹

Truly such an excess of fervour forces people who are unprepared and inexpert to perform unusual gestures, to produce tears, sighs and sobs and to stammer, as we read concerning Br. Maseo the companion of St. Francis that in his joy he could say nothing but "Oh! Oh! Oh!" Others were forced to jump and to run as did Br. Bernard, who because of excess of spiritual sweetness was forced to run the whole day through mountains and valleys.² Others are forced to dance and to make a noise with their hands and feet. Others are forced to shake all their limbs.³ The experience of sweetness is infused into the soul in many [69r] other ways, which, as far mortal man's lower faculties are concerned, are in themselves the sweetest life, which he may possess.

3945. We should mention two things here.⁴ Firstly, it is necessary to proceed with this exercise with great caution and prudence, because such an experience of sweetness can be so violent and arousing that it will injure weak bodily organs, specifically the heart and the head, seriously. Thus they may succumb to some serious illness or become frenzied. Therefore such sweetness should be tempered with the greatest discretion. Secondly, the soul should (gather) the gifts of God and spiritual sweetness and consolation, continually flapping wings of discernment and meditating like a busy⁵ bee, and desiring and pleasantly tasting them with a loving sting, gathering honey from everything, that is, gathering material for praising and thanking God, blending everything into the unity of God, seeking God's pleasure in everything and above everything, completely renouncing its own comfort and self-control.

If the soul wants to soothe [69v] itself in God's gifts they become contaminated and so completely nullify the fruits of any good work. It was stated above that the soul should not seek anything else but divine love, and the divine will and pleasure with all its strength, its own abasement, annihilation and mortification, and commit itself faithfully to the divine pleasure in prosperity or adversity, in salvation or damnation.

3946. The third stage consists in a certain arousal of the heart towards which the soul is directed in order to obtain a higher and purer embrace by divine love, and which sweetens and delights the heart of the lover more than all worldly delights.⁶ The more intense the soul's knowledge becomes at this stage, the sweeter will be its love, its purpose and thanksgiving and the like. This activity

¹ Cf. Acts 2, 13.15-17.

² Cf *Fioretti*, ch 32 (FA:ED III 622-623); *Actus*, ch 30, ed P. Sabatier, Paris, 1902, 47s; *Conf.* IV, 197 and 182; *Chron. XXIV Gen.* in AF III, 43.

³ One may read many such things in the Capuchin chronicles. But it is sufficient to refer to the way St. Felix of Cantalice prayed to represent all of them. Cf *Processus sixtinus...* ed. Marianus ab Alatri (*MOHC*, X), Romae, 1964, 426 (see analytical index for all references); see also further ahead.

⁴ This is the synthesis of ch. 42 of the *Directorium* by Herp: "Pericula in isto exercitio contingi solita".

⁵ This thought comes from Herp in chapter 43: "Propriam quaestionem et voluntatem summo studio esse necandam".

⁶ From ch. 44 by Herp: "Tertius gradus consurrectionis omnia penetrans creata et animam vulnerans".

is a kind of presence of eternal light which by illuminating the intellect and by inflaming the emotions with all the gifts of eternal sweetness and consolation causes the soul, which is naked and equipped, to immerse its whole self in kisses of divine charity, [70r] having cast all human delights over¹ its shoulders. Really God so draws the soul to himself and into himself at this stage that it regards all those things which are below God as most vile, or nothing. Paul indicates this grace when he says: *Omnia arbitratus sum ut stercora ut Christum lucrifaciam.*² So the human heart expands and opens with such ineffable joy and sweetness in this divine touch that it cannot be shut by any human strength, so the soul despoils itself of the ornaments of its faculties, so that it may at last happily repose on the couch of love and peace in oneness of spirit with its beloved.

3947. This stage is followed by another stage of love which is called intense love, which, as Hugh says, creates a certain driving force and ardent desire in the soul, indeed it penetrates everything like a sharp knife, so that it finds rest exclusively in the beloved.³ Since, as Augustine⁴ says, the soul exists more in the thing, which is loved than in its own body to which it gives life, it always views its beloved with the eyes of its heart, thus the soul always loves God with this ardent love. All its thoughts, desires and wishes, its whole mind drives [70v] it to where its beloved is, that is to its heavenly home, where it sees itself crowned with glory and honour,⁵ Where it gives a drink to holy souls from the stream of its will, intoxicating them with inestimable sweetness and soothing.⁶ Because of this, when it perceives itself an exile from this home, and oppressed by many calamities in this valley of wretchedness, it weeps, sighs, and pours forth sweet tears, which are useful to preserve bodily strength, so that one is able to tolerate such impatience more easily.

3948. Since this intense, penetrating love draws all the soul's faculties to God, and as the person who enjoys it receives many divine revelations and confidences, it happens that such love could be the cause of the exchange of confidences between friends.⁷ Thus Richard says that the extent of divine revelations depends on the extent of divine love.⁸ As we have said, such persons

¹ *Dereto* in the text is equivanent to *dietro*.

² Cf. Phil 3:8.

³ Cf. Hugh of St. Victor, *Expositio in Hierarchiam coelestem*, lib. VI (PL 175, 1037). Henry van Herp cites the text as follows: "armor iste idcirco dicitur acutus, quia facit quendam amoris impetum et vehementiam desiderii ardentis, ferentis se in amatum et intrantis et penetrantis, ut ibi sit ubi est ipsum quod amatur, cum ipso et in ipso; et non solum calidus efficitur ab amato, sed instar acuti penetrat omnia, ut in dilecto suo requiescat" (*Theol. Myst.* c. 44, p. 152 rb). Herp considers this "piercing love" to be the fifth stage of love; the fourth is "passionate (*caldo*) love" (*ibid.*, c 43, p. 151 vb).

⁴ See above p.66 note 5.

⁵ Cf Ps 8:6; Heb 2:7.

⁶ Ps. 36:9.

⁷ From ch 45 of the *Directorium* by Herp: "Revelationes quomodo a Deo fiant".

⁸ Richard of St. Victor, *Beniamin Maior*, lib. IV *de gratia contemplationis*, c 16: PL 196, 155. Cf. E. Kaluska, *La doctrine de Richard de Saint Victor*, in *Le Vie Spirituelle* 10 (1924) *Supplem.*, 185-239, 274-87, 297-331.

have many revelations, raptures, ecstasies, excesses of mind and visions, and thus many foretell things, which are to come, great and marvelous things about God, and about heaven. They speak of divine decrees and are gifted and adorned with many similar gifts.

However we should remember that at this stage many are deceived [71r] because the devil, seeing how many curious and rash people delight in these visions, turning himself into an angel of light, infuses a kind of make-believe light into their hearts, which are devoid of divine grace and full of vanity, and so deceives them.¹

3949. The fourth stage of this ascent is the withdrawing of experiencing grace, devotion and love, which occurs because of six things.²

Firstly, it is caused by a kind of loving indignation, which sometimes arises between lovers, when they fear that love has been injured in some way or has grown cold. Thus when the Holy Spirit sees that the soul has received some exterior consolation or love, he immediately withdraws the infusion of his sweetness or love, so that the soul will become aware of having erred and immediately correct this, and not dally in lover's indignation, which only desires to be left alone. An example of this was when Aaron's son put unholy fire on the altar and perished.³ Truly the more God draws a person to himself and into himself, the more love which is more fervent and pure he requires of him, otherwise he becomes indignant against the ingratitude [71v] of the recipient, since the greater the gift, the greater the responsibility.

3950. Secondly, it (the experience of grace) is withdrawn so that the soul which is loved may recognize that such grace is not won by its own exertion, nor by its own merits, nor by performing good works, but through the free bounty of the beloved, so that it may not sink into pride because of self complacency, but ever remain humbly downcast.

Thirdly, so that the soul, knowing that it cannot advance in love, nor in virtue, nor in good works, nor even persevere in what it has gained without God, may more solicitously undertake to acquire grace and the assistance of the beloved.

Fourthly, since sensual nature is greatly delighted by the overabundance of the experience of grace and the present devotion and love, specially because of the strong infusion of the Holy Spirit, and since such violent emotion causes an impulsive animation in the soul, because the heart greatly seeks to be satisfied by an overabundance of grace, and when this ascends to the head such animation upsets it greatly, specially in those who suffer from infirmity of the head; the Holy Spirit moderates its warmth so that nature thus revived is better disposed [72r] to accept new and purer infusions.

3951. Fifthly, so that the soul learns and recognizes that the experiencing of

¹ Cf. 2 Cor 11:14.

² This is a summary of ch 47 of Herp: "Quartus gradus consurrectionis, quia anima fidelis per adversa probatur, et de causis subtractae gratiae".

³ Cf. Lv 10:1-2.

devotion does not constitute real sanctity, nor real salvific love, since those who possess such devotion and experience grace do not possess greater charity, nor are they more greatly loved by God than those who do not enjoy such experiences. However, the real friends, indeed children, of God are those who possess the capacity to love beyond experience in a manner which is so elevated, one with and completely subject to the will of God, doing everything perfectly for love of him and according to the divine pleasure, that they know how to have plenty and to have little in divine riches and to be poor in spirit.¹ When they are deprived of all divine consolation and experience of taste, they love God with simple and pure love from the heart and know how to seek nothing else but divine love and no other honour or glory. The more this voluntary spiritual poverty increases the more real sanctity, pure charity and love of God increase.²

3952. Sixthly, so that the happy spouse may discover that she has the ability and the knowledge of how to live without [72v] any experience of devotion or consolation, although she has produced such valiant exertion in good works, and thus learns how to serve God bereft of all consolation, with pure and naked love and elementary charity. More than this, this stage of assent, in which God wishes to test those who are his real friends, who would rather approach and serve him out of love alone, than because of any gifts or experience of grace, since true trust and friendship cannot be better known than in adversity, is fundamentally based upon this. Certainly a friend loves at all times, and a brother is proved in adversity.³ Although this state in which the soul finds herself abandoned and destitute of all grace is pitiable and anxiety ridden, in the same manner as this is true of the state of damnation, nevertheless if the soul remains constant and unmoved in pure, simple, naked love, giving thanks to God for the privation of that taste and devotion as if it were experiencing all consolation, this love is truly perfect, and loves God simply for himself, not for his gifts.⁴ Thus she prepares, qualifies and disposes herself perfectly to receive more noble infusions and delights.

Chapter 9

CONCERNING THE EXERCISE OF ASPIRATION⁵

3953. The exercise of aspiration is connected to this stage and it consists of four elements.

The first element is that a person should offer God¹ all God asks of him,

¹ Philippians 4:12.

² The theme of "spiritual poverty" is greatly emphasized in Capuchin spirituality, above all by Francis of Jesi. Cf *MHOC* III, 78 in the footnote; IV, 12 and *Circolo de carità divina*.

³ Cf. Prov 17:17.

⁴ This is John of the Cross' night of the senses and the spirit.

⁵ This corresponds to chapter 46 of the *Directorium* by Herp: "Nobilissimum aspirationis, unitivique amoris exercitium quadriforme".

specially perfect abnegation and mortification of self and a complete abdication of sensuality with which the affections may be stained (even though sometimes these things appear to be small and frivolous), such as talkativeness, idle talk, laziness, human companionship, pleasure in eating and drinking, inappropriate mirth, useless recreation, inordinate pain, vane hope and the like, which should be cast aside.

Further the person offers themselves prepared and totally ready for whatever loss or privation of spiritual consolation, of experience of grace, sweetness and devotion and of all gifts, which are not necessary for salvation, and endures all with peace and freedom of spirit.

3954. Further the person offers themselves spontaneously and joyfully² to endure all adversities, such as sickness, anxiety, insults, defamation, the death of relatives or friends, [73v] and in short all tribulations which might occur in time or eternity, for the love of God.³ Although no one should wish, as far as possible, to agree to be separated from God by being deprived of grace, he should offer himself all the more readily to the divine pleasure that, if he wished, should God commit him to eternal punishments for his honour and glory, he would graciously accept this without any hesitation. Although it may appear to be inhuman and quite cruel that a person should consent to his own damnation, it may be with the development of his desire towards resignation to the will of God mentioned above, through the abundance of divine grace, that he might succeed in offering himself, without any reluctance or recoiling of his heart, just as completely and generously to undergoing the eternal sufferings of hell as to possessing the glory of paradise. This is because the love of God has become so perfect in him that he despises himself very much and loves God with such fervour that he is concerned or worried about nothing that might happen to him as long as the divine will; honour and glory are completely [74r] fulfilled.⁴

3955. Although it is absolutely impossible that God could will anyone's damnation, since if he does not wish the death of the sinner,⁵ how much less that of the just, however, he does wish that all are prepared for total resignation and to endure anything which appears to be intolerable for love of him. Indeed God sometimes permits that temptations come upon his dear friends, so that they may be aware of how much they should mortify themselves, abase themselves, and completely renounce themselves for love of him. This is how he tested

¹ This is offering God everything, in perfect oblation, even in small things, as is indicated immediately. This "perfect abnegation" has a clear application in the *Constitutions of 1536*.

² Note the usual adjectives: "prepared and totally ready", "spontaneous and free tolerance", already mentioned elsewhere.

³ That is, which might befall.

⁴ Pili's cautious expressions in expounding this doctrine of complete abandonment to the will of God are specifically inspired by the strong love of God felt by the saints and have nothing to do with Quietism. At no time in the spiritual life is the soul capable of corresponding sincerely and in an absolute manner to the sacrifice of eternal beatitude. St. Thomas says: "Velle suam damnationem absolute, non esset conformare voluntatem suam divinae, sed voluntati peccati". Cf. *De veritate*, q. 23, a, 8 ad 2).

⁵ Cf. Ez 33:11; 18: 23; Lk 15:7. 10. 32.

Abraham's perfection commanding him to sacrifice his son.¹ Once a person realizes that his will is free and that he is totally resigned to the divine good pleasure, then he may freely proceed to the second element of this exercise.

The second element is called searching and asking. The person should seek and ask of God not only the things which God possesses, but God himself pure and simple, so that he may enjoy him alone in his immense charity, since it is not lawful for a person to enjoy anything else but God alone, that is take anything else as his final end.² [74v] Thus a person cannot enjoy any gift of God, no matter how great or noble, nor rest in him, without sinning; rather he should use these gifts only to acquire greater perfection. Thus the true lover will be at peace and content to be always famished in enjoying the highest good in simple and perfect charity, so that once the person begins to settle into any of God's gifts, the desire to make progress in virtue slackens off and becomes cold.

3956. The person should still desire a very pure illumination of mind to know three things in particular. Firstly, that he may know the divine good pleasure, and carry out God's will completely.³ To achieve this, the soul, like the shadow following the body, should present itself spontaneously without any delay. Thus the light is the Godhead, the body the humanity of Christ, the shadow is our will, which should follow the example of Christ's life in everything that it can without drawing back or slowing down.⁴ As has been said, the divine good pleasure is to be sought in everything.

Secondly, the person who recognizes his own wickedness, woe, nothingness, [75r] ingratitude and unworthiness in everything, so that he may humiliate, mortify and despise himself more easily.

Thirdly, the person who recognizes the moral virtues, which he should try to acquire through constant prayer and devotion, and in particular the growth⁵ of divine, pure and simple love within himself, which is God and which was contained in his first love, and who should recognize when one goes after love of the creature out of insecure charity. This very fervent petition should

¹ Cf. Gen 22.

² Herp calls this the second "branch of the cedar on the mountain of perfection, or the second manner of aspiration: 'exigere'" (cf. *Spiegel der Volcomenheit*. Opnieuw uitgegeven door P. Lucidius Verschnergen ofm, II. Tekst [latino e fiammigo], Uitgever Neerlandia Antwerpen 1931, 272).

³ The text reads "exequire" that is perform, execute, put into practice.

⁴ In these phrases we see developments which were to be expanded ultimately in the mysticism of Canfield, which is completely focused on abandonment to the will to God. Cf. Optat de Veghel, *Benoit de Canfield (1562-1610). Sa vie, doctrine et son influence*, Romae, 1949; L. Cognet, *La spiritualité moderne*, Paris 1966, 249s. To understand Pili's shortened and not always clear text well, it is well to refer to the corresponding passage in Herp: "Sicut umbra movetur sine omni retractione ad motum corporis, unde causatur. Tria enim quaedam sunt, videlicet lumen solis, lunae vel candelae; medium aut interpositum corpus unde umbra causatur, et ipsa imbra. Divinitas igitur lumen, humanitas Christi corpus interpositum, et voluntas nostra erit velut umbra et movebitur sine omni retractione cordis ad confirmationem vitae Christi, sicut umbra movetur ad motum interpositi unde causatur; ad quod implendum petere, debet perfectam notitiam divini beneplaciti" (*Theol. myst. cit. lib. II. `pars III, c. 46, f. CLXIIIva*).

⁵ The text has *l'augumento*.

be that these desires to increase the love of God in us and to make us enjoy eternal charity would grow with speedy impetus, like a flash of lightning.¹

3957. The third element of this exercise of aspiration is that the faithful lover tries to resemble the beloved.² This should happen in the following manner. As soon as the soul feels that the heart has been inflamed with divine love, it should divest itself of all that has no resemblance to Christ, namely vices and sins, and even mortify natural passions and sensual emotions. It should bind [75v] such things and anything like them into a bundle to be consumed completely in the furnace of divine love. After doing this, the soul asks the beloved with ardent desire and insistent sentiments to deign to decorate her, now that she is stripped of all creatures, with those virtues that adorned our Lord Jesus Christ. The faithful and loving soul should continually contemplate with the mind's eye the perfection of her sweet spouse Jesus, both in his divinity and in his humanity, as in a spiritual mirror or representation, so that she may be conformed to him as much as possible, specially in the virtues which shone in his bitter and relentless Passion, that is in the desire for self abnegation, complete abdication and renunciation of one's own will, in most profound humility, in tolerance of suffering, in ardent charity exposing one's own life for the honour of God and the salvation of one's brother.³ One arrives at these and similar virtues through persevering prayer better than by any other exercise.

3958. Therefore, when the soul realizes that she is to aspire to the above virtues with most vehement emotions and ardent desires [76r] and to humble herself, and once she has spontaneously and freely renounced her own will without any recoiling of the heart or any sensuality, even when the experience of grace and devotion is withdrawn, then she can begin to believe that she had achieved such virtues. She desires, for example, to possess the virtue of humility, patience, contempt of self and the like. She asks God for them with insistence. Then she suddenly finds herself destitute of all experience of devotion and grace, and then suffers some serious scandal, injury, loss of reputation, injustice, punishment, on account of which she suffers confusion and ignominy, or privation of friends or family. If she finds herself, in these or similar situations, and free and immune from all impatience or rebellion in the first and last emotions of the heart, as if such things had been expected and desired, she may then probably conjecture that she has reached the apex of these virtues and has, within the limits of

¹ This is a classical similitude in spiritual literature. Francis of Jesi uses the image of a bellows and of a rifle that strikes sparks to light a fire and keep it alight. (cf. the last words of the *Circolo*). In the pocket editions of the Rule many prayers are suggested to this purpose, especially many *Aspirationes flammigeræ per totam hebdomadam, haud incongrue recitande ante sacram Communionem (Regula et Testamento...Venezia 1597, ff 150r-155r.*

² That is conformity to Christ as we shall see further on in his Passion.

³ We note the precision and spiritual intensity of these words which are to be found in the *Constitutions of 1536* and which are based upon the *Specchio d'orazione* by Bernardino da Balvano and many other Capuchin texts. The expression to continually contemplate with the mind's eye the perfection of Jesus Christ, spouse of the soul, according to his divinity and his humanity is the contemplative method taught, for example, by Ripanti in his *Circolo* and is characteristic of Capuchin devotion. Cf. Optatus van Asseldonk, *François d'Assise, imitetur du Christ crucifié, Dieu-Homme, dans la tradition franciscaine et capucine*, in CF 52 (1982) 117-143.

human frailty, become like Christ in this matter. The Prophet speaks [76v] of this in the Psalms: "Improperium expectavit cor meum et miseriam".¹

However, should she experience any rebellion on the part of sensuality in the above adversities, and break out into any act of impatience, that is of making excuses, of murmuring, of defensiveness or the like, then she will realize that she is not grounded in such virtues, nor trained in fervent desires or emotions, since the Lord God usually confers the virtues and perfection of divine grace and radical love by these means.

3959. The fourth element is that the soul perfectly conforms and unites its simple and trained will to the will of God.² This is becoming one with God that is being able to want and not to want the same thing as God does. Thus to be able to perform this act of aspiration and unitive love it is required that one rests in God alone through love and becomes one spirit with him through inflamed desires. A person should equate their will to the will of God without any rebellion of heart or sensuality and with very ardent desire and commit themselves perfectly to God's good pleasure.³ One should do this in such a way that the impact of simple charity will constitute his greatest [77r] desire, greatest consolation and his greatest delight will always be doing the will of God both in exterior adversities, such as sickness, persecution,⁴ oppression, defamation, prison, scourging, death and the like, as well as in inner adversities, such as withdrawal of divine grace, devotion, consolation etc., in clouding of the intellect, aridity, hardening of the heart, frigidity of spiritual desires, tepidity and the like.

Not only this but also let the soul be more faithful at the time when the Lord permits such things to happen, and guard with all solicitude against any wandering of the senses to exterior things, so as to seek no comfort in transitory or vane things. Let the soul also beware not to incur any laziness or negligence because of these things, nor idleness, but maintain herself in interior exercises with all her strength, or at least to keep occupied with exterior exercises, which although they appear to be tasteless are appreciated by God as more valuable and meritorious than those which are performed under the experience of grace and devotion, because at such a time, when grace is withdrawn, we serve [77v] God at our own expense. So that he may fulfill this more easily and with greater fidelity, a person should believe with firm trust and certain faith that it is God who allows such things to happen to him, so as to test the love and fidelity of his servant, to enrich him with greater gifts and graces in the future and to console him more sweetly.

3960. Beware that no one can become perfect in this virtue in any of the three ways mentioned above. However, those who exercise themselves in this virtue achieve the highest degree of purity of heart and perfect charity possible in this life.

¹ "Insults have broken my heart; so that I am in despair". Ps 69:20.

² This is unitive love, the outcome of perfect conformity to the will of God.

³ That is to abandon oneself, release oneself, give oneself.

⁴ This appears in the text erroneously as *perequitano*.

We seek God in the exercise of the Purgative Way. Even if we find him we do not find him in fervent charity.

In the Illuminative Way we offer victims and sacrifices of praise with ardent desires and craving to arrive at our eternal home.

In the Unitive Way we find him whom our heart loves and desires.¹

Chapter 10

THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE PRESUPPOSES THE ACTIVE²

3961. The first stage, which pertains to beginners and the imperfect, is humble confession preceded by contrition, by means of which the soul mortifies love of the world in depraved concupiscence, [78r] and many illicit and dangerous habits.³ These people have to chastise and mortify the flesh, so that it does not rebel against the spirit, with fasts, vigils, abstinence, affliction, tears, groans and sighs, and by bodily exertion imposed by prelates. Anyone who thinks that he can rise to the contemplative in any other way is deceiving himself, as would one who wanted to reach the summit of a mountain in a single leap.

Thus St. Gregory and other saints say, that the active life which is lived amidst toiling and bodily affliction, should be undertaken before the contemplative as a preparation for it.⁴ We have a symbol of this in Jacob who worked seven years for Rachel, who symbolizes the contemplative life. However, before that he was assigned for seven other years with Leah, her sister, who symbolizes the active life.

Thus Gerson says that young people who are addicted to carnal pleasure and subject to temptations, and used to vice and wickedness, cannot and should not give themselves suddenly to contemplation, because when they decide to think about God and engage in pure prayer in secret, they think

¹ This is a good summary of the spiritual life in its upward movement of "consurrezione" and "introversione".

² Pili here takes up the *Exercitatorium* by Cisternos in chapter 34: "Quomodo vita contemplativa debet incipere a labore activae".

³ All this was fully developed in the first chapters of the Purgative Way, which correspond substantially to the twelve mortifications of Henry Herp.

⁴ St. Gregory the Great *Moralium* lib. VI, ch 37, n. 61. "Et qui per Rachelem, nisi contemplativa; quid per Liam, nisi activa vita designatur?" (PL 75, 764); id. *Homiliarum in Ezechielem lib II, homil. 2* n. 10: PL 76, 954; also St. Augustine *Contra Faustum*, lib. 22 c. 54-55: PL 42, 434s; Richard of St Victor, *De praeparatione animi ad contemplationem (Beniamin monor)*, c. 1: PL 196, 1-4; Cf. A. Ménager, *Les divers sens du mot "contemplatio" chez Grégoire le Grand*, in *Le Vie Spirit.* 59 (1939) *Suplem.* 145-169; (1939) 39-56; id. *La contemplation d'après saint Grégoire le Grand*, *ibid.* 9 (1923) 242-282; cf. also L. Gougand, *La teoria dans la spiritualité médiévale*, in *Revue d'Ascétique et Mystique* 3 (1922) 388 note 3; E. van Herp in ch 4 of *hgis Directorium* ("De triplici via hic tractanda et quis ad vitam contemplativum aptus") writes: "Sciendum est quod triplex est vita, scilicet activa per Lyam designata, quae lippos habebat oculos, et spiritualis contemplativa in Rachele figurata, quae pulchra erat sed infecunda et superessentialis contemplativa vita in Maria Magdalena signata, quae optimam partem praelegerat" (cf. *Spiegel der Volcomenheit*, ed. P.L. Verschueren, II, Antwerpen 1931, 96.)

[78v] more quickly and abundantly about the things to which they were addicted by their evil inclinations and depraved habits.¹ Thus they should exercise themselves firstly in the purgative way, as was stated in the first book.

Chapter 11

THE CONTEMPLATIVE SHOULD SOMETIMES INTERRUPT HIS CONTEMPLATION²

3962. The contemplative should interrupt his contemplation in two ways by coming down from the mountain of contemplation to attend to himself and his neighbour.³

Firstly, sometimes when a person has been established⁴ in a higher stage the person should step down and occupy himself at a lower stage, so that by always ascending to higher things the person does not begin to lose things, which he acquired at a lower stage.

For example. Firstly in the Purgative Way the person was sorry for sins and confessed them, did penance and many other good works out of fear of death, judgment, hell and the like. Secondly, the person achieved consideration [79r] of divine gifts in the Illuminative Way. Thirdly, the person was prepared for divine union in the Unitive Way by seraphic and ardent love.⁵ Should you abandon the two first ways because you have ascended to such heights of union? Certainly not! Rather you should meditate upon them very frequently, so that you may continually give thanks to God for the gifts which you have received, and so that you may always remain humble out of fear, until charity, which banishes fear, is perfected in you, and so that you do not become lazy and presumptuous because of too much confidence.⁶ This is how all the saints ascended to heavenly things as high as heaven through

¹ Cf. *De monte contemplationis*, in *Opera*, ed. Dupin, I Paris 1706; also in *LeVie Spirituelle* 23 (1930) *Supplem.*, 56-59.

² Cf. chapter 68 of the *Exercitatorium* by Cisterios: "Quomodo in certis casibus debet vir contemplativus de alto contemplationis descendere, et ad tempus sua spiritualia exercitia interrumpere".

³ The symbol of the "mountain of prayer" has ancient resonances and echoes, such as Gregory of Nyssa, for whom Moses who ascended Sinai was the symbol of the mystical ascent and became a person who sought God. This image is developed in subsequent spiritual literature, for example, in Richard of St. Victor who speaks of contemplation as a large, high mountain in *Beniamin minor* chapters 75 and 83 (PL 196, 53s, 59); also Gerson, *De monte contemplationis*, or Il libro del monte della santissima orazione, a work by an anonymous author of the fourteenth century (a recent edition, Messina 1965: translated by Ellero Cenni, with commentary by Mons. P. Minutoli); *La salida del Monte Sion*. This image is contained in the Constitutions of 1536, n. 120.

⁴ In the text *constituto* is equivanent to *costituito* or *posto*.

⁵ This is a summary of the spiritual life, which was explained at length in chapter sixteen of the Purgative Way and chapter two of the Illuminative Way.

⁶ Cf. John 4: 18.

divine love and desire and descended as deep as the abyss by the humble consideration of divine justice and severity in punishing.

3963. Secondly, you should return to yourself by the necessary performance and arrangement of good habits, so that by good example you may be loved by all and be someone to be imitated, so that your light may shine before all and they may glorify our Father who is in heaven.¹ Our behaviour should be: firstly, mature, so that it may be an example to others; secondly, humble, [79v] so that it protects us; thirdly, kindly, so that we appear attractive to others.

Thirdly, you should return to yourself by some corporal works. Even though corporal works are of little use, as the Apostle says,² still spiritual and corporal works, should be undertaken at the proper time when the one or the other are duly disposed and executed with discretion the one does not interrupt the other, and the devil finds a person always occupied.³

3964. While exercising exterior works do not abandon the spiritual, praying, meditating and devoutly exercising fear, and other virtues and good emotions. The saintly fathers always did this. Therefore we frail humans, not regarding ourselves as angels, who always feed themselves on spiritual food, should at times attend to corporal works, for many reasons: firstly, so that when boredom sets in at times we do not leave spiritual things aside. Sts. Cassian, Anthony and others taught this.⁴ Secondly, because such exterior works, although they sometimes take one away from⁵ contemplation, still, [80r] they send one back with more strength and ardour. Certainly we cannot ascend with concupiscence and we need to overcome it and conquer it, chiefly through manual work, since *in desiderio est omnis ociosus*.⁶ Thirdly, we should sometimes do this because our heart, which is so fickle, is battered and greatly tossed around by so many emotions and thoughts like a little bark on the ocean. Thus, as Cassian says: we need to steady it with the firm anchor of exterior occupations.⁷ Fourthly, because the enemy finds more ways and means of tempting the unoccupied person than one who is occupied, since only one devil tempts a person who is occupied, where many tempt those who are unoccupied.

3965. In order not to distance⁸ ourselves too far from spiritual works we should chose those exterior works which are in accord with the spiritual, such as

¹ Cf. Mtth 5:16.

² Cf. Tim 4:8.

³ "Diabolus te semper inveniatur occupatum": this maxim comes from the monastic tradition.

⁴ The *Constitutions of 1536*, n. 56-66, applied this important principal of the spiritual tradition of saintly monks and hermits very concretely. Cf. St Cassian, *Coll. 24: De mortificatione*, chapters 4 and 12: PL 49, 1288s, 1300. For St. Anthony, cf. *Vita S. Antoni*, written by St. Athanase (PG 26, 836-976).

⁵ In the text *ne* is used for *ci*.

⁶ This is a direct quotation from the Latin text by Cisternos from chapter 68: "...et ideo has concupiscentias oportet nos vincere, et praecipue operere manuali; in desiderio est enim omnis otiosus" (*Exercitatorium* cit., 222).

⁷ Cf. above p.72 note 6.

⁸ alongamo in the text is equivalent to *ci allontaniamo*.

writing holy books and the like. Thus we have to work not for temporal gain but to strengthen the spirit.¹ We should not be too worried and intense in these works, but moderate and discrete, mainly by observing silence, which, according to the Prophet, is our strength.² This is especially true of manual work, so that the mind may be [80v] occupied in some good meditation, as when one speaks of God, or the soul, or other edifying things.

Secondly, most importantly we should interrupt our contemplation of Christ for our neighbour. Firstly, for the superior! Thus, although we should always wish to be occupied in spiritual works as far as we can be, that is bewail our sins as Lazarus did, or stir compunction through recalling death and judgment, or with Magdalene be seated at the Lord's feet, and meditate on his life and passion, or be occupied in some other work, still, if the superior commands something special, leaving everything he is to be obeyed immediately, since the prelate is the vicar of Christ.³ *Paratum cor meum Deus* etc., that is to leave contemplation at your command.⁴ *Paratum cor meum* that is when you command me to do exterior things I serve.

3966. Secondly, for our peers, that is for our neighbour, we should interrupt contemplation to serve them and be subservient to them, moved by compassion and pity, in advising them, helping them, assisting them etc. not only in their physical needs but even more in their spiritual necessities.⁵ [81r] Thus if St. Paul had not come down from the third heaven and from his exalted state of mind he would not have bent down to the weak, no one would have been attracted or lead. But he became *omnia omnibus* etc.⁶ We too should do the same.

Thirdly for inferiors! Thus it is often necessary for prelates who have the care of souls to stop contemplation so that they may attend to the care of their subjects, so that those who are living fittingly may be confirmed, and also when discipline is required, so that those who err may be corrected, otherwise the blood of their subjects, that is their damnation, will be their responsibility. If their young brother, that is their subject, is not assisted by them, they will not be able to see the face of Joseph that is of their Saviour.⁷

¹ "To fortify the spirit" is a phrase which is "idiomatic" for Capuchin spirituality: cf. Const. 1536, n. 18 and 19.

² Cf. Is. 30:15 (Vulg): "In silentio et in spe erit fortitudo vestra". The expression which follows in the text almost literally found a place in the Caonstitutions of 1536, n. 65-66.

³ Lazarus is the "teacher" of the Rich Man: Lk 16:19; for Magdalen see the note above.

⁴ Ps 57: 8 and 108: 2.

⁵ This is how the corporal and spiritual works of mercy become part of the contemplative journey. This principle is the greatest explanation and justification of the Capuchin apostolate.

⁶ Cf. 1 Cor 9:22.

⁷ The office of superior takes its meaning and spirituality from the biblical interpretation of Gen 42: 14-20, and more precisely Gen 43: 3: "You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you". Cisternos' Latin text reads "nisi frater minimus, quantum in ipsis est, per eos adductus fuerit, faciem Joseph ... non videbunt"; Pili translated this "E se il fratello piccolino ... da loro non sarà reduto ...", that *reductus, adductus* in Cisternos' text (Cf. *Exercitatorium* , cit., 226).

Thus according to the advice of the saints, avoid exterior work as much as you can, always with the exception of humble and prompt obedience. When you are obliged to do something, you should return to the intimacy of the mind with all care as soon as you can, and perform spiritual exercises so that you do not become insensitive.

IV SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

This is a separate part, which Dionysius of Montefalco put out as the fourth part of the complete treatise in his edition, and it includes the whole of the ascetical contemplative journey under the image of a "palace" with concrete detail which is valuable to anyone who wishes to learn the Art of Union and put it into practice on a daily basis.

The "Palace" has a "passage" with five doors on the left and five on the right, corresponding to a similar number of rooms or cells, similar to the corridor in a Capuchin friary. The first five rooms on the left one after the other represent, in a popular style, the subjects of meditation recommended for the Purgative Way. However, the soul should not delay for a long time in these rooms, but pass from one to the other rather quickly, according to its spiritual needs. In visiting these five rooms the soul finds herself ashamed and contrite and wants to confess her faults to the divine judge. First, however, she must ascend a staircase with eight steps, which contain all the activities and exercises of the Purgative Way. When she has mastered the final step, there is a door which opens onto a magnificent hall, at the centre of which, the Just Judge is seated on a throne made of gold and precious stones surrounded by angels and saints. The soul approaches with fear and having prostrated in front of the throne confesses her sins, beating her breast, and in tears she turns to Jesus Christ, to the Virgin, to the saints with separate prayers. When she has been assured of forgiveness she kisses God's feet. These are all spiritual exercises, which are best performed at the time of day after Compline.

Instead, after Matins, it is better to enter the other five rooms on the right side of the hall in the palace meditating on God's gifts according to the exercises of the Illuminative Way. Having concluded these prayers of thanksgiving and praise, the soul, while singing, returns to the throne room and kisses the beneficent hands of the Lord, and, alongside of him, continues to practice the Unitive Way up to kissing the mouth.

John of Fano's book ends with a list of devotional practices, which are recommended for facilitating the difficult yet wonderful journey of the spirit. They deal with Christ's Passion or the mysteries of the life of the Madonna fittingly spread over the various days of the week. They suggest the way to enter the Church, and to prepare oneself for the celebration of the liturgical Hours, and how to apply the different steps of Christ's Passion to each of the liturgical Hours, or how to pray for oneself for freedom. Finally the devotions of the five Our Fathers and Hail Marys for special intentions are proposed, the devotion of the seven Our Fathers and Hail Marys while meditating on the seven sorrows of St. Joseph and a special prayer to the Madonna.

A WONDERFUL SPIRITUAL EXERCISE FOR THE ABOVE WAYS COMPOSED
AND ENVISIONED IN A PALACE¹

3967. In addition to the two exercises given in the Purgative and Illuminative Ways, the devout soul today may compose [81v] another. Firstly she should make the effort to read this book often and to practice it well.² She should then be able to reach the Purgative, Illuminative and Unitive Ways easily in the following manner:

Imagine a large Palace, with a hallway inside the door, in which there are five doors and five rooms on either side.

Starting on the left you enter the first room of the consideration of sins. In there it seems that you are in a shameful place, which is dark and reeking and full of all kind of wretchedness and filth, where a demon lures and leads one to commit one sin now and another later. Here one may recall all one's life. One seems to see many devils who play various instruments, while other dance making a festival for such sins.

3968. Now imagine an angel who often reminds you not to follow that devil, and not to commit that sin, and places many obstacles to your sinning. When he sees that you do not wish to obey him, he remains at a distance showing that he is very upset and depressed.³

Imagine a Crucifix off to one side. It appears as if you have slapped [82r] him, wounded him, spat at him, flogged him, crowned him, put nails in his hands and feet, and cut him and covered him with filth. You might imagine these things and the like, as the Lord shall enlighten you.

But beware that it is not good to delay over the consideration of sins for very long, especially over sins of the flesh, so that where you hope to make progress, does not bring about a fall. Think of this little or never, according as you deem it necessary to shatter your tepidity or negligence. One may also proceed according to the things, which were mentioned above in the Purgative Way in chapter 16, on Monday.⁴

3969. Having passed out of the first room with great contrition and sorrow for

¹ The image of the "Palace" is original it seems to Pili and it represents the synthesis, translated into a spiritual exercise, of the whole of the Three Ways in *The Art of Union with God*. In the Brescia editions of 1536 and 1548 these pages are joined to chapter 11, but they should form a separate chapter since in the "Table of Contents" or the Index there is a heading: *Spiritual Exercise*. In the re-edited edition of Dionysius of Montefalco this part makes up chapter 4 of Part Four of *The Art of Union with God*, which is entitled: *The exercises to be used in the above Ways*. Perhaps the image of the "Palace" might have received a tacit prompt in St. Bonaventure, *De triplici via*, ch 2, n.4: "We should end our prayer here, and certainly not desist before we enter into the presence of the wonderful tabernacle in God's palace where the sound of the feast is heard in exalted voice." (cf. *Opuscoli mistici*, Milan, 1956, 61; *Op. omnia*, VIII, 9a).

² This is the original text of John of Fano and it demonstrates how the first Capuchin booklets were written with the object of being effective and practical.

³ Note the liveliness of the scene portrayed with happy touches of popular religious fantasy.

⁴ See above paragraphs 3888-3894.

one's sins, one enters the second room that is the consideration of death. There it seems that one is lying in bed with a serious illness with the doctors offering no hope. The friars approach bringing the Sacrament, administering Extreme Unction, recommending one's soul to God. Step by step the soul contemplates in detail what happens to a person when they die, following the guide given above in the Purgative Way in chapter 16 [82v] for Tuesday.¹

Then one enters the third room that opens into the consideration of the punishments of Hell, according to what was said above for Wednesday.²

Then one enters the fourth room that opens into the consideration of the punishments of Purgatory, which, as Augustine says, are very heavy.³ Although they are not eternal, they exceed and surpass any pain, which one could every feel in the world.

Lastly enter the sixth room that opens into the consideration of the last judgment, as it is described above, for Thursday.⁴

3970. Note well that it is not expedient for the soul, who wishes to attain divine union, to dwell long in these rooms, that is in the consideration of things which have been lost, which belong rather to servile fear, since the whole foundation of this most worthy union is made up of simple, naked love of the Divine Majesty, stripped of craving for any special comfort or discomfort, whether in this world or the next, as was said above.⁵ However, these considerations [83r] are useful to the soul to keep her humble and unassuming and careful and fervent and to drive her to good works, as was said above, in the last chapter of the Unitive Way.⁶ Thus the soul may occupy herself in the above-mentioned exercises to a greater or lesser degree as she sees the need. When there is no great need she may pass over them with a glance of the mind. If there is no need of them she may leave them aside completely and go on to the Illuminative and Unitive Ways.

Once she has passed through the above mentioned five rooms, and thus through the consideration of those five topics, then quite contrite and ashamed and full of fear and trembling, she decides to go to the feet of the divine tribunal, where, as before a severe and very just Judge, she accuses herself of her sins and iniquities, and asks for mercy as before a very merciful father.

3971. In order to come to this tribunal one has to climb a staircase with eight steps,⁷ that is following the consideration of the above; one ordinarily needs to

¹ See above paragraph 3895.

² See above paragraph 3896.

³ Cf. *In Ps.* 37, n 3: "gravior tamen erit ille ignis, quam quidquid potest homo pati in hac vita" (PL 36, 397).

⁴ See above paragraphs 3897-98.

⁵ See above Paragraphs 3914 and 3930.

⁶ That is chapter 11.

⁷ The image of stairs recalls the work of John Climacus, *Scala Paradisi*. It is the climb of annihilation to prepare one for the grace of contemplation.

proceed thus.

Firstly to know oneself and one's wretchedness [83v] both because of one's nature and one's faults, and to attain deep humility, abjection and annihilation in the sight of God and every creature, according to what was said above in the Purgative Way, chapter 12.¹

The second step is that one studies to purify the soul of any stain through bitter contrition and sincere confession, as chapter five of the Purgative Way teaches.²

The third step is that one is prepared to endure any adversity you might wish to name, for the love of God, as we saw above in chapter nine of the Purgative Way.³

The fourth step is a complete abdication from and contempt for all sensuality, as we saw in chapter six of the Purgative Way.⁴

The fifth step is free submission and renunciation of oneself from all special comforts both spiritual and temporal, being attentive to the will of God and his pleasure alone, as we saw in the tenth chapter of the Purgative Way and the first of the Illuminative Way.⁵

The sixth step is constant, unshakable faith and hope that God intends and is able to forgive and confer grace, as we saw in chapters [84r] eight and thirteen of the Purgative Way.⁶

The seventh step is complete mortification of all love and fear, as we saw above in chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Purgative Way.⁷

The eighth step is right intention that is of carrying out all the above simply for the love of God and to his praise, honour and glory.

3972. When one has reached the top of the stairs, that is has completed the above mentioned things with greatest diligence, one finds oneself at the door of a most beautiful hall all decorated and wondrously marvelous, where, one will see the most just Judge, seated upon a resplendent throne made of gold and precious stones,⁸ looking marvelous, stupendous and admirable. There beside him is the most kind Redeemer of the world, God and man, man and God, crowned with honour and glory. There one will see the most worthy Empress of the universe, the Mother of God, crowned with glory and inestimable beauty.

¹ See above paragraphs 3858-3870.

² See above paragraphs 3827-3830.

³ See above paragraphs 3843-3847.

⁴ See above paragraphs 3831-3834.

⁵ See above respectively paragraphs 3848-3857 and 3902-3904.

⁶ See above paragraphs 3838-3842, 3871-3876.

⁷ See above paragraphs 3821-3825.

⁸ "Prede" is dialect for "pietre". the image of the resplendent throne is also used by Verucchino (Cf *I Frati Cappuccini*, III/I p.1085 ff.)

There one will find her most noble spouse St. Joseph. There one will find the precursor of the Lord and the Apostles. There one will find our Seraphic Father St. Francis with the most precious marks of the Son of God, and countless [84v] saints around the hall singing and creating music of incomprehensible sweetness together with the angels. If one has a special devotion to one of the saints, imagine them present there ready to be of assistance.¹

One can devoutly imagine the marvelous beauty of this hall, its splendour, aroma and pleasantness according to the unction the Spirit confers.² Perhaps because of the sight of such wonderful things and because one feels unworthy, one does not dare enter, but stands still ashamed and full of amazement, then imagine that one's angel sweetly invites one to enter, or one's special saint intercessor signals to one with their hand to enter will all confidence.

3973. Then, taking heart, one advances as far as the judgment seat, with one's head lowered and hands joined, kneeling there, prostrated with face on the ground, with deep humility, bitter contrition and sorrow for one's sins and with an abundant flow of tears, yet with undoubted faith and firm hope in the infinite [85r] mercy of the Judge, who is our most kind Father. Striking one's breast one might say three times: *Deus, propitius esto mihi peccatori.*³ Then one might say with much devotion and heartfelt love: *Pater, peccavi in coelum et coram te, et prae multitudine peccatorum meorum iam non sum dignus vocari filius tuus; immo nec servus, nec oculos ad coelum levare. Miserere mei, Pater clementissime, peccavi super numerum arenae maris et multiplicata sunt peccata mea et non sum dignus videre altitudinem coeli prae multitudine peccatorum meorum, quia irritavi iram tuam et malum coram te feci.*⁴ Then one strikes one's breast again saying with a deep sigh: *Deus propitius esto mihi peccatori.* Every time one repeats these words with great love, bitter sorrow and heartfelt sighs one strikes their breast.

3974. Then say all the *Confiteor*. When one says: *Ideo precor beatissimam et gloriosam Virginem Mariam*, one turns to her with devotion and recommends oneself to her. One names the saints to whom one has devotion, turning [85v] to them and recommending oneself to them⁵ and to all the saints. Then say:

Deus propitius esto mihi peccatori.

Miserere mei Deus secundum magnam misericordiam tuam, et secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum dele iniquitatem meam. Amplius lave me ab iniquitate mea, et a peccato meo munda me. Quoniam iniquitatem meam ego cognosco et peccatum meum contra me est semper.

¹ This is a hierarchy of devotion and worship; first Good the Father, then Jesus Christ, then the Madonna, St. Joseph, the stigmatized St. Francis and other saints and finally the angels as the crown of the scene.

² This is the usual refrain, with reference to 1 John 2, 20. 27.

³ This is the attitude of the Publican: cf Luke 18, 13.

⁴ The Prodigal Son's sorrow is mixed in with that of David: cf Luke 15: 18. 21; Ps 40: 13; 51:6.

⁵ That is to their intercession.

Say with fervor, while striking the breast strongly:¹ *Tibi soli peccavi et malum coram te feci, ut iustificeris in sermonibus tuis et vincas cum iudicaris.*

Deus propitius esto mihi peccatori.

*Domine, averte faciem tuam a peccatis meis et omnes iniquitates meas dele. Cor mundum crea in me Deus, et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus meis. Ne proicias me a facie tua, et Spiritum Sanctum tuum ne auferas a me. Redde mihi laetitiam salutaris tui, et spiritu principali confirma me.*²

Deus propitius esto mihi.

Ne reminiscaris Domine delicta mea, vel parentum meorum; neque vindictum sumas de peccatis meis. Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison. Pater noster qui es in coelis, say it all.

Et ne nos inducas in tentationem. [86r] Sed libera nos a malo. Ego dixi Domine miserere mei. Sana animam meam quia peccavi tibi. Convertere Domine usquequo. Et deprecabilis esto super servos tuos. Ab occultis meis munda me Domine. Et ab alienis parce servo tuo. Quoniam tu illuminas lucernam meam Domine.

3975. Say with heartfelt emotion three times: *Deus meus illumina tenebras meas; illumina oculos meos ne unquam obdormiam in morte, ne quando dicat inimicus meus, that is the devil and sin: Prevalui adversus eum.*

Qui tribulant me exultabunt si mortus fuero. Ego autem in misericordia tua speravi. Miserere nostri Domine, miserere nostri.

Fiat misericordia tua Domine super nos. Quemadmodum speravimus in te. In te Domine speravi, non confundar in aeternum.

Turn to Jesus Christ saying devoutly:

Christe, Fili Dei vivi, miserere nobis. Qui pretiosissimum sanguinem tuum pro nobis miseris, sceleratis et ingratis peccatoribus clementissime efudisti. Exurge Christe adiuva nos. Et libers nos propter nomen tum.

Turn to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary saying:

Post partum, Virgo, inviolata permansisti. Dei Genetrix intercede pro nobis.

Turn [86v] to all the saints: *Omnes sancti et sanctae Dei, orate pro nobis, ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi. Domine exaudi orationem meam, et clamor meus ad te veniat.*

3976. Say with the greatest devotion and affection of the heart and, if possible, with tears.³ Your intention should always be to ask God for the grace to know

¹ The prayer is active and the action sacred.

² Note the liturgical derivation of these prayers as also of the following. Cf Ps. 52: Miserere.

³ Tears are important in the economy of prayer. This is the great theme of compunction, developed at depth in Patristic, Monastic and Medieval spiritual literature.

and love his Majesty and to do his most holy will and nothing else.

*Oratio:*¹

Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, fac nos tibi semper et devotam gerere voluntatem et maiestati tuae sincero corde servire.

Actiones nostras quaesimus Domine aspirando praevieni et adiuvando proseguere, ut cuncta nostra oratio et operatio ad te semper incipiat et per te coepta finiatur.

Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, dirige actus nostros in beneplacito tuo, ut in nomine dilecti Filii tui mereamur bonis operibus abundare.

Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, da nobis fidei, spei et charitatis augmentum et, ut mereamur assequi quod promittis, fac nos amare quod praecipis.

Aurem tuam, quaesimus Domine, precibus nostris accomada et mentis nostrae tenebras [87r] gratia tuae visionis illustra.

Mentes nostras, quaesumus Domine, Spiritus Sanctus qui a te procedit illuminet, et inducat in omnem, sicut promisit Filius, veritatem.

Interveniat pro nobis. quaesumus Domine Iesu Christe, apud tuam sanctissimam clementiam nunc et in hora mortis nostrae gloriosa Virgo Maria dulcissima mater tua, cuius animam sanctissimam in hora amarissimae passionis tuae doloris gladius pertransivit.

Adsit nobis, quaesumus Domine, beatissimi patris nostri Francisci pia humilis et devota supplicatio, in cuius carne praerogativa mirabili passionis tuae sacra stigmata renovasti.

Fidelium Deus omnium conditor et redemptor animabus famulorum famularumque tuarum remissionem cunctorum tribue peccatorum, ut indulgentium quam semper optaverunt, piis supplicationibus consequantur. Per Dominum ...

*Conclusio:*²

Auditorium nostrum in nomine Domini. Qui fecit coelum et terram. Sit nomen Domini benedictum. Ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum. Benedictum sit dulce nomen Domini nostri Iesu Christi et glorissimae Matris eius, in aeternum et ultra. Amen

Nos cum prole pia, benedicat Virgo Maria. Amen.

3977. These prayers together with all that has been said above are most efficacious in asking for grace from God, both because everything is confided to the honour, glory and pleasure of his Majesty, and also because of the invocation

¹ A series of well-known prayers taken from the liturgy. In the text the word *Oratio* appears before each *oremus*.

² At this point in the text there is written erroneously the title: *Exercizio spirituale*, which we omit because it is out of place.

of the glorious name of Jesus since he said: "If you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will grant it to you".¹ What has been indicated here and above may be performed at the end of all your prayers that is when you do not wish to pray any longer, whence also many indulgences may be gained.²

Note also that you may add or subtract according to the time at your disposal and as you are moved by devotion,³ to all the things which you have said or will say. If you persevere in this practice with devotion and fervor, you will find that in a short time you will experience a great change and an affluence of divine grace and a disposition towards the Unitive Way. This will happen after Compline or when you have the opportunity.

3978. Having completed all this, imagine that the Lord God and most loving Father, seeing your contrition and good will and having been asked [88r] by the most sweet Jesus and his most merciful Mother and all the saints, says to you with a kindly face: *Remittuntur tibi peccata tua*⁴ and he will show you his feet so that you may kiss them. Knowing that you have been received into grace and allowed to kiss the feet,⁵ you may say with great joy and very devoutly from the heart: *Agimus tibi gratias omnipotens Deus pro universis beneficiis tuis, qui vivis et regnas in saecula saeculorum: Amen.* Then singing the *Te Deum*" go to sleep.⁶

Following Matins, return to your spiritual exercise carefully in order to be allowed the kiss on the hands and on the lips by means of the Illuminative and Unitive Ways.⁷

3979. Return once more to the other five rooms which are in the passage of the above mentioned palace. Imagine in the first room and paint a picture in the mind of the gifts of creation, made in God's image, with all that pertains to such creation. There is not a piece of wood, a stone, a brute animal etc. that is not for your protection, management and nourishment. The whole world was made for you.⁸

Imagine in the second room and paint a mental picture of the ordering and regulating [88v] which has destined you to the beatific vision furnishing

¹ Cf John 16:23.

² Thus there is also the intention of gaining holy indulgences, following a devotional style, which was widely spread before and up to the Vatican II.

³ The usual refrain cf. p.45 note 4.

⁴ Once again Jesus' words to the sinful woman or the paralytic (cf. Mt 9:2; Luke 5:20; 7: 48) underline the attitude of the soul at prayer in the Purgative Way.

⁵ Symbol in the Purgative Way of the grace of divine pardon.

⁶ John of Fano assigns this spiritual exercise to nighttime, before going to bed for the night.

⁷ Nighttime, following the celebration of Matins, as a time for awaiting love, is regarded as the most opportune time for practicing the meditation of the Illuminative Way (on God's gifts) and the Unitive Way (on union with divine love.).

⁸ As we can see, John of Fano hints in a round about way at several motives or points for meditation on the gifts of creation as on other gifts, recalling what he wrote at greater length in chapter two of the Illuminative Way. Cf. above paragraphs 3905 and following.

you with the necessary means. You have been created a Christian, not a Pagan or Jew. You have been given the most blessed Sacraments under the Christian law, the law of love, the theological virtues, the merits of Jesus Christ, the prayers of his most blessed Mother and of the other saints, your Angel Guardian and the like.

In the third room paint a picture of the gift of justification, how I have sought and called you like the lost sheep. Although you did not answer I waited. When you returned I accepted and pardoned you. I called you to religious life; I preserved you from sin into which you might have fallen etc.

In the fourth room paint a picture of redemption. Whoever contemplates the Passion of the Redeemer would do well in this to look at St. Bonaventure's *Meditation*, or the book *Arte del ben pensare*.¹

In the fifth room which deals with glorification, paint a picture and contemplate the glory of paradise. Undertake all these meditations as the influence of the Holy Spirit leads you.²

3980. When you have left these rooms through the considerations of the gifts, all happy and contented, singing: *Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino* etc.,³ [89r] return to the passage, and with the highest reverence and trust, kneeling before the judgement seat of the kind Father, say devoutly: *Regi saeculorum immortalis et invisibilis, soli Deo honor et gloria in saecula saeculorum. Amen.*⁴

The Lord will offer you his glorious hands and you may kiss them with the highest devotion and the sweetest movements of the depths of the heart mindful of the infinite and immortal grace of such gifts. If you know how to conduct yourself according to the rules set out above for the Unitive Way, you will come to kiss the lips with ease and embrace the Spouse and enjoy the sublime condition and most excellent state of Union.

Note that for this practice it is expedient to be familiar with spiritual books, such as: *Stimolo del divino amore* by St. Bonaventure, John Gerson, *Meditation* of St. Bernard and St. Anselm and the like.⁵

¹ Cf. above p.84 note 1.

² Cf. above p.48 notes 2 and 3.

³ Ps 103: 22.

⁴ Cf. 1 Tim 1:17.

⁵ The *Stimulus amoris* in its short edition was not written by St. Bonaventure, but by the Friar Minor James of Milan who lived in the second half of the thirteenth century: cf. *Stimulus amoris Fr. Iacobi Mediolanensis* (Bibl. Franc. Asc. Medii Aevi, 4), Quarachi 1949; in its longer form its editing is attributed to Henry of Balma (+ 1439); cf. Balduinus Distelbrink, *Bonaventurae scripta authentica, dubia vel spuria critice recensita* (Subsidia scientifica Franciscalia, 5), Roma 1975, 194-197 (n. 217-219). Connected to the name of John Gerson (1363-1429) we can mention *De monte contemplationis* or *Theologia mystica speculativa et practica*, etc. All his works were edited by Ellis Dupin in five volumes in 1706. Yet it is not impossible that Pili could be referring to the famous booklet the *Imitation of Christ*, which was also known in Italy as "Gerson" or "the little Gerson". One indication may be the catalogue of books used by the Capuchins for reading in the refectory given by Boverius (cf. C. Cargnoni, *I primi lineamenti di una "scuola cappuccina di devozione"*, in IF [1984] 126 and note 39), in which we see: Gerson, *De perfectione religiosa*, a title which

Note also that one should not delay too long with the meditation on things in the first five rooms; but delay a little longer in the passage, as also in the other rooms. If you wish to meditate on everything at once, pass on succinctly, so that you will have time to stop in the fourth and fifth rooms, and especially in the fourth on the Passion of the Lord. If you wish to contemplate the gifts with more savour, take one each day, in the order given above in the second chapter of the second book.¹

[*A method for meditating on the Passion of Christ for the whole week*]

3981. You may also divide the Passion of the Lord over the whole week.² Monday: from taking leave of his Mother to his capture: Tuesday: from the capture to the morning: Wednesday from when he was thrown into prison to his crowning: Thursday: from his crowning to the crucifixion: Friday: up to his death: Saturday: the taking down from the cross and burial: Sunday: the Resurrection, Ascension and Pentecost.

You may empathize with the sorrows of the Madonna for the whole week.³ Monday: the espousals and the Annunciation: Tuesday: the Visitation and when St. Joseph wanted to leave her: Wednesday: the Nativity of the Lord: Thursday: the circumcision and the Magi: [90r] Friday: the Presentation in the Temple and the Flight into Egypt: Saturday: the return from Egypt and when he stayed in the Temple: Sunday: all the rest up to the Assumption of the Madonna.

[*When you come into the Church*]⁴

3982. Say when you enter the Church: *Introibo in domum tuam. Adorabo ad templum sanctum tuum in timore tuo.*⁵ Taking holy water: *Asperges me Domino ysopo et mundabor, lavabis me et super nivem dealbabor.*⁶ Before the

might fit better the *Imitation of Christ*. In any case a booklet of the Imitation by Kempis, edited in Brescia in 1539 or in Venice in 1540 was called: The four books of John Gerson; or *Libellus de imitatione Christi, qui dicitur Joannis Gerson*, Venice 1536. For the *Meditazioni* by St. Bernard we may refer also to many works attributed to Bernard which circulated in many early printed editions such as the following: *Opuscola divi Bernardi abatis Clarevallensis* (Venice, by Simonem Bivilaqua Papiensem, 17 October 1495); or Italian editions such as the following: *Devote meditationi di S. Bernardo abbate con le meditationi di S. Anselmo ...*, Venice 1559 (even if this is a later edition). For St. Anselm see also: *Anselmi meditationes*, Venice 1512, 1520 etc.

¹ Thus "the room" in the palace of salvation which was most lived in by the Capuchins must have been the fourth, that of the Passion of the Lord. The distribution of the meditations for each day of the week is characteristic of the spiritual method of the *Devotio Moderna*

² This is the practice which was most frequently practiced by the early Capuchins.

³ Marian devotion has always been to the fore from the beginning of the Capuchin Reform.

⁴ Here begins a kind of primitive archaic rule for Capuchin devotion, which opened the way for the "Capuchin school of devotion", which has regulated the life of Capuchin friars to the present day. These detailed regulations, that confer spiritual value and motivation to the little daily gestures, became the basis of a methodology, which was applied, literally in the traditional Novitiate.

⁵ Ps. 5:8.

⁶ Ps 51:9.

Sacrament or Crucifix: *Adoramus te, Domine Iesu Christe et benedicimus tibi, quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum et miserere mei. Agimus tibi gratias omnipotens Deus pro universis beneficiis tuis, qui vivis et regnas in saecula saeculorum. Amen. Deus propitius esto mihi peccatori.*¹

[When you wish to pray or say the office]

3983. When you wish to say the office, or to pray, first make the sign of the cross; then sign your forehead saying: *Iesus, Maria.*² Then say three times, while making the sign of the cross: *Deus in adiutorium meum intende. Domine adiuvandum me festina. Gloria patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto. Sicut erat etc.*[90v]

*Rex Christe clementissime,
Tu corda nostra posside,
Ut tibi laudes debitas,
Reddamus omni tempore.*³

Veni sancte Spiritus, reple tuorum corda fidelium, et in tui amoris in eis ignum accende. Emitte Spiritum tuum et creabuntur. Et renovabis faciem terrae.

Oratio: Actiones nostras quaesumus Domine aspirando praeveni et adiuvando proseguere, ut cuncta nostra oratio et operatio a te semper incipiat et per te coepta finiatur. Per Christum Dominum etc.

Omnipotens sempiternae Deus, dirige actus nostros in beneplacito tuo, ut in nomine Filii tui mereamur bonis operibus abundare. Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

[Preparation for the Divine Office]

3984. When the bell rings for the Divine Office, go to the Church immediately, there having genuflected with devotion prepare your heart for the Lord with meditation such as this.⁴

At Compline: think how the Lord, having finished supper, having washed the feet of the disciples and given them Communion then prayed for more than three hours in the garden. He prayed for an hour the first time as

¹ John of Fano does not say that it is necessary to kiss the floor, however, this gesture of adoration is traditional within the Order accompanied by the prayer to the Crucifix, which St. Francis developed in the *Testament*, to which a prayer of thanksgiving and contrition is added.

² It is an original practice of devotion to the Name of Jesus and Mary together with the sign of the Cross, which is copied neither from Cisternos nor from Herp, but continually recommended by Pili.

³ Note how the spiritual teaching of Pili insists greatly on preparation for prayer in order that prayer may be fruitful.

⁴ This passage recalls the *1536 Constitutions*, n. 35. Meditation on the Passion spread over the various Hours became a widely spread practice among the Capuchins and it was based upon the Bonaventurian doctrine and the practice of the *Devotio Moderna*.

he said to Peter: *Could you not stay awake with me one hour?*¹ He prayed for an hour the second time, as the Gospel [91r] says: *And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words.*² The third time he prayed more, and so it says: *He prayed longer*³. Think about his anxiety and his sweat of blood; and of how he was arrested.

At Matins think of the embarrassment, scorn and blows which he endured at the house of Annas and Caiaphas. He was then put in prison until morning, where he endured such suffering and cruelty that, Jerome says,⁴ it will not be revealed till Judgement Day.

At Prime: he was taken out of prison and sent before the Council where there were six hundred and six members of the Council against him.⁵ Then he was led to Pilate, then Herod, then back to Pilate, scourged at the pillar, crowned with thorns, presented to the people with the words *Ecce homo*.⁶ These points are meditated on between Prime and Tierce.

At Tierce: he was sentenced, stripped again and clothed in his own clothes. He went to the mount carrying his cross. On the way his sorrowful mother embraced him and both fell to the ground, where they gave out great cries and the like. Then once they had arrived at the mount they flung him in a ditch filled with dead men's bones,⁷ until they completed preparations for the crucifixion.

3985. Note how some say that the Lord Jesus Christ was scourged twice: the first time at the pillar and the second time, after sentence had been passed to fulfil Roman law that when someone was sentenced to death, he was to be scourged before he was executed. Thus Pilate had him scourged the first time, not to kill him, but to set him free. The second time, after he had passed the death sentence, he had him scourged to fulfil the letter of the law.⁸

I say that he was crowned three times: the first, immediately after he was scourged; the second, after sentence was passed, when they wanted to strip him to put his own clothes on again, they could not do so, since the

¹ Matthew 26:40.

² Matthew 26:42; Mark 14:39.

³ Luke 22: 43 [(44) Vulg. the Greek has "more earnestly". Trans.]

⁴ I could not find this passage in Jerome.

⁵ These details are taken from popular dramatizations in medieval devotional literature, which are not easy to trace.

⁶ Cf. John 19:5.

⁷ More details rich in popular iconographic details. In contrast to John of Fano Bernardine of Ochino did not accept the crying of Mary beneath the cross.

⁸ Here too we are dealing with curious details from devotion to Christ's Passion. Dwelling on these details, which relate to the scourging shows the importance, which the ascetical exercise of scourging had in the penitential psychology of the Capuchins, which even Bernardino da Balvano insisted upon. The Roman decree referred to Ulpiniano, *Institutiones* 48, 19, "de poenis". The scourging of Jesus was carried out *more romano*, that is without limitation of strokes. Cf. G. Ricci, *L'uomo della Sindone è Gesù*, Roma 1969, 113-131, specially 127.

crown was in the way (oh, incomprehensible sorrow!), then they clothed him again, and they put the crown on his head again. The third time was when they divested him to crucify him. They took off the crown first, and then stripped him, to put it on his head again.¹

At Sext: how he was crucified. At None, how he died. At Vespers: the taking down from the cross.[92r] At Compline: how he was buried etc.²

To meditate on these things well, put into practice the *Meditazione* by Bonaventure, and the book called *Arte del ben pensare*³

Any soul, who is in love with Christ, can perform this most devout practice any day, from Hour to Hour, succinctly and briefly by contemplating the Passion of his most sweet Lord.

[*Remedy against the temptation of the Devil*]

3986. You must adopt another practice which is of great use for salvation.

When you find yourself molested by some diabolical temptation, be it lust or avarice or sloth, or anger or whatever, make the sign of the cross immediately and sign your forehead saying: *Jesus, Maria*, because the sign of the triumphant cross and that of the glorious names, are the most vigorous arms against our enemies that we can possibly have.⁴ Then say: *Exurge, Christe, adiuva nos. Et liber nos propter nomen tuum.* Then think, at the time when you find yourself being tempted, what our Lord Jesus Christ was doing at the time of his most bitter Passion, for example, if it is the Hour of Prime, think of how [92v] he was led to Pilate at that time, and how much scorn, shame and slaps he suffered at that time. If it is at the Hour of Tierce, think of how he was sentenced to death. If it is at the Hour of Sext: think how he was crucified then. Do the same for all the other Hours.⁵

Wonderful devotion, to the Lord God which confers very great grace and merit.

3987. In the morning or at night or at any time of day, having made the sign of the cross and signed your forehead saying: *Jesus, Maria* say five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys with devotion. The first is in honour of the Most Blessed Trinity adoring it, blessing it, and thanking it for all the gifts received or which will be received.

The second is for our enemies, and this bears great merit, because by loving our enemies and by praying for them we become children of God, as

¹ These are devout curiosities of popular simplicity, evidently taken from continual meditation on Christ's Passion.

² Thus each day, as each week, the friar spiritually "revisited" the whole *Via Crucis* and, in love with Christ, impressed the Beloved upon the heart.

³ See above notes 233-234.

⁴ It is the same practice which was mentioned above (note 449) but it becomes here an efficacious prayer of freedom and self-exorcism founded upon the power of the Cross and the names of Jesus and Mary.

⁵ The soul makes the suffering Christ present by referring to time and by imitation.

our Lord says. Our sins are forgiven, where otherwise they would not have been forgiven, as our Lord says: in Matthew chapter 5 and Matthew chapter 6.¹ When we say: *et dimitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus* [93r] *nostris*, we ask God to forgive us our sins as we forgive our enemies. If we forgive we pray that God will pardon us. If we do not forgive we are then praying that He does not forgive us and thus we ourselves provoke God's anger against ourselves. Matthew chapter 18: The servant who was forgiven his debt, not wishing to forgive the other servant, was condemned to eternal darkness.²

The third Our Father is for all the souls in Purgatory. This has great charity and merit and is also of use to the person who recites it, since every hour many of those who have finished their cleansing go to Paradise and pray for those who prayed for them.³

The fourth is for all sinners in the world that the Lord may enlighten and convert them to the knowledge and love of his Majesty and increase their number in this life and in the next.

The fifth is for you and your family, friends and acquaintances, so that the Lord may grant his grace to you and to them to know and love his Majesty and to always carry out his pleasure and [93v] his will.

*The seven Our Fathers to St. Joseph*⁴

3988. A trustworthy Observant friar told me, that two friars of that Order were in a ship going to Flanders, with about three hundred people on board, when there was eight days of great storm. One of the friars was a preacher and very devoted to St. Joseph, to whom he recommended himself with all his heart. Finally the ship sank with all on board. The friar and his companion found themselves in the sea on a plank. They were three days on the plank, one on either side. They continued to recommend themselves to St. Joseph with the greatest faith. On the third day a very handsome youth appeared⁵ and greeting them with a happy face he said: "God will help you brothers; do not fear".

¹ Cf. Matt 5:44-45; 6:14-15..

² Cf. Matt 18:23-35.

³ Devotion to the souls in Purgatory was well-developed among the Capuchins and had its immediate derivation from the prescription of chapter three of the Later Rule: *Let them pray for the dead*.

⁴ Another characteristic of Capuchin piety is the devotion to the seven sorrows of St. Joseph, which is developed here in a page which is very interesting, even as literature, which has already been noted and published by Frédégand d'Anvers, *De arte unionem cum Deo consequendi juxta P. Joannem a Fano O.F.M. Cap., addita appendice de septem doloribus S. Joseph (1536)*, in AO 39 (1932) 281-283; see also Jean-Joseph Lemire, *Jean de Fano et la dévotion aux sept douleurs et sept allégresses de saint Joseph*, in *Cahiers de Josephologie* 11 (1963) 65-86. There was also a little office in honour of St. Joseph spread among the Capuchins with the addition of "seven meditations on the joys and sorrows of glorious St. Joseph": cf. *Vetus officium in honorem S. Joseph* in AO 26 (1910) 72-77 (This is an edition from Venice of 1625 taken from another of Naples 1609). In his book entitled " *Les grandeurs et excellences du glorieux S. Joseph*, which had already appeared in Rome in 1597 P. Jerónimo Gracián says that this devotion was followed by many people in Italy and especially by the Capuchin Fathers (ed. 1597, p. 311: by J.-J. Lemire, *Jean de Fano ...*, 71).

⁵ A detail, which contrasts with the traditional iconography of St. Joseph.

Having said this, all three of them together with the plank found themselves on shore.

Kneeling down the friars then thanked the young man with great devotion. Then the preacher said: "O most noble young man, I ask you for the love of God that you tell me who you are". He replied: "I am St. Joseph,[94r] the most worthy spouse of the most blessed Mother of God, to whom you recommended yourselves so strongly. I was sent by the most kind Lord to save you. Know that if it had not been so, you would have been drowned with all the others. Know also that just as we three, that is the most kind Son of God, his sweetest Mother and I, lived together till my death, so we are now in Paradise one in soul and body, above the glory of all the others, since I rose with Christ, as Scripture says: *many bodies of the saints rose with him* etc.¹ Recently I asked the Divine Infinite Clemency that whoever recites daily for a whole year seven Our Fathers and seven Hail Marys in honour of the seven sorrows that I suffered in the world, will obtain all graces from God, because this is just".

Then the brother said: "O most noble spouse of the Mother of God, I beg you tell me what those seven sorrows were." St. Joseph replied: "Willingly".

3989. "The first was when, shortly after I had married the most kind [94v] Virgin, observing some signs of her pregnancy, not knowing the secret mystery of the Incarnation and not thinking that she would ever have children, I experienced such sorrow that tongue could not describe it. I loved her so much and did not wish to accuse her because she would have been stoned. It seemed intolerable to me to accept her as she was. She could see that I did not regard her favorably. She did not want to tell me anything, not knowing whether it was God's will that I be told and she did² nothing but cry. In the end it pleased the Lord to have me understand the truth, by sending his angel.

The second was when on the night of the Nativity of the Son of God³ I found myself in the stable without any human assistance. Although I accepted seeing the Son of God with great desire and once I had seen him had great consolation, still I experienced great sorrow in not being able to honour that most noble birth as it deserved.

3990. The third was when he was circumcised on the eighth day. I saw that poor most innocent little boy cry and he looked [95r] at his Mother, as little boys do, almost calling for help,⁴ and she could not offer it, because the law had to be observed. She cried and we all cried out of compassion, thus this was a great sorrow for me.

The fourth was when on the fortieth day, having completed the period of purification, when we had spent so much time in discomfort, we were happy

¹ Matthew 27:52. The Church has not pronounced on the assumption body and soul of St. Joseph.

² *Feva* is dialect in the Marches for *Faceva*.

³ Contrast the behaviors of St. Joseph, which is devoutly imagined here, with what Verucchino says. (See *I Frati Cappuccini* vol III, n 500ff pp. 1203ff.)

⁴ This is a very effective description in its popular and iconographic simplicity and immediacy.

and contented to have the company of the most noble Son of God, and entering the Temple, Holy Simeon said to his Mother that the sword of his Passion would pierce her heart. Then she began to cry and I cried too wounded by immense sorrow thinking that that poor little boy was so recently born and yet there was already talk of his Passion.

The fifth was when I had to flee into Egypt, being poor with a young wife, considering the difficulties of the dangerous journey and fearing that the little boy would be taken and killed and thus I experienced very great and inexpressible sorrow.

The sixth was when on the return from Egypt, when [95v] the little boy was so big we could not carry him, nor could he walk, so that we experienced great anxiety and fatigue on that journey. Then the sorrow was rekindled when we heard that Archelaus reigned in place of Herod his father. I experienced great fear and sorrow.

The seventh was when he had reached twelve years of age and stayed in Jerusalem and we lost him for three days. This sorrow was greater than all the others." Having said these things St. Joseph disappeared.

[Devotion to the Most Blessed Mother of God]

3991. Devotion to the most Blessed Mother of God full of grace,¹ concerning whom we read many examples of graces received.

*Gaude Maria Virgo, cunctas hereses sola interemisti,
quae Gabrielis Archangeli dictis credidisti,
dum Virgo Deum et hominem genuisti,
et post partum virgo inviolata permansisti.
Dei Genetrix intercede pro nobis.*

*Sub tuum praesidium confugimus, sancta Dei Genetrix,
nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus,
sed a periculis cunctis libera nos semper,
Virgo gloriosa et benedicta.*

¹ This is the original title, as written in the "Table of Contents" or general index. It has to do with Marian devotion in which the Madonna is seen as a rampart against heresy, refuge of the faithful, Immaculate and Sorrowful. The prayers are traditional and connected with the liturgy.

*Tota pulcra es, Maria Mater Dei, perpetua virgo,
 et macula originalis non est [96r] in te, alleluia. Miserere mei.
 Sancta et immaculata virginitatis, quibus te laudibus efferam nescio; quia
 quem coeli capere non poterant tuo gremio contulisti. Benedicta tu in
 mulieribus et benedictus frustrus ventris tui, Iesus; quia quem coeli capere
 non poterant tuo gremio contulisti.
 Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto.
 Quia quem coeli capere non poterant tuo gremio contulisti.
 Ora pro nobis sancta Dei genetrix.
 Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.
 Christe Fili Dei vivi miserere nobis.
 Qui natus es de Maria Virgine.
 Qui pretiosissimum sanguinem tuum pro nobis miseris, ingratis et
 sceleratissimis peccatoribus clementissime effudisti, miserere nobis.
 Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto.
 Exurge Christe adiuva nos.
 Et libera nos propter nomem tuum.
 Oratio: Interveniat pro nobis quaesumus Domine Iesu Christe apud tuam
 santissimam clementiam, nunc et in hora mortis nostrae, gloriosa Virgo Maria
 dulcissima mater tua, cuius animam sacratissimam in hora amarissima
 passionis tuae doloris gladius pertransivit. Per eundem Christum Dominum
 nostrum. Amen. [...]*¹

Translated by PATRICK COLBOURNE O.F.M.Cap.

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Note: The numbering of the paragraphs follows that in *I Frati Cappuccini*.

¹ There follows a most excellent Christian Catechism, which is reprinted in the section of *I Frati Cappuccini* dealing with apostolate. (Vol III/2 nn. 6769-6772.)