Treatise on the Love of God

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TREATISE

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St. Francis DeSales

St. Francis de Sales

1567-1622

Bishop, Founder of the Visitation

and Doctor of the Church

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TREATISE

ON THE

LOVE OF GOD

By

St. Francis de Sales

DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Translated by

Rev. Henry Benedict Mackey, O.S.B.

Under the Direction and Patronage of His Lordship the

Right Rev. John Cuthbert Hedley, O.S.B.

BISHOP OF NEWPORT

"A truly admirable book, which has as many admirers of the sweetness of

its author as it has readers. I have carefully arranged that it shall

be read throughout our Society, as the universal remedy for all feeble

ones, the good of slothful ones, the stimulus of love, and the ladder

of those who are tending to perfection. Oh! that all would study it as

it deserves! There should be no one to escape its heat."

--St. Vincent de Paul

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DEDICATION

I have dedicated this work to the Mother of dilection and to the Father

of cordial love, as I dedicated the Introduction to the Divine child

who is the Saviour of lovers and the love of the saved. And as women,

while they are strong and able to bring forth their children with ease,

choose commonly their worldly friends to be godfathers, but when their

feebleness and indisposition make their delivery hard and dangerous

invoke the Saints of heaven, and vow to have their children stood to by

some poor body or by some devout soul in the name of S. Joseph, S.

Francis of Assisi, S. Francis of Paula, S. Nicholas, or some other of

the blessed, who may obtain of God their safe delivery and that the

child may be born alive: so I, while I was not yet bishop, having more

leisure and less fears for my writings, dedicated my little works to

princes of the earth, but now being weighed down with my charge, and

having a thousand difficulties in writing, I consecrate all to the

princes of heaven, that they may obtain for me the light requisite, and

that if such be the Divine will, these my writings may be fruitful and

profitable to many.

Annecy, the day of the most loving Apostles

S. Peter and S. Paul, 1616.

BLESSED BE GOD.

--St. Francis de Sales

From The Preface (Pages 15-16)

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION.

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THE following Treatise presents, at first sight, considerable

difficulties. They do not arise from any defect in the Saint's mode of

expression, but are inherent in his subject and manner of treatment,

"going deep down into the roots" of the Love of God. Thus he speaks in

his Preface, and continues: "The first four books, and some chapters of

the others might doubtless have been omitted without disadvantage to

such souls as seek only the practice of holy love. . . . I have been

forced to say many things which will appear more obscure than they are.

The depths of science are always somewhat hard to sound." But he tells

us that the state of the minds of his age required this deeper

treatment; and whatever may be thought as to the best way of presenting

modern religious teaching to an age so ignorant, so shallow and so

unthinking as is our own with regard to spiritual truths, there can be

no question that this masterpiece of the chief doctor of ascetic

theology must not be brought down to our level, but that we must raise

ourselves towards it. The necessity of giving some explanation of the

sequence of its doctrine, and of the difficulties which occur, must be

our chief excuse for daring to place words of ours by the side of this

finished work of S. Francis de Sales.

A second reason lies in the fact that the "Treatise on the Love of God"

was, with others of his writings, the chief subject of the celebrated

controversy between F�n�lon and Bossuet. There can be little doubt that

this lowered the authority of the work. Not because the mere fact of a

discussion seemed to throw over it an air of unsafeness or suspicion.

Descriptions of the sublime and mysterious operations of the soul under

the influence of grace are always capable of being misunderstood, and

"wrested" from their proper sense, and no Christian mystic, from S.

Paul downwards, has escaped this danger. The shameless abuse of the

Saint's authority by the Jansenists left it eventually quite

unimpaired. Hence the mistakes of Molinos, P�re Lacombe, Madame Guyon,

and even of F�n�lon himself would have thrown no permanent discredit on

this treatise, if Bossuet had defended it in a proper spirit and with

full knowledge and discretion. Incredible as the fact may seem, it is

nevertheless true that neither F�n�lon nor Bossuet had properly studied

the works in dispute. The former went to them prepossessed. His

opinions were already formed, and he merely sought a confirmation of

them. He read in a most superficial manner. He precipitately chose out

what seemed to suit his purpose, and neglected important statements and

obvious interpretations which were inconsistent with it. He even went

so far in what must be called a sincere dishonesty of misapprehension,

as to insist on clinging to mistakes he had fallen into through using

Bailly's Lyons edition of the "Conferences" (1628), which Bossuet had

proved to be spurious. Bossuet, on his side, admits that he had not

previously read it properly, he only studied what seemed necessary to

answer his opponent, and lacked that high complete knowledge of S.

Francis's teaching as a whole which was necessary for taking a proper

view of details and parts. Indeed he only then (1695) began those

profounder studies of mystic theology which enabled him later to write

his treatises on matters which to S. Francis, by the experience of

sanctity more even than by the studies of a lifetime, were as familiar

as the sights and sounds of home. Hence it came about that while he

easily justified the teaching of the Saint, he not only failed to give

the full influence of his genius and authority to unassailably

establish its triumphant reputation, but on the contrary he

incidentally disparaged it. He says, for instance: "S. Francis is a

great saint, and I have always maintained that his doctrine which is

objected against us is entirely for us as to the matters in question:

but we must not therefore make him infallible, and it cannot be

forgotten that he has shown more good intention than knowledge on some

points." Fortunately Bossuet mentions these points, and the reader

shall see directly Bossuet's entire misapprehension of the Saint's

meaning, and meanwhile "it cannot be forgotten" that while Bossuet

refused the title "infallible" to S. Francis, for whom no one claims

it, he refused it to the successor of S. Peter to whose office it

really belongs. Bossuet says further: "According to the spirit of his

time he had perhaps less read the Fathers than the modern Scholastics."

Did Bossuet remember that he was speaking of the age of Sirmond, of

Bellarmine, of Venerable Canisius, and, we may say, of Petavius?

Francis was a master and a leader of his age, and, as is clear from

this Treatise alone, was excellently versed both in the Fathers and the

Scholastics, if any distinction is to be made between them. In

conclusion, Bossuet presumes to say: "In these places and in some

others his theology might be more exact and his principles more sure .

. . . one would not follow him in certain condescensions which I will

not particularize." In this also it will be shown that Bossuet is most

unjust, but for the present we may consider that he neutralizes his own

objection, when in the same sentence he says: "As director of souls he

is truly sublime." In answer to these attacks, F�n�lon gladly changed

places with Bossuet, but his hasty defence was not so complete as the

charges were unwarranted and presumptuous. [1]

We shall briefly touch upon these controverted points as they occur

among the difficulties of the Treatise. Of these difficulties Book I.

contains by far the largest proportion, and we will give an abstract of

this Book sufficiently complete to prevent the necessity, not indeed of

studying it, but, of a too laborious study. [2]

In this first Book the Saint treats in general of the will and its

affections, in particular of its chief affection, love, and of the

will's natural inclination towards a sovereign love of God.

The first chapter is to show that the unity required for the beauty of

that assemblage of perfections called man, lies in this, that all his

powers are grouped round the will and subordinated to it. Then (c. 2)

it is shown that the will exercises its authority in different ways,

according to the different nature of human powers. It governs: (a)

exterior movements, at its pleasure, like slaves; (b) the senses and

corporal functions, by a certain management, like horses or hawks; (c)

the fancy, memory, understanding, by direction and command, like wife

and children, who are able to disobey if they choose; (d) the sensual

appetite (c. 3), in the same manner as the last-named; it is still less

under the will's control, but there is no moral guilt so long as the

will refuses to consent to or adopt its wrong desires. Then are

described the twelve movements of this sensual appetite,--viz., desire,

hatred, hope, &c., which are called perturbations or passions. They are

all forms of the chief, and, in a sense, the only passion, love. These

passions are left in man on purpose to exercise his will. A universal

experience, testified to in effect even by those who pretend to deny

it, such as the Stoics, proves that these movements are necessary

qualities of human nature. Love being (c. 4) the root of the others

their action is good or bad according as the love is rightly or wrongly

placed. Nay the very will is bad or good according to its love; and its

supremacy does not lie in this that it can reject all love, but in this

that it can choose amongst the loves presented to it, by directing the

understanding to consider one more favourably or more attentively than

another. In the will, now defined (c. 5) as "the reasonable appetite,"

there are affections, that is, movements or forms of love, similar to

the passions of the sensual appetite. Having different and higher

objects they often run counter to the passions, and the reasonable will

often forces a soul to remain in circumstances most repugnant to its

sensual inclinations. These affections or tendencies of the will are

divided into four classes according to their dignity, that is, the

dignity of their objects: 1�. Natural affections, where the word

natural is not used in opposition to supernatural (as in this sense the

next class would also be natural), but to signify those first and

spontaneous affections which by the very natural constitution of our

reason arise from the perception of sensible goods. Indeed the word

sensible exactly explains his use of the word natural, provided that we

carefully remember that he is speaking not of the movements of the

merely sensual appetite or concupiscence which are anterior to reason,

but of our reasonable and lawful affections for sensible goods. Such

are the affections we have for health, food, agreeable society. 2�.

Reasonable affections, where it will now easily be understood that the

word, which could be applied also to the preceding class, is restricted

to those which are par excellence reasonable, that is, the affections

which arise in the spiritual part of reason, from the light of nature

indeed, but from the higher light of nature--such as the affections for

the moral virtues. 3�. Christian affections, which spring from the

consideration of truths of the Christian revelation, such as affections

for poverty, chastity, heavenly glory. 4�. Divine, or (entirely)

supernatural affections which God effects in us, and which tend to him

as known by a light entirely above that of nature. These supernatural

affections are primarily three: love for the beautiful in the mysteries

of faith, love for the useful in the promises of hope, and love for the

sovereign good which is the Divinity.

The essential supremacy of divine love is proved (c. 6), and there

follows a wondrous description in four chapters of the nature and

qualities of love in general. Divine love or charity is not defined

till chapter 13, and is not specifically described till the last

chapter of Book II.

There are (c. 7) five points in the process of love: 1. Natural

affinity of the will with good. 2. Delectation or complacency in it.

3. A movement, following this complacency, towards union. 4. Taking

the means required for union. 5. Union itself. [3] It is in 2 and 3,

complacency and movement, that love more properly consists, and most

precisely in 3, the movement or outflowing of heart. Complacency has

appeared to some to be the really essential point of love, but it is

not so, because love is a true passion or affection, that is, a

movement. Complacency spreads the wings, love actually flies. When the

object loved is present and the lover has but to grasp it, the love is

called a love of complacency, because complacency has no sooner

produced the movement of love than it ends in a second complacency.

When the object is absent, or, like God, not as present as it may

become, the tending, advancing, aspiring movement is called a love of

desire, that is, the cupidity of what we have not but hope to have.

After certain exquisite distinctions between various kinds of desires,

he returns (c. 8) to the correspondence or affinity with good which is

the root of love, and which consists not exclusively in resemblance,

but in a certain relation between things which makes them apt to union

for their mutual perfection. Finally, coming to union and the means

thereto, it is exquisitely proved (c. 9) that love tends to union but

(c. 10) to a spiritual union, and that carnal union, instead of being

an expression of true love or a help to it, is positively a hindrance,

a deviation, a degradation.

The next two chapters (11, 12) treat the important distinction between

the two parts of the soul, the inferior and the superior. It will clear

matters to notice that the Saint means the two parts of the reasonable

soul, and that in the first two paragraphs of chapter 11 he simply says

that his distinction does not refer to the soul as a mere animating

principle, or, again, as the principle of that life which man shares

with plants and animals. He speaks of the human soul as such, that is,

as having the gift of reason.

Even the inferior part of the soul truly reasons and wills (so that his

distinction of inferior and superior is not the distinction between

concupiscence and reason), but it is inferior because it only reasons

and wills according to data furnished by the senses: the superior part

reasons and wills on intellectual and spiritual considerations. But it

must be noticed that these considerations are not necessarily

supernatural. The distinction between the inferior and the superior

part of the reasonable soul is quite independent of revelation: it

rests on the distinction between what we have called the lower light of

nature and that higher light which, for instance, heathen philosophers

used, when, for love of country or moral virtue, they chose to submit

to sensible pain or even to death which their lower reason would direct

them to avoid. The existence of this lower reason is clearly shown in

Our Blessed Saviour's prayer in the garden. Willing and praying are

acts of reason, yet in this case they were acts of a lower reason which

Christ permitted to manifest itself, but which had to give way to

higher considerations.

Now the inferior part of reason forms by itself one degree of the

reason, but the superior part has three degrees; in the lowest of which

we reason according to higher natural light, or as the Saint calls it,

"human sciences," in the next according to faith, and in the highest we

do not properly reason, but, "by a simple view of the understanding,

and simple acquiescence," or assent, "of the will" we correspond with

God's action, when he spreads faith, hope and charity in this supreme

point of our reasonable soul. The distinction corresponds exactly with

that made in chapter 5, into natural, reasonable, Christian and divine.

The Saint there spoke of affections or tendencies, he here speaks of

reasonings and willings which are the fulfilment of those tendencies.

We may remark here, as an instance of the superficial way in which

F�n�lon and Bossuet studied this Treatise, that they take a totally

different ground of distinction in separating the soul into superior

and inferior (viz., sensible perception and intellectual cognition),

and yet do not perceive that they are differing from the Saint. [4] To

sum up (cc. 11, 12): in man there are some powers altogether below

reason; and reason, which is of course one and simple in itself, has

four degrees, according to the rank of the objects presented for its

consideration and love,--sensible things, spiritual things known by the

light of nature, spiritual things known by the revelation of Christ,

and spiritual knowledge communicated by the immediate communication of

God's light. Between the last and the last but one there is not exactly

a difference of rank in the objects, but a difference in clearness of

perception and strength of acceptance.

Having finished this subject, which is to some extent a digression, the

Saint returns to the consideration of love, and gives (c. 13) its two

main divisions,--viz., love of cupidity when we love good for our own

sake, and love of benevolence when we love good for its sake--i.e. love

of self-interest and disinterested love. He has already, in chapter 7,

sub-divided the love of cupidity into love of benevolence and love of

desire, according as the loved good is present or absent, and now he

applies the same division and the same ground of division to the love

of benevolence. This also is either a love of complacency or a love of

desire according as the good is present to or absent from the person we

love: we rejoice in the good he already has, we desire him the good he

has not. This double form of the love of benevolence, besides occurring

frequently throughout, enters particularly into the structure of Book

V., and is importantly needed for the full understanding of Book VIII.

It is necessary here to point out that whereas he has just placed the

names complacency and desire under the generic head, benevolence, he

afterwards uses the word benevolence, specifically, instead of desire,

as if dividing benevolence into complacency, and benevolence proper.

This use of the word in the sense of desire agrees with its

etymology,--bene-volentia, bien-veuillance, well-wishing.

Cupidity alone is exercised in the inferior reason, but in the superior

reason both find place. The love of God for his own sake which is

necessary for eternal life belongs exclusively to the supreme degree of

the superior reason, but the Saint teaches (as Bossuet has clearly

shown against F�n�lon) that there is a reasonable, high love of

cupidity, that is, a love of God as good to us, even in the highest

degree and supreme point of the spirit. This indeed is the precise

motive of Christian hope, which must be kept subordinate to

disinterested love, but can only be separated from it by abstraction

and by a non-permanent act.

The love of benevolence is called friendship when it is mutual. This

friendship has degrees. When it is beyond all comparison with other

friendships, supereminent, sovereign, it is called charity--the

friendship or mutual love of God and man.

The Saint shows (c. 14.) that to employ the word love instead of

charity is not against the use of Scripture, and he mentions one reason

for his preferring the word love which gives us an important help to

the understanding of the Treatise. It is, he says, because he is

speaking for the most part not of the habitual charity, or state of

friendship between God and the soul in grace, but of actual charity,

that is, of the acts of love which at once express and increase the

state of charity. Even in the three following books, in which he is

speaking of the formation, or progress, or loss, of habitual charity,

he is still chiefly concerned with the acts by which this is done.

In the remaining four chapters preparation is made for the account of

the communication of grace and charity to the soul. He shows (c. 15)

that there is a natural affinity of the soul with its God which is the

root of love; that thus, by a glorious paradox, God and man need one

another for their mutual perfection; that we have (c. 16) a natural

inclination to love God above all things; that (c. 17) we cannot fulfil

this inclination by natural powers; but (c. 18) that still the

inclination is not left in our hearts for nothing, as it makes possible

the communication of grace, and is the handle by which grace takes hold

of us.

It is chiefly against these three chapters that Bossuet's

animadversions are directed. He accuses the Saint of two errors: 1�.

in saying (p. 61) that God would give grace to one who did his best by

the forces of nature as certainly as he would give a further grace to

one who corresponded with a first grace; 2�. of saying (p. 57) that in

the state of original justice our love of God would not be

supernatural.

F�n�lon misapprehends the Saint's meaning, and gives a very confused,

imperfect answer to the two objections. The real answer to the first is

that Bossuet is quite outside the question. S. Francis is not speaking

of the step by which a man passes from the natural to the supernatural

order, but of the process by which his natural inclination to love God

above all things ripens into that actual love of him above all things

which belongs still to the natural order. [5]

Bossuet falls into a somewhat similar error in his second objection. S.

Francis is considering, separately, the natural love of God which those

would have who might be in the state of original justice, who would, of

course, by the very terms, have supernatural love. Not only is

Bossuet's criticism ridiculously irrelevant, but his language, to ears

which have heard the Saint declared "Doctor of the Church," sounds

almost like impertinence. "What," he says, "would this humble servant

of God have done if it had been represented to him that in the state of

original justice we should have loved God supernaturally? Would he not

have confessed that he was forgetting the most essential condition of

that state?" And it is after these mistakes that Bossuet complacently

observes: "These opinions rectify themselves in practice when the

intention is good;" and "In some points his theology might be more

exact and his principles more sure."

Book II. describes the generation of charity, which, being

supernatural, must be created in the soul as a new quality. And after

two introductory chapters, the remaining twenty are evenly divided

between the history of the action of God in bestowing, and the action

of man in appropriating this gift. The two introductory chapters, which

seem at first sight somewhat foreign to the subject of the book, are

directed to put steadily and unmistakeably before us the truth that

when theologians speak of many perfections, many acts, a most various

order of decrees and execution, this is only according to the human

method of viewing, and that our God is really but one perfection and

one act, which is himself. This truth is developed partly also to

introduce a description of the perfections of the God of whose love the

Saint is speaking. At the end of the Treatise he refers to these

chapters as his chief treatment of the chief motive of love--the

infinite goodness of God in himself.

After this caution and preface, he begins (c. 3) his account of the

action of God in the production of charity. He speaks, first, of God's

providence in general, including under this title his actual providing

or foreseeing, his creating, and his governance. Then (c. 4) he comes

to the divine decree to create Christ's Humanity, angels and men for

him, inferior creatures for men--following here the Scotist teaching

that Christ would have become man (though of course he would not have

died) even if Adam had not sinned. God decreed to create angels and man

in the supernatural state of charity, and, foreseeing that some angels

and the whole nature or race of man would fall from this state, God

decreed to condemn the former, but to redeem the latter by his Son's

death, making the state of redemption a hundred times better than the

state of innocence. God decreed (c. 6) special favours, such as the

Immaculate Conception of Mary, for certain rare creatures who were to

come nearest to his Son, and then for men in general an immense

abundance and universal showers of grace, an all-illuminating light. He

gives a whole exquisite chapter (c. 8) to show the sincerity and

strength of the desire God thus manifests that we should love him, and

then comes (c. 9) to the effecting this desire by preventing our hearts

with his grace, taking hold of our natural inclination to love him. We

can (c. 10) repulse his grace, not because (c. 11) there is anything

wanting in God's offer, but (c. 12) as an inevitable consequence of our

having free-will; in case we accept it, we begin to mingle our action

with God's. Here we must remark that the Saint is not concerned with

the sacramental action of God which creates or re-creates charity in

the soul by baptism or penance, still less does he treat the

semi-miraculous production of charity by Baptism in souls which have

not yet the use of reason, but he speaks of the intellectual and moral

process or set of acts by which a soul gifted with the use of reason is

conducted from infidelity to faith and charity, he treats of the

justification which is made by love even before the actual reception of

a Sacrament.

Our first act under divine inspiration is (c. 13) the consenting to

those first stirrings of love which God causes in the soul even before

it has faith. Then (c. 14) comes the production of faith. This may

follow after argument and the acceptance of the fact of miracles, but

it is not precisely an effect of these. Such things make truths of

faith extremely credible, but God alone makes them actually believed.

And the effect is from God not only in this sense that the extremest

effort of natural intelligence could not attain to faith, but also

because a moving of the will is required and is contained in the

intellectual act of faith itself, what the Saint calls an affectionate

sentiment of complacency in the beauty and sweetness of the truth

accepted, so that faith is an acquiescence, an assent, an assurance.

The Jews saw the force of the argument from Christ's miracles, but they

did not assent to the conclusion because they loved it not. Hence faith

includes a certain commencement of love in the will, but a love not as

yet enough for eternal life.

Then (cc. 15, 16, 17) comes the production of hope, which brings yet

closer to charity. As soon as faith shows the divine object of man's

affections, there arises a movement of complacency and desiring love.

This desire would be a torment to us unless we had an assurance that we

might obtain its object. God gives this assurance by his promise, and

this promise, while it makes desire stronger, causes at the same time a

sense of calm which the Saint calls the "root" of hope. From it spring

two movements or acts of the soul, the one by which she expects from

God the promised happiness, and this is really the chief element of

hope--esperer, the other by which she excites herself to do all that is

required on her part--aspirer. This aspiration is the condition but not

the positive ground of our esperation (to coin a word). That is to say,

we may not expect the fruition of God except in so far as we have a

courageous design to do all we can; then, we may infalliby expect it,

yet still ever from the pure mercy of God. Hope, then, is defined "an

expecting and aspiring love," or "the loving complacency we take in the

expecting and seeking our soverign good." It is then a distinct advance

in love. Faith includes a beginning of love in the movement of the will

though its real seat is the intelligence; hope is all love, and its

seat is the will. However hope as such is still insufficient, because,

however noble, it is a love of cupidity, and not that love of God for

his own sake which is necessary for eternal life. By it we love God

sovereignly, because we desire him above all other goods, yet our love

is not sovereign, because it is not the highest kind of love. The Saint

is of course speaking of the action of hope before charity. Hope

remains also after charity, existing, as we have said, in the very

heights of perfect love, and after charity its acts merit before those

of every other virtue.

Then comes the production of penitence or repentance. He distinguishes

(c. 18) first, a merely human repentance; secondly, a religious

repentance belonging to the merely natural order; thirdly, a

supernatural inferior repentance, which (c. 19) is good but

insufficient; and fourthly (c. 20), perfect repentance, that is, sorrow

for sin arising from the loving consideration of the sovereignly

amiable goodness which has been offended thereby. This is not precisely

charity, because charity is, precisely, a movement towards union,

whereas repentance is, precisely, a movement of separation (from sin);

but though it is not precisely charity and therefore has not the

sweetness of charity, it has the virtue and uniting property of

charity, because the object of its movement of separation from sin is

union with God. In practice there is no means, or need, to distinguish,

because perfect repentance is always immediately followed or preceded

by charity, or else the one is born within the other.

The Saint then reminds us (c. 21) that all this has been done by the

loving action of God's grace, which, after awakening our souls and

inspiring them to pray has brought them through faith and hope to

penitence and perfect love. In conclusion (c. 22) he describes charity.

Book III. treats of the progress and perseverance of the soul in

charity on earth, and of the perfection of triumphant charity in

heaven. We have only one remark to make on this book. The Abb� Baudry

expresses surprise that the Saint when speaking (c. 2) of the increase

of charity by good works does not mention its increase by the

Sacraments. But he includes them under the name good-works, and in Book

IV., c. 4, where he sums up this part of Book III. mentions them

explicitly. He does not dwell on them because his object in chapter 2

is to show how easy God has made the increase of charity. He takes

therefore as his examples the smallest works, such as the giving a cup

of cold water, and he leaves us to draw the conclusion that the

faithful and loving reception of God's Sacraments would � fortiori

increase love. Still it is true that neither here nor elsewhere does he

treat the Sacraments except quite incidentally, and the explanation of

this fact gives us a further insight into the true character and object

of the Treatise. He is concerned with the action of grace in general,

not with its action by particular means; he is more concerned with the

interior movements of man under grace than with the effects worked on

him, as it were from outside; and, as he is treating of actual charity,

he is more concerned with the good acts for which God gives (whether by

Sacraments or in any other way) an increase of grace, than he is

concerned with the actual reception of the grace. We mention this to

show that one must not be surprised at not finding a fuller treatment

of, for instance, the Blessed Eucharist. We must also remember that

this Treatise supposes the "Introduction to a Devout Life" as a

foundation. And though he only introduces the Sacraments incidentally,

he does not fail to speak of them frequently, and with such magnificent

praises as we should expect from the Saint of love. As when he says

(ii. 22) that the communication of Christ's body and blood is the very

consummation of the charity he is writing of, and the crown of God's

love-dealings with us; or as when he says, speaking of the return of

the penitent soul to reunite herself, immediately, with her God: "Go

and cry God's mercy in the very ear of your confessor" (ix. 7).

Book IV. describes the relations of love and sin. The following five

Books treat of the exercise of benevolence in its generic sense--the

sovereign love of God for his own sake.

Book V. treats in general of the double action or manifestation of this

love,--in complacency, and in benevolence in its specific sense, that

is, desire.

Books VI. and VII. treat of union with God by affection, that is, by

prayer; the former treating of meditation, and of contemplation as far

as union, the latter of union itself. The various degrees of the prayer

of quiet are treated in these books, and Quietists bring forward

passages from them, as from other parts of the Saint's works, in

support of their extravagant system of annihilation of the powers and

of purely passive prayer. We have said elsewhere [6] as much as we

think it necessary to say to overthrow these allegations. But it is

important to show that F�n�lon was utterly wrong in appealing to the

Saint's authority in support of his erroneous doctrine on this point in

his "Maximes des Saints." Bossuet has exposed these errors and given a

full explanation of the passages cited from S. Francis; particularly in

the 8th and 9th Books of his "Instruction pastorale sur les �tats

d'oraison." The Saint expresses in this as in all things the very

teaching of the Church. He rightly teaches that there is, even short of

suspension and ecstasy, a kind of prayer in which God takes into his

own hands the powers of the soul, and produces in it acts far above the

ordinary operations of faith, hope and charity. When God lifts a soul

to this prayer, and also to some extent in preparation and expectancy

of this elevation, the will acts, by a placing of itself (remise) in

the hands of God, and even continues to act, though insensibly: hence

the soul is not purely passive, but the action of God is so mighty, and

so far beyond all proportion to that of the will, that S. Francis says

this is "as it were passive." And as the soul must offer itself to be

lifted, and must co-operate with God, therefore also must it help to

acquire and preserve that "quiet" which is the condition of God's

operation: it must abstain from intrusive acts of reasoning and from

other acts of the will, especially from violent ones. But this prayer,

however frequent, long, uninterrupted, absorbing, it may become, is of

itself a non-permanent state, and not of the nature of a habit, but is

always an act of charity. And far from saying that for perfection it is

necessary to be raised to and to keep oneself in this state, the Saint

teaches in a hundred places that the soul, however perfect, must

exercise itself in all ordinary acts of prayer, faith, hope, petition,

which are only put on one side for the time in which God has raised it.

The practice of S. Jane Frances, whose authority was invoked even more

speciously than that of her saintly director by the advocates of

passive prayer, bears on this. We are told that: "She wrote out and

signed with her blood a long prayer which she had composed of

petitions, praises, thanksgivings, for general and particular favours,

for relations and friends, for the living and the dead, in fine for all

intentions to which she considered herself obliged, with the Credo of

the Missal, also signed with her blood. She carried this in a little

bag night and day round her neck, and she had made a loving covenant

with Our Lord that whenever she pressed this to her heart she should be

taken to have made all the acts of faith, the thanks and the petitions

she had written." [7] And, at last, prayer is not a character of

perfection, but a means to it, and the two following statements of S.

Francis in his second Conference absolutely settle the whole question

as to his teaching. "It happens often enough that Our Lord gives these

quietudes and tranquillities to souls that are far from perfection." .

. . . and on the other hand: "There are persons who are very perfect to

whom Our Lord has never given such sweetnesses nor such quietudes; who

do all with the superior part of the soul, and make their will die in

the will of God by main force, and with the supreme point of the

reason; and this death is the death of the cross, much more excellent

than that other, which should rather be called a slumber than a death."

As in treating affective love Book VII. completes Book VI., so in

treating effective love Book VIII., which treats of obedience to the

already signified will of God, is completed by Book IX., which treats

of indifference, or the state of perfect readiness to accept all that

God's good-pleasure may choose to send us.

On the doctrine of indifference we venture again to refer the reader to

our Essay [8] just quoted. We add a few words to show how completely

F�n�lon erred in appealing to this Treatise to support his extravagant

and condemned propositions that indifference extends to eternal

salvation as our salvation, and to virtuousness as such. The Saint

expressly teaches that while God's glory must be our principal end, we

may, indeed we must--our nature so requires--desire salvation and

virtue as good also in themselves. Much less can we acquiesce in a

supposed decree of damnation, with that species of absolute act which

F�n�lon requires as the last test of the disinterestedness of love. [9]

With regard to eternal salvation, we have only to study the sentiments

the Saint places in the hearts and mouths of those whose love is

refined to its highest point at the moment of death (v. 10, vii. 11,

12). He has a chapter to prove that the preceding desire of heaven

increases the enjoyment of it (iii. 10); and he teaches that not only

mercenary hope but also servile fear remain in the soul as part of its

habit of charity so long as it is in this life (xi. 17). With regard to

virtues he says (xi. 13): "Let us love the particular virtues, but

principally because they are agreeable to God;" and: "We must make this

heavenly good-pleasure the soul of our actions, loving the goodness and

beauty of virtue principally because it is agreeable to God." Here the

word "principally" is the key of the whole question.

Bossuet triumphantly vindicates [10] the Saint's doctrine on

indifference, but has a very ill-judged criticism on his use of the

word. He is quite right in saying that indifference is only a degree of

resignation, but he forgets how far ordinary resignation is below

indifference. Bossuet gives a full explanation of all the passages

alleged by F�n�lon from S. Francis, but he was hampered, as F�n�lon was

totally misled, by Maupas's erroneous account of S. Francis's famous

temptation to despair.

Of the remaining three books, Book X. is dedicated entirely to the

commandment of loving God above all things; Books XI. arid XII. are on

the theory and practice of the particular virtues. Indeed it must be

remembered that the object of the Treatise, even in its speculative

parts, is exclusively practical. And as we have shown that in its

theory it is free from error, so we may now be allowed to indicate some

of its glorious truths, particularly with regard to the practice of

holy living.

It is not a book, like other spiritual books, treating only a section

or a single element of the devout life, but it is one by which and on

which the whole spiritual life can be formed; it is, with the

"Introduction to a Devout Life," a perfect book, a "complete food,"

containing all the ingredients necessary for spiritual sustenance.

It contains in the first place an immense mass of instruction, dogmatic

and moral, on the science of the love of God. It treats not only in

broad outline but also in subtle detail of God and the soul, this world

and the world to come, grace and free-will, holiness and sin,

commandments and counsels, ordinary virtue and perfection, all

questions of prayer; it treats the virtues in detail, not only the

virtue of charity in all its parts, but also faith, hope and fear,

zeal, obedience, resignation. The direct course of the Treatise takes

us through all these, and they are not only treated fully in

themselves, but so treated as to bring out in illustrating them a

hundred related truths. A whole theology of Mary might be gathered as

we pass along; her Immaculate Conception (ii. 3), her graces and

privileges (iii. 8.; ix. 14.; vii. 13, 14), her praise of God (v. 11),

her heavenly death (vii. 13, 14). A new light is thrown on the sense of

Holy Scripture, and on the principles and actions of the Saints.

But, in the second place, we more particularly wish to point out some

of his practical principles and rules, the manner of loving and serving

God. The most important of these is what may be called the Saint's

general idea or philosophy of life. It begins thus: "We know by faith

that the divinity is an incomprehensible abyss of all perfection. . . .

. And this truth which faith teaches we consider attentively by

meditation, regarding this immensity of goods which are in God. . . . .

Now when we have made our understanding very attentive to the greatness

of the goods which are in this divine object, it is impossible that our

will should not be touched with complacency in this good . . . . and

especially when we see amidst his perfections that of his infinite love

excellently shining" (v. 1, 2.). The loving soul does not stay in

complacency but goes on to benevolence, wishing her God all possible

goods; but as she is at the very same time exulting in the thought that

nothing is wanting to him, she can at first but spend herself in

desiring him what he already has, in desiring to be able to give him

something, and in praises, ever rising higher and higher until at last

she finds a sort of rest in the sense that her utter inability to

desire him anything which he has not, or to praise him fully, is the

best proof of the infinity of the goods he has. This delight in God and

these loving desires are an important part of her service, but they

would be barren if she did not go further. She turns, then, to her own

powers, and finds that exercising them in herself by internal acts of

prayer (affective love), and outside herself, amid creatures, by

external acts of the virtues (effective love), she can increase the

glory of her beloved, not in itself, but in and by herself. Thus the

various interior and exterior acts are brought into one, and the soul's

life consists, on the one hand, in "a continual progress in the sweet

searching out of motives which may continually urge her" (v. 7), and,

on the other hand, in acts of prayer, in obedience, and in submission.

She "employs every occasion," "does everything most perfectly," and, by

the practice of Intention, Offering, and Ejaculatory Prayer (according

to methods minutely described in Book XI. 13, 14, 20, and throughout

Book XII.), subordinates and ranges every interior movement and every

exterior action to the service of divine love.

This "view" of life, this continual gazing at the beloved Master for

whom we work, this regarding the acts of life as a mere series of acts

or offerings of love, is the very central point of the ascetic teaching

of S. Francis. It not only gives the nobleness, the intensity, the

meritoriousness of charity to every act, but it gives also at the same

time a great simplicity and largeness, preserving the soul from

formality and from getting lost or wearied in the multitudinous details

and minute practices of the spiritual life; it creates a loving

detachment and liberty of spirit, with a readiness to follow every

slightest indication of God's will. Finally, it gives order to our

various duties. For instance, it puts in their proper place, in serene

majesty above the cavils of worldlings, the works of religion and

"piety." These are the immediate services of the beloved, the first

effects of charity, and therefore charity itself teaches that: "Amongst

all virtuous actions we should carefully practise those of religion and

reverence to divine things, those of faith, hope and the most holy fear

of God;--often talking of heavenly things, thinking of and aspiring

after eternity, frequenting churches and holy services, reading

spiritual books, observing the ceremonies of the Christian religion;

for holy love feeds at will amid these exercises, and spreads its

graces and properties more abundantly over them than over the simply

human virtues" (xi. 3). Yet there is no fanaticism. The human virtues

find their proper place at the proper time, and, inferior in

themselves, are raised by love, that is, by the fact that for the time

they are the will of God, to the highest rank in the eyes of the loving

soul,--"For in little and low exercises, charity is practised not only

more frequently, but also as a rule more humbly, and therefore more

profitably and more holily" (xii. 6). He has two glorious chapters on

the truth that legitimate occupations, be they even in court or camp,

hinder not the practice of divine love. "Curiosity, ambition, disquiet,

together with inadvertence to, or not considering, the end for which we

are in this world, are the causes why we have a hundred times more

hindrances than affairs; and it is these embarrassments, that is, the

silly, vain, superfluous undertakings with which we charge ourselves

that turn us from the love of God, and not the true and lawful exercise

of our vocations" (xii. 4.). In the one great principle of doing all

for love we have signalized two conditions or negative aspects of the

same. 1�. The intellect must be kept "very attentive." As the Saint

says in the "Introduction to a Devout Life" (v. 17), so here,

consideration "is supposed throughout the entire work," the whole

edifice is built on it, and therefore the want of it,

"inconsid�ration," is the ruin of the whole spiritual life (xi. 7.)

This "consideration" need not be called by the alarming name of mental

prayer, but whatever it is called it consists in a most serious

attention to spiritual truths according to the capacity of the

individual: there must be one great esteem, and therefore the energy of

the intellect cannot be given primarily to anything else. So (2�) in

the will, there must be but one great affection, one aim, one

desire--"One to one." "The desire of exalting God separates from

inferior pleasures" (v. 7); and: "to have the desire of sacred love we

must cut off other desires" (xii. 3). "Those souls who ever abound in

desires, designs and projects never desire holy celestial love as they

ought:" "He who aspires to heavenly love must carefully reserve for it

his leisure, his spirit, and his affections:"--words which should be

written in letters of flame for the guidance of such as seek the right

way to perfection.

We will not stay to give examples of his more particular principles

with regard to prayer, but we select a few with regard to the virtues.

The truly loving heart not only observes the commandments, but loves

the observance, of them (viii. 5). "Inclination is neither vice nor

virtue. . . . . How many by natural disposition are sober, simple,

silent, even chaste? All this seems to be virtue, but it is not, until

on such natural humours we have grafted free and voluntary consent:"

The whole chapter "On the imperfection of the virtues of the pagans"

(xi. 7.) is of the most practical importance at the present day. The

general, but surely most constraining, principle of

mortification,--that other pleasures and other desires must be put down

for the sake of divine love,--is applied to the interior in such more

particular methods as this:--irregular affections can be put down

either on the principle of curing contraries by contraries, or on the

principle of curing likes by likes: the inclination to trust in earthly

things may be overcome either by thinking of the vanity of earthly

hopes or of the solidity of heavenly hopes; desire of riches or of

sensual pleasure may be kept down either by the contempt of them or by

the esteem of heavenly goods, "as fire is extinguished either by water

or by lightning" (xi. 20). It is applied to the exterior thus: "It is

useless to give orders of abstinence to the palate, but the hands must

be ordered to furnish the mouth with meat and drink only in such and

such a measure. . . . . If we desire our eyes not to see we must turn

them away, or (he has just compared our sensual appetite to a hawk)

cover them with their natural hood . . . . it would be folly to command

a horse not to wax fat, not to grow, not to kick,--to effect all this,

stop his corn" (i. 2). In this connection, and to show how beautiful,

how consistent, and how feasible his teaching is, it should be studied

with his life, as his life should be explained by his teaching. That

his extraordinary and almost unreasonable meekness sprang from no

weakness or ignorance, but was founded on the deepest wisdom and

sincere humility, we realize when we study his teaching (x.) on zeal

and anger. His extremely affectionate expressions towards his friends

find their justification in the truth that "the union to which love

aspires is spiritual" (i. 10). The ground of his missionary spirit and

life is found in v. 9, and the whole work is the explanation of his

absolute devotion of himself to the loving service of God and his

neighbour.

In the third place, the Treatise contains a full exposition of the

motives for serving God, the why of a spiritual life. This is all

reduced to the one great motive of the infinite perfections--especially

the amiableness, the love, the goodness of God--brought before us in a

hundred ways. His mere descriptions are enough to bring home this

motive to the heart that reads them with attention, but the Saint

himself puts them together (xii., 11, 12) with the exact method of

applying them. But besides the direct treatment of the motives, the

Treatise is pervaded by a heavenly persuasive unction, which ever urges

them. This is why S. Vincent calls it "the goad of the slothful and the

stimulus of love." While S. Francis seems only to be making us clearly

understand what virtue is, he at the same time makes us esteem and love

it; his reasons for loving God and practising virtue are not cold, dry

logic, but reach the heart, and command assent; and while he is

apparently only fixing our attention on the way to practise virtue he

is at the same time gently but effectively touching the springs of the

will to make us love and prepare to effect it. But besides this

continual stimulation he has direct exhortations; he stops, as it were,

in his course to preach. One chapter is headed: "An exhortation to the

amorous submission which we owe to the decrees of divine Providence"

(iv. 8). Another is his exposition of S. Paul's,--"The charity of

Christ presseth us." Another--"An exhortation to the sacrifice we ought

to make to God of our free-will" (xii. 10). And other chapters, though

not precisely in the form of exhortations, contain the virtue of them.

Such are the chapters "On condolence and complacency in the Passion of

Our Lord" (v. 5); on the "Marvellous history of a gentleman who died of

love on Mount Olivet" (vii. 12); and the last chapter of all: "That

Mount Calvary is the true academy of love."

But, in the fourth place, this Treatise is not only a manual and a

guide to perfection, but it is also a meditation-book, and a

prayer-book. In such chapters as those just mentioned the devout soul

will find all the materials of most excellent meditations;--not only

deep pregnant thoughts, but also a very fountain of affections and

ejaculations, most pressing movements of the will, and most effective

resolutions. The summing up of motives, and method of using them is

already in the very form of meditation. But almost every chapter could

be used as such. For instance, if one wished to strengthen the

groundwork of love--the realization of the perfections of God--after

thinking out Book v. cc. 1. 2., he could add Book i. cc. 15, 18, Book

ii. cc. 1, 2, 8, 15, 22, and Book iii. cc. 11, 12, 13. This Book III.

furnishes grand meditations on heaven, and every Book is full of the

excellences of charity, than which no consideration could be more

touching or more practical.

Then, the Treatise is a prayer-book. Very frequently the Saint ends his

chapter with an exquisite prayer, himself giving the expression of the

ardours with which he has filled our hearts. All Book V. is a

prayer;--for instance, c. 5 on the Passion, c. 6 on Desires. Profound

dogma, having permeated the intellect, exhales itself, as it were, to

God on the apex of the spirit in such burning words as his--"Ah! then I

am not made for this world, &c." (i. 15), or--"Ah! Jesus, who will give

me grace to be one single spirit with thee, &c!" (vii. 3.)

We have now to speak of our text and rendering. We have followed the

text of Viv�s's edition of the "OEuvres Compl�tes," which, with a

little improvement from subsequent editions, is a reproduction of the

original work, published at Lyons by Rigaud in 1616. We therefore

follow in our quotations the spelling and accentuation of the old

French. We have of course used the ordinary Catholic translation of the

Bible, except where the Saint leaves the Vulgate for the Septuagint or

the Hebrew, which he occasionally does, not, as he says, to get the

true sense, but "to explain and confirm the true sense." We have

consulted the originals for the citations from the Fathers, but the

Saint himself quotes them with a certain freedom, and we have not

thought it necessary to give the exact references, as the student can

easily find them in Viv�s or Migne. It has been decided to omit or

modify in this popular edition a few sentences in which the Saint

refers to certain delicate matters--in particular to certain Bible

narratives which to his original readers were matters of familiar

knowledge--with the happy simplicity of his day. As he says in his

Preface, "it is of extreme importance to remember the age in which one

writes," and there can be no doubt that if he had been writing for this

age he would have consulted its requirements, and would have conformed

to the universal practice of modern spiritual writers by forbearing

reference to these subjects. He only introduces them incidentally and

merely for the purpose of illustrating his main argument. The omissions

or alterations taken altogether would not amount to more than two

pages. [11]

We are acquainted with only two English versions of the Treatise. The

first was made by Father Car, from the eighteenth French edition, [12]

and we had at first intended to take this as the basis of ours; but

when we came to actually test it by the original, we determined to make

our translation completely independent of it, and in many parts we did

not refer to it at all. As to the substance of the work it is

satisfactory; though there are many slight omissions, and a few

somewhat serious mistakes. As to style, taken by itself, it is a good

and a very interesting specimen of the racy, vigorous English of that

day; but taken as a translation, the rendering is unwarrantably free,

and Father Car's manner is far too rugged to represent that of the

Saint, which is always graceful and flowing, even when the thought is

closest and the passion strongest. Father Car gives the structure

correctly, but his manipulation of conjunctions and adverbs,

particularly in the more argumentative parts, is painfully cumbrous. We

should expect his diction to be archaic, but some of his words are

quite obsolete [13] . He is occasionally mistaken in his use of words,

as when he translates bont�, "bounty," instead of "goodness;" he makes

curious mistakes in words which are spelt nearly alike. [14] We have

laboured to preserve his delightful air of antiqueness, which is

singularly appropriate to the Saint's work.

The modern English translation, which was made, we believe, early in

the present century by an Irish lady, and which has been reprinted by

various publishers, is not worth criticizing. It is not so much a

translation as a very bad adaptation. A good deal of the substance of

the book is left out, and the translator, who was not properly

acquainted either with the Saint's language or her own, substitutes her

style for his. We have no hesitation in saying that there is not a page

without important errors on commission or omission.

We may add a few words on our own work. It is sometimes said that a

translation should read as if it were composed in the language in which

it appears, and, again, that a translator must not attend immediately

to the words of his text, but must, in the first place, aim at

producing the same impression on the minds of his readers as the author

would produce on the minds of those for whom he originally wrote. We

cannot but consider both these rules or principles to be fallacious. A

Frenchman, for instance, is different from an Englishman, and there are

many words which necessarily make a very different impression,

according as they fall on a French or on an English mind. So, again,

the French tongue has national peculiarities and differences which an

English translator may not ignore, but which he cannot represent in

strict accordance with the genius of his own tongue. S. Francis's work

would have been totally different, both in itself and in its effect, if

he had been an Englishman writing for his countrymen in their native

language. The most that a translator can do is to put the foreign

reader in as good a position as he would be in if he had a familiar

knowledge of the original. When an Englishman having a familiar

knowledge of French reads a book written in that language, he does not

indeed usually advert to the expression therein of the national

characteristics--vivacity, use of gesture, frequent expression of

emotion, strong sense of personality--because he has for the time put

on his French form of mind, but there is certainly a latent sense of

foreignness, of which he becomes conscious when these peculiarities are

exaggerated, as in such a writer as Victor Hugo.

We say this in explanation of the general structure of the work, which

could not be altered without being revolutionized, but as regards

particular words and phrases, we have tried our best to spare our

readers the disagreeable jar which is caused by the introduction of a

foreign idiom. In this matter the Treatise presents less difficulty

than is found in the more colloquial writings, because its argument is

very substantial, and its text largely consists of quotations from the

Holy Scriptures, the Fathers, and philosophers. The difficulty lies

deeper, and one must be extremely careful, in obliterating Gallicisms,

not to injure or destroy what belongs to the very texture of the style.

S. Francis's work cannot be made to read as easily as do the empty,

superficial writings of the day, or to appear in a spick-and-span

modern English dress. He is a classic, he is a master of thought,

having his individual characteristics, who wrote scientifically on

profoundest religious truths three ages back.

His style is old-world, antique. Words with him have more of their

fresh native simplicity than they now retain after having done service

for three hundred years. Some of them he was the first to bring out of

their classic use into modern circulation. Hence, we make no difficulty

in using such words as "contemplation," "sensible," "civil," in their

original and more proper sense, as English religious writers of his

age--Hooker, Taylor or Milton--used them.

Again, he is scientific--theological and philosophical. He writes a

Treatise. The world, which is only interested in its own matters, will

not admit the rights of the scientific writer on religion. Catholics of

the English-speaking race are placed at a double disadvantage, on

account of the small proportion their numbers bear to the mass of their

countrymen. But surely we are not to acquiesce in allowing terms to be

prohibited which are necessary or useful for properly and safely

expressing the distinctive truths of our religion: there is an interest

at stake not merely literary, but religious, and also patriotic. We

claim, therefore, the right to use, for instance, the words "religion,"

"religious," "professed," in our technical Catholic sense, for the

state and the persons of those who have bound themselves to the service

of God by vow.

S. Francis also had his special characteristics, which, therefore, are

not French but Salesian. He was slightly old-fashioned, even in his own

time. He was a patriarch of French literature, and devoted, in language

as in other things, to the old times, though so glorious a pioneer of

the new. He is simple in expression amongst the simple. But each word

is charged with thought and reflection, and sometimes an exclamation

which one might at first be tempted to suppress as a French

superfluity, turns out to be a "word," and welded into the substance of

the phrase. He was a Saint, also, and what would be an exclamation in

others is an ejaculation in him.

But, after all, our object is devotional and not literary; we are far

from wishing to indulge any literary fancies or crotchets and have no

intention of straining our principles of translation. Our one aim is to

make the true teachings of S. Francis de Sales accessible, profitable,

and attractive to English readers, and so to contribute our poor

efforts to advance the divine Art of Holy Loving.

Weobley,

Feast of our most holy Father S. Benedict, 1884.

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[1] For our authorities and full information on this important

controversy we refer our readers to the admirable "Dissertation," by

Baudry, in the supplementary volume (ix.) of Migne's edition of the

"Works of S. Francis and S. Jane Frances." There is an anonymous

dissertation in vol. vi. which bears on the same subject.

[2] The following part of our Introduction--viz., the analysis of Books

i., ii., will probably be found more intelligible and useful after

reading the Saint's text.

[3] This division is the connecting chain of the whole Treatise, and it

will be found that each Book treats of one or more of its parts. Thus

the three following Books are on point 3, Book v. on point 2, Books

vi.-ix. on points 4 and 5 (viz., union by affective and by effective

love), x.-xii. on point 3.

[4] Certain expressions on p. 50 require explanation. It is there said

that in the superior part of the soul there are two degrees of

reason--the answer is that the Saint for the moment puts out of

consideration the lowest degree of the higher reason, and concerns

himself with the two supernatural degrees. And a little lower down he

speaks of the action of faith "in the inferior part of the soul," but

he really means in the lower one of the two highest degrees.

[5] It is true that elsewhere (Book iv. c. v.) S. Francis says, after

S. Thomas and S. Francis Xavier, that God is sure to give grace to

those who fulfil the natural law, but, since in the state of fallen

nature the natural law itself cannot be fully observed without grace,

there is already supposed in the hearts of such persons the existence

of grace which draws the further grace. This the Saint expressly states

(xi. 1).

[6] "Four Essays on the Life and Writings of S. Francis de Sales,"

Essay III. p. 88.

[7] From her life by Maupas, quoted by Bossuet in the "Instr. Past. sur

les �tats d'oraison," viii.

[8] Pp. 82-4.

[9] The Saint is careful to qualify any ambiguous statement (as in ix.

4) by declaring that he speaks "par imagination de chose impossible."

[10] In the same "Instruction, &c."

[11] They occur in i. 5, 10; iv. 10; v. 1; vi. 15; vii. 1; viii. 1; ix.

10; x. 7, 9; xi. 4, 10, 11, 14.

[12] "A Treatise of the Love of God." Written in French by B. Francis

de Sales, Bishope and Prince of Geneva. Translated into English by

Miles Car, priest of the English Colledge of Doway. The eighteenth

edition. Printed at Doway by Gerard Pinchon, at the sign of Coleyn,

1630.

[13] We would gladly have reintroduced such a fine old word as "yert,"

which represents the now untranslateable eslan or eslancement.

[14] For instance nuisance as if it were naissance; jeusnes et veilles,

as if they were jeunes et vieilles.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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TREATISE

ON THE

LOVE OF GOD

Dedicatory Prayer

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MOST holy Mother of God, vessel of incomparable election, Queen of

sovereign dilection, thou art the most lovely, the most loving and most

beloved of all creatures! The love of the heavenly Father found its

good pleasure in thee from all eternity, destining thy chaste heart to

the perfection of holy love, to the end that one day thou mightest love

his only Son with unique motherly love as he had done from all eternity

with unique fatherly love. O Saviour Jesus, to whom could I better

dedicate words on thy love, than to the most amiable heart of the

well-beloved of thy soul?

But O all triumphant Mother! Who can cast his eyes upon thy majesty

without seeing at thy right hand him whom for the love of thee thy Son

deigned so often to honour with the title of father, having united him

unto thee by the celestial bond of a most virginal marriage, that he

might be thy coadjutor and helper in the charge of the direction and

education of his divine infancy? O great S. Joseph! Most beloved spouse

of the well-beloved Mother, ah! how often hast thou borne in thy arms

the love of heaven and earth, while, inflamed with the sweet embraces

and kisses of this Divine child, thy soul melted away with joy while he

tenderly whispered in thy ears (O God what sweetness!) that thou wast

his great friend and his well-beloved father.

Of old the lamps of the ancient temple were placed upon golden lilies.

O Mary and Joseph, Pair without peer! Sacred lilies of incomparable

beauty, amongst which the well-beloved feeds himself and feeds all his

lovers--ah! if I may give myself any hope that this love-writing may

enlighten and inflame the children of light, where can I better lay it

than amongst your lilies, wherein the Sun of Justice, the splendour and

brightness of the eternal light, did so sovereignly recreate himself

that he there fulfilled the delights of the ineffable love of his heart

towards us? O well-beloved mother of the well-beloved Son, O

well-beloved spouse of the well-beloved mother! Prostrate before the

feet of you who bore my Saviour, I dedicate and consecrate this little

work of love to the immense greatness of your love. Ah! I conjure you

by the heart of your sweet Jesus, King of hearts, whom your hearts

adore--animate my heart, and all hearts that shall read this writing,

by your all powerful favour with the Holy Ghost, that henceforth we may

offer up in holocaust all our affections to his divine goodness, to

live, die, and live again for ever, amid the flames of this heavenly

fire, which Our Lord your son has so much desired to kindle in our

hearts, that he never ceased to labour and sigh for this until death,

even the death of the cross.

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VIVE J�SUS.

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PREFACE.

THE Holy Ghost teaches that the lips of the heavenly Spouse, that is

The Church, resemble scarlet and the dropping honeycomb, [15] to let

every one know that all the doctrine which she announces consists in

sacred love; of a more resplendent red than scarlet on account of the

blood of the spouse whose love inflames her, sweeter than honey on

account of the sweetness of the beloved who crowns her with delights.

So this heavenly spouse when he thought good to begin the promulgation

of his law, cast down upon the assembly of those disciples whom he had

deputed for this work a shower of fiery tongues, sufficiently

intimating thereby that the preaching of the gospel was wholly designed

for the inflaming of hearts.

Represent to yourself beautiful doves amidst the rays of the sun; you

will see their plumage break into as many different colours as you

change your point of viewing them; because their feathers are so fitted

to display the light, that when the sun comes to spread his splendour

on them, a multitude of reflections are made, producing a great variety

of tints and glancing colours, colours so agreeable to the eye that

they surpass all other colours, even the enamel of richest jewels;

colours so resplendent and so delicately gilded that the gilding makes

their own colours more bright than ever; for it was this sight which

made the royal prophet say If you sleep among the midst of lots; you

shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and the hinder

parts of her back with the paleness of gold. [16] The Church is indeed

adorned with an excellent variety of teachings, sermons, treatises and

spiritual books, all very beautiful and pleasant to the sight by reason

of the admirable mingling which the Sun of Justice makes of his divine

wisdom with the tongues of his pastors, which are their feathers, and

with their pens, which sometimes hold the place of tongues, and form

the rich plumage of this mystic dove. But amongst all the divers

colours of the doctrine which she displays, the fine gold of holy

Charity is everywhere spread, and makes itself excellently visible,

gilding all the science of the saints with its incomparable lustre, and

raising it above every other science. All is love's, and in love, for

love, and of love, in the holy Church.

But as we are not ignorant that all the light of the day proceeds from

the sun and yet we ordinarily say that the sun does not shine, except

only when it openly sends out its beams here or there; in like manner,

though all Christian doctrine be about sacred love, yet we do not

honour all theology indifferently with the title of this divine love,

but only those parts of it which regard the birth, nature, properties

and operations thereof in particular.

Now it is true that divers writers have already handled this subject;

above all those ancient Fathers, who as they did lovingly serve God so

did they speak divinely of his love. O how good it is to hear S. Paul

speak of heavenly things, who learned them even in heaven itself, and

how good to see those souls who were nursed in the bosom of love write

of its holy sweetness! For this reason those amongst the schoolmen that

discoursed the most and the best of it, did also most excel in piety.

S. Thomas has made a treatise on it worthy of S. Thomas; S. Bonaventure

and B. Denis the Carthusian have made divers most excellent ones on it

under various titles, and as for John Gerson, Chancellor of the

University of Paris, Sixtus Senensis speaks of him thus: "He has so

worthily discoursed of the fifty properties of divine love which are

described in the course of the Canticle of Canticles, that he alone

would seem to have taken proper account of the affections of the love

of God." Truly this man was extremely learned, judicious and devout.

And that we may know this kind of writings to be made more successfully

by the devotion of lovers than by the learning of the wise, it has

pleased the Holy Ghost that many women should work wonders in it. Who

has ever better expressed the heavenly passions of sacred love, than S.

Catharine of Genoa, S. Angela of Foligno, S. Catharine of Siena, S.

Mechtilde?

In our age also many have written upon this subject, whose works I have

not had leisure to read distinctly but only here and there so far forth

as was requisite to discover whether this book might yet find place.

Father Louis of Granada, that great doctor of piety, has placed a

treatise of the love of God in his Memorial, which is sufficiently

commended in saying it is his. Diego Stella, of the Order of S.

Francis, made another, which is very effective and profitable for

prayer. Christopher Fonseca, an Augustinian, brought out one still

larger, wherein he has many excellent things. Father Louis Richeome of

the Society has also published a book under the title of The Art of

Loving God by his Creatures, and this author is so amiable in his

person and in his beautiful writings that doubtless he is even more so

when writing of love itself. Father John of Jesus Maria, a discalced

Carmelite, has composed a little book which is also called The Art of

Loving God, and which is much esteemed. That great and celebrated

Cardinal Bellarmine has also lately issued a little book entitled: The

Ladder for Ascending unto God by his Creatures, which cannot be but

admirable coming from that most learned hand and most devout soul, who

has written so much and so wisely in the Church's behalf. I will say

nothing of the Parenetic of that river of eloquence [17] who flows at

present through all France in the multitude and variety of his sermons

and noble writings. The close spiritual consanguinity which my soul has

contracted with his, when by the imposition of my hands he received the

sacred character of the episcopal order, to the great happiness of the

diocese of Belley and to the honour of the Church, besides a thousand

ties of a sincere friendship which fasten us together, permits me not

to speak with praise of his works, amongst which this Parenetic of

divine love was one of the first sallies of the matchless wealth of

intellect which every one admires in him.

We see further a goodly and magnificent palace which the R. Father

Laurence of Paris, a Capuchin preacher, erected in honour of heavenly

love, which being finished will be a complete course of the Art of

loving well. And lastly the B. Mother (S.) Teresa of Jesus, has written

so accurately of the sacred movements of love in all the books she has

left us, that one is amazed to see so much eloquence masked under such

profound humility, such great solidity of wit in such great simplicity:

and her most learned ignorance makes the knowledge of many learned men

appear ignorant, who after long and laborious study have to blush at

not understanding what she so happily puts down touching the practice

of holy love. Thus does God raise the throne of his power upon the

ground of our infirmity, making use of weak things to confound the

strong. [18]

And although, my dear reader, this Treatise which I now present you,

comes far short of those excellent works, without hope of ever running

even with them, yet have I such confidence in the favour of the two

heavenly lovers to whom I dedicate it, that still it may be in some way

serviceable to you, and that in it you will meet with many wholesome

considerations which you would not elsewhere so easily find, as again

you may elsewhere find many beautiful things which are not here.

Indeed, it even seems to me that my design is not the same as that of

others except in general, inasmuch as we all look towards the glory of

holy love. But this you will see by reading it.

Truly my intention is only to represent simply and na�vely, without

art, still more without false colours, the history of the birth,

progress, decay, operations, properties, advantages and excellences of

divine love. And if besides this you find other things, these are but

excrescences which it is almost impossible for such as me who write

amidst many distractions to avoid. But still I think that there will be

nothing without some utility. Nature herself, who is so skilful a

workwoman, intending to produce grapes, produces at the same time, as

by a prudent inadvertence, such an abundance of leaves and branches,

that there are very few vines which have not in their season to be

pruned of leaves and shoots.

Writers are often treated too harshly: the censures that are passed on

them are given hastily, and very often with more incorrectness than

they committed imprudence in hastening to publish their writings.

Precipitation of judgment greatly puts in danger the conscience of the

judge, and the innocence of the accused. Many write amiss and many

censure foolishly. The kindness of the reader makes his reading sweet

and profitable. And, my dear reader, to have you more favourable, I

will here give you an explanation of some points which might

peradventure otherwise put you out of humour.

Some perhaps will think that I have said too much, and that it was not

requisite to go so deep down into the roots of the subject, but I am of

opinion that heavenly love is a plant like to that which we call

Angelica, whose root is no less odoriferous and wholesome than the

stalk and the branches. The four first books and some chapters of the

rest might without doubt have been omitted, without disadvantage to

such souls as only seek the practice of holy love, yet all of it will

be profitable unto them if they behold it with a devout eye: while

others also might have been disappointed not to have had the whole of

what belongs to the treatise of divine love. I have taken into

consideration as I should do, the state of the minds of this age: it

much imports to remember in what age we are writing.

I cite Scripture sometimes in other terms than those of the ordinary

edition (the Vulgate). For God's sake, my dear reader do me not

therefore the wrong to think that I wish to depart from that edition.

Ah no! For I know the Holy Ghost has authorized it by the sacred

Council of Trent, and that therefore all of us ought to keep to it: on

the contrary I only use the other versions for the service of this,

when they explain and confirm its true sense. For example what the

heavenly spouse says to his spouse: Thou hast wounded my heart: [19] is

greatly illustrated by the other version: Thou hast taken away my

heart, or, Thou hast snatched away and ravished my heart. That which

our Saviour said: Blessed are the poor in spirit: is much amplified and

cleared by the Greek: Blessed are the beggars in spirit: and so with

others.

I have often cited the sacred Psalmist in verse, and this to recreate

your mind and on account of the ease with which I could do it, by the

beautiful translation of Phillip des Portes, Abbot of Tiron. This

however I have sometimes departed from; not of course thinking I could

improve the verses of this famous poet (for I should be too impertinent

if never having so much as thought of this kind o� writing, I should

pretend to be happy in it in an age and condition of life which would

oblige me to retire from it in case I had ever been engaged therein),

but in some places where the sense might be variously taken, I have not

followed his verse, because I would not follow his sense, as in Psalm

cxxxii., where he has taken a certain Latin word for the fringe of the

garment which I thought ought to be taken for the collar, wherefore I

have translated it to my own mind.

I have said nothing which I have not learned of others, yet it is

impossible for me to remember whence I had everything in particular,

but believe me, if I had taken any lengthy and remarkable passages out

of any author, I would make it a matter of conscience not to let him

have the deserved honour of it, and to remove a suspicion which you may

conceive against my sincerity in this matter, I warn you that the 13th

chapter of Book VII. is extracted from a sermon which I delivered at

Paris at S. John's en Gr�ve upon the feast of the Assumption of our

Blessed Lady, 1602.

I have not always expressed the sequence of the chapters, but if you

notice you will easily find the links of their connection. In that and

several other things I had a care to spare my own leisure and your

patience. After I had caused the Introduction to a Devout Life to be

printed, my Lord Archbishop of Vienne, Peter de Villars, did me the

favour of writing his opinion of it in terms so advantageous to that

little book and to me, that I should never dare to rehearse them: and

exhorting me to apply the most of my leisure to the like works, amongst

many rare counsels he favoured me with, one was that as far as the

matter would permit I should always be short in the chapters. For as,

said he, travellers knowing that there is a fair garden some twenty or

twenty-five paces out of their way, readily turn aside so short a

distance to go see it, which they would not do if it were further

distant; even so those who know that there is but little distance

between the beginning and end of a chapter do willingly undertake to

read it, which they would not do though the subject were never so

delightful, if a long time were required for the reading of it. And

therefore I had good reason to follow my own inclination in this

respect since it was agreeable to this great personage who was one of

the most saintly prelates and learned doctors that the Church has had

in our age, and who at the time that he honoured me with his letter was

the most ancient of all the doctors of the faculty of Paris.

A great servant of God informed me not long ago that by addressing my

speech to Philothea in the Introduction to a Devout Life, I hindered

many men from profiting by it: because they did not esteem advice given

to a woman, to be worthy of a man. I marvelled that there were men who,

to be thought men, showed themselves in effect so little men, for I

leave it to your consideration, my dear reader, whether devotion be not

as well for men as for women, and whether we are not to read with as

great attention and reverence the second Epistle of S. John which was

addressed to the holy lady Electa, as the third which he directs to

Caius, and whether a thousand thousand Epistles and excellent Treatises

of the ancient fathers of the Church ought to be held unprofitable to

men, because they are addressed to holy women of those times. But,

besides, it is the soul which aspires to devotion that I call

Philothea, and men have souls as well as women.

Nevertheless, to imitate the great Apostle in this occasion, who

esteemed himself a debtor to every one, I have changed my address in

this treatise and speak to Theotimus, but if perchance there should be

any woman (and such an unreasonableness would be more tolerable in

them) who would not read the instructions which are given to men, I beg

them to know that Theotimus to whom I speak is the human spirit

desirous of making progress in holy love, which spirit is equally in

women as in men.

This Treatise then is made for a soul already devout that she may be

able to advance in her design, and hence I have been forced to say many

things somewhat unknown to the generality, and which will therefore

appear more obscure than they are. The depths of science are always

somewhat hard to sound, and there are few divers who care and are able

to descend and gather the pearls and other precious stones which are in

the womb of the ocean. But if you have the courage fairly to penetrate

these words which I have written, it will truly be with you as with the

divers, who, says Pliny, see clearly in the deepest caves of the sea

the light of the sun: for you will find in the hardest parts of this

discourse a good and fair light. Moreover, as I do not follow them that

despise books treating of a certain supereminently perfect life, so for

my part, I do not speak of such a supereminence; for I can neither

censure the authors, nor authorize the censors of a doctrine which I do

not understand.

I have touched on a number of theological questions, proposing simply,

not so much what I anciently learnt in disputations, as what attention

to the service of souls, and my twenty-four years spent in holy

preaching have made me think most conducive to the glory of the Gospel

and of the Church.

For the rest some men of note in various places have signified to me

that certain little books have been published simply under the first

letters of their author's name which are the same as mine. This made

some believe that they were my works, not without some little scandal

to such as supposed thereby that I had bidden adieu to my simplicity,

to puff up my style with pompous words, my argument with worldly

conceit, and my conceptions with a lofty and plumed eloquence. For this

cause my dear reader, I will tell you, that as those who engrave or cut

precious stones, having their sight tired by keeping it continually

fixed upon the small lines of their work, are glad to keep before them

some fair emerald that by beholding it from time to time they may be

recreated with its greenness and restore their weakened sight to its

natural condition,--so in this press of business which my office daily

draws upon me I have ever little projects of some treatise of piety,

which I look at when I can, to revive and unweary my mind.

However, I do not profess myself a writer; for the dulness of my spirit

and the condition of my life, subject to the service and requirements

of many, would not permit me so to be. Wherefore I have written very

little and have published much less, and following the counsel and will

of my friends I will tell you what I have written that you may not

attribute the praises of another's labours to him who deserves none for

his own.

It is now nineteen years since that, being at Thonon, a small town

situated upon the Lake of Geneva, which was then being little by little

converted to the Catholic faith, the minister, an adversary of the

Church, was proclaiming everywhere that the Catholic article of the

real presence of our Saviour's body in the Eucharist destroyed the

symbol and the analogy of faith (for he was glad to mouth this word

analogy not understood by his auditors, in order to appear very

learned; and upon this the rest of the Catholic preachers with whom I

was pressed me to write something in refutation of this vanity. I did

what seemed suitable, framing a brief meditation upon the Creed to

confirm the truth: all the copies were distributed in this diocese

where now I find not one of them.

Soon afterwards his Highness came over the mountains, and finding the

bailiwicks of Chablais, Gaillard and Ternier, which are in the environs

of Geneva, well disposed to receive the Catholic faith which had been

banished thence by force of wars and revolts about seventy years

before, he resolved to re-establish the exercise thereof in all the

parishes, and to abolish that of heresy, and whereas on the one side

there were many obstacles to this great blessing from those

considerations which are called reasons of State, and on the other side

some persons as yet not well instructed in the truth made resistance

against this so much-desired establishment, his Highness surmounted the

first difficulty by the invincible constancy of his zeal for the

Catholic religion, and the second by an extraordinary gentleness and

prudence. For he had the chief and most obstinate called together, and

made a speech unto them with so lovingly persuasive an eloquence that

almost all, vanquished by the sweet violence of his fatherly love

towards them, cast the weapons of their obstinacy at his feet, and

their souls into the hands of Holy Church.

And allow me, my dear readers I pray you, to say this word in passing.

One may praise many rich actions of this great Prince, in which I see

the proof of his valour and military knowledge, which with just cause

is admired through all Europe. But for my part I cannot sufficiently

extol the re-establishment of the Catholic religion in these three

bailiwicks which I have just mentioned, having seen in it so many marks

of piety, united with so many and various acts of prudence, constancy,

magnanimity, justice and mildness, that I seemed to see in this one

little trait, as in a miniature, all that is praised in princes who

have in times past with most fervour striven to advance the glory of

God and the Church. The stage was small, but the action great. And as

that ancient craftsman was never so much esteemed for his great pieces

as he was admired for making a ship of ivory fitted with all its gear,

in so tiny a volume that the wings of a bee covered all, so I esteem

more that which this great Prince did at that time in this small corner

of his dominions, than many more brilliant actions which others extol

to the heavens.

Now on this occasion the victorious ensigns of the cross were replanted

in all the ways and public places of those quarters, and whereas a

little before there had been one erected very solemnly at Annemasse

close to Geneva, a certain minister made a little treatise against the

honour thereof, which was a burning and venomous invective, and to

which therefore it was deemed fit to make answer. My Lord Claude de

Granier, my predecessor, whose memory is in benediction, imposed the

burden upon me according to the power which he had over me, who beheld

him not only as my Bishop but also as a holy servant of God. I made

therefore this answer, under the title: Defence of the Standard of the

Cross, and dedicated it to his Highness, partly to testify unto him my

most humble submission, and partly to render him some small

thanksgiving for the care which he took of the Church in those parts.

Now lately this Defence has been reprinted under the prodigious title

of Panthalogy, or Treasure of the Cross: a title whereof I never

dreamed, as in truth I am not a man of that study and leisure, nor of

that memory, to be able to put together so many pieces of worth in one

book as to let it deserve the name of Treasure or Panthalogy, besides I

have a horror of such insolent frontispieces:

A sot, or senseless creature we him call,

Who makes his portal greater than his hall.

In the year 1602, were celebrated at Paris, where I was, the obsequies

of that magnanimous prince Philip Emanuel of Lorraine, Duke of

Mercoeur, who had performed so many brave exploits against the Turks in

Hungary that all Christianity was bound to conspire to honour his

memory. But especially Madam Mary of Luxembourg, his widow, did for her

part all that her heart and the love of the deceased could suggest to

her to make his funeral solemn. And because my father, grandfather, and

great grandfather had been brought up pages to the most illustrious

princes of Martigues her father and his predecessors, she regarded me

as an hereditary servant of her house; and made choice of me to preach

the funeral sermon in that great celebration, where there were not only

several Cardinals and Prelates but a number of princes also,

princesses, marshals of France, knights of the Order, [20] and even the

Court of Parliament in a body. I made then this funeral oration and

pronounced it in this great assembly in the great Church of Paris, and

as it contained a true abridgment of the heroic feats of the deceased

prince, I willingly had it printed, at the request of the

widow-princess, whose request was to me a law. I dedicated this piece

to Madam the Duchess of Vend�me, as yet a girl, and a very young

princess, yet one in whom were very clearly to be recognized the signs

of that excellent virtue and piety which now adorn her, and which show

her to be worthy of the bringing forth and educating by so devout and

pious a mother.

While this sermon was in the press, I heard that I had been made

Bishop, so that I came here to be consecrated and to begin residence.

And at first there was pointed out to me the necessity of instructing

Confessors on some important points. For this reason I wrote

twenty-five instructions, which I had printed to get them more easily

spread amongst those to whom I directed them; since then they have been

reprinted in various places.

Three or four years afterwards I published the Introduction to a Devout

Life, upon the occasion and in the manner which I have put down in the

preface thereof: regarding which I have nothing to say to you, my dear

reader, save only that though this little book has generally had a

gracious and kind acceptance, yes even amongst the most grave prelates

and doctors of the Church, yet it did not escape the rude censure of

some who did not merely blame me but bitterly attacked me in public

because I tell Philothea that dancing is an action indifferent in

itself, and that for recreation's sake one may make quodlibets; and I,

knowing the quality of these censors, praise their intention which I

think was good. I should have desired them however to please to

consider that the first proposition is drawn from the common and true

doctrine of the most holy and learned divines, that I was writing for

such as live in the world and in courts; that withal I carefully

inculcate the extreme dangers which are found in dancing;--and that as

to the second proposition it is not mine, but S. Louis's, that

admirable king, a doctor worthy to be followed in the art of rightly

conducting courtiers to a devout life. For, I believe if they had

weighed this, their charity and discretion would never have permitted

their zeal, how vigorous and austere soever, to arm their indignation

against me.

And therefore, my dear reader, I conjure you to be gracious and good to

me in reading this Treatise. And if you find the style a little (though

I am sure it will be but a very little) different from that which I

used in the Defence of the Cross, know that in nineteen years one

learns and unlearns many things, that the language of war differs from

that of peace, and that a man uses one manner of speech to young

apprentices and another to old fellow-craftsmen.

My purpose here is to speak to souls that are advanced in devotion. For

you must know that we have in this town a congregation of maidens and

widows who, having retired from the world, live with one mind in God's

service, under the protection of his most holy Mother, and as their

purity and piety of spirit have oftentimes given me great consolation,

so have I striven to return them the like by a frequent distribution of

the holy word which I have announced to them as well in public sermons

as in spiritual conferences, and this almost always in presence of some

religious men and people of great piety. Hence I have often had to

treat of the most delicate sentiments of piety, passing beyond that

which I had said to Philothea: and I owe a good part of that which now

I communicate to you to this blessed Society because she who is the

mother of them and rules them, knowing that I was writing upon this

subject, and yet that scarcely was I able to accomplish it without

God's very special assistance, and their continual urging, took a

constant care to pray and get prayers for this end, and holily conjured

me to pick out all the little morsels of leisure which she judged might

be spared here and there from the press of my hindrances and to employ

them in this. And because this soul is in that consideration with me

which God knows, she has had no little power to animate me in this

occasion. I began indeed long ago to think of writing on holy love, but

that thought came far short of what this occasion has made me produce,

an occasion which I declare to you thus simply and in good faith, in

imitation of the ancients, that you may know that I write only as I get

the chance and opportunity, and that I may find you more favourable. It

is said amongst the Pagans that Phidias never represented anything so

perfectly as the gods, nor Apelles as Alexander. One is not always

equally successful: if I fall short in this treatise, let your goodness

make progress and God will bless your reading.

To this end I have dedicated this work to the Mother of dilection and

to the Father of cordial love, as I dedicated the Introduction to the

Divine child who is the Saviour of lovers and the love of the saved.

And as women, while they are strong and able to bring forth their

children with ease, choose commonly their worldly friends to be

godfathers, but when their feebleness and indisposition make their

delivery hard and dangerous invoke the saints of heaven, and vow to

have their children stood to by some poor body or by some devout soul

in the name of S. Joseph, S. Francis of Assisi, S. Francis of Paula, S.

Nicholas, or some other of the blessed, who may obtain of God their

safe delivery and that the child may be born alive:--so I, while I was

not yet bishop, having more leisure and less fears for my writings,

dedicated my little works to princes of the earth, but now being

weighed down with my charge, and having a thousand difficulties in

writing, I consecrate all to the princes of heaven, that they may

obtain for me the light requisite, and that if such be the Divine will,

these my writings may be fruitful and profitable to many.

Thus my dear reader I beseech God to bless you and to enrich you with

his love. Meanwhile from my very heart I submit all my writings, my

words and actions to the correction of the most holy Catholic,

Apostolic, and Roman Church, knowing that she is the pillar and ground

of truth, [21] wherein she can neither be deceived nor deceive us, and

that none can have God for his father who will not have this Church for

his mother.

Annecy, the day of the most loving Apostles

S. Peter and S. Paul. 1616.

Blessed be God.

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[15] Cant. iv.

[16] Ps. lxvii. 14.

[17] M. Camus.

[18] 1 Cor. i. 27.

[19] Cant. iv. 9.

[20] Of the Holy Spirit. (Tr.)

[21] 1 Tim. iii. 15.

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THE LOVE OF GOD.

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BOOK I.

CONTAINING A

PREPARATION FOR THE WHOLE TREATISE.

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CHAPTER I.

THAT FOR THE BEAUTY OF HUMAN NATURE GOD HAS GIVEN THE GOVERNMENT OF ALL

THE FACULTIES OF THE SOUL TO THE WILL.

Union in distinction makes order; order produces agreement; and

proportion and agreement, in complete and finished things, make beauty.

An army has beauty when it is composed of parts so ranged in order that

their distinction is reduced to that proportion which they ought to

have together for the making of one single army. For music to be

beautiful, the voices must not only be true, clear, and distinct from

one another, but also united together in such a way that there may

arise a just consonance and harmony which is not unfitly termed a

discordant harmony or rather harmonious discord.

Now as the angelic S. Thomas, following the great S. Denis, says

excellently well, beauty and goodness though in some things they agree,

yet still are not one and the same thing: for good is that which

pleases the appetite and will, beauty that which pleases the

understanding or knowledge; or, in other words, good is that which

gives pleasure when we enjoy it, beauty that which gives pleasure when

we know it. For which cause in proper speech we only attribute corporal

beauty to the objects of those two senses which are the most

intellectual and most in the service of the understanding--namely,

sight and hearing, so that we do not say, these are beautiful odours or

beautiful tastes: but we rightly say, these are beautiful voices and

beautiful colours.

The beautiful then being called beautiful, because the knowledge

thereof gives pleasure, it is requisite that besides the union and the

distinction, the integrity, the order, and the agreement of its parts,

there should be also splendour and brightness that it may be knowable

and visible. Voices to be beautiful must be clear and true; discourses

intelligible; colours brilliant and shining. Obscurity, shade and

darkness are ugly and disfigure all things, because in them nothing is

knowable, neither order, distinction, union nor agreement; which caused

S. Denis to say, that "God as the sovereign beauty is author of the

beautiful harmony, beautiful lustre and good grace which is found in

all things, making the distribution and decomposition of his one ray of

beauty spread out, as light, to make all things beautiful," willing

that to compose beauty there should be agreement, clearness and good

grace.

Certainly, Theotimus, beauty is without effect, unprofitable and dead,

if light and splendour do not make it lively and effective, whence we

term colours lively when they have light and lustre.

But as to animated and living things their beauty is not complete

without good grace, which, besides the agreement of perfect parts which

makes beauty, adds the harmony of movements, gestures and actions,

which is as it were the life and soul of the beauty of living things.

Thus, in the sovereign beauty of our God, we acknowledge union, yea,

unity of essence in the distinction of persons, with an infinite glory,

together with an incomprehensible harmony of all perfections of actions

and motions, sovereignly comprised, and as one would say excellently

joined and adjusted, in the most unique and simple perfection of the

pure divine act, which is God Himself, immutable and invariable, as

elsewhere we shall show.

God, therefore, having a will to make all things good and beautiful,

reduced the multitude and distinction of the same to a perfect unity,

and, as man would say, brought them all under a monarchy, making a

subordination of one thing to another and of all things to himself the

sovereign Monarch. He reduces all our members into one body under one

head, of many persons he forms a family, of many families a town, of

many towns a province, of many provinces a kingdom, putting the whole

kingdom under the government of one sole king. So, Theotimus, over the

innumerable multitude and variety of actions, motions, feelings,

inclinations, habits, passions, faculties and powers which are in man,

God has established a natural monarchy in the will, which rules and

commands all that is found in this little world: and God seems to have

said to the will as Pharao said to Joseph: Thou shalt be over my house,

and at the commandment of thy mouth all the people shall obey. [22]

This dominion of the will is exercised indeed in very various ways.

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[22] Gen. xli. 40.

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CHAPTER II.

HOW THE WILL VARIOUSLY GOVERNS THE POWERS OF THE SOUL.

A Father directs his wife, his children and his servants by his

ordinances and commandments, which they are obliged to obey though they

are able not to obey; but if he have servants and slaves, he rules them

by force which they have no power to contradict; his horses, oxen and

mules he manages by industry, binding, bridling, goading, shutting in,

or letting out.

Now the will governs the faculty of our exterior motion as a serf or

slave: for unless some external thing hinder, it never fails to obey.

We open and shut our mouth, move our tongue, our hands, feet, eyes, and

all the members to which the power of this movement refers without

resistance, according to our wish and will.

But as for our senses and the faculties of nourishing, growing, and

producing, we cannot with the same ease govern them, but we must employ

industry and art. If a slave be called he comes, if he be told to stop,

he stops; but we must not expect this obedience from a sparrowhawk or

falcon: he that desires it should return to the hand must show it the

lure; if he would keep it quiet he must hood it. We bid our servant

turn to the right or left hand and he does it, but to make a horse so

turn we must make use of the bridle. We must not, Theotimus, command

our eyes not to see, our ears not to hear, our hands not to touch, our

stomach not to digest, or our body not to grow, for these faculties not

having intelligence are not capable of obedience. No one can add a

cubit to his stature. We often eat without nourishing ourselves or

growing; he that will prevail with these powers must use industry. A

physician who has to do with a child in the cradle commands him

nothing, but only gives orders to the nurse to do such and such things,

or else perchance he prescribes for the nurse to eat this or that meat,

to take such and such medicine. This infuses its qualities into the

milk which enters the child's body, and the physician accomplishes his

will in this little weakling who has not even the power to think of it.

We must not give the orders of abstinence, sobriety or continency unto

the palate or stomach, but the hands must be commanded only to furnish

to the mouth meat and drink in such and such a measure, we take away

from or give our faculties their object and subject, and the food which

strengthens them, as reason requires. If we desire our eyes not to see

we must turn them away, or cover them with their natural hood, and shut

them, and by these means we may bring them to the point which the will

desires. It would be folly to command a horse not to wax fat, not to

grow, not to kick,--to effect all this, stop his corn; you must not

command him, you must simply make him do as you wish.

The will also exercises a certain power over the understanding and

memory, for of many things which the understanding has power to

understand and the memory has power to remember, the will determines

those to which she would have her faculties apply themselves, or from

which divert themselves. It is true she cannot manage or range them so

absolutely as she does the hands, feet or tongue, on account of the

sensitive faculties, especially the fancy, which do not obey the will

with a prompt and infallible obedience, and which are necessarily

required for the operations of the understanding and memory: but yet

the will moves, employs and applies these faculties at her pleasure

though not so firmly and constantly that the light and variable fancy

does not often divert and distract them, so that as the Apostle cries

out: I do not the good which I desire, but the evil which I hate. [23]

So we are often forced to complain that we think not of the good which

we love, but the evil which we hate.

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[23] Rom. vii. 15.

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CHAPTER III.

HOW THE WILL GOVERNS THE SENSUAL APPETITE.

The will then, Theotimus, bears rule over the memory, understanding and

fancy, not by force but by authority, so that she is not infallibly

obeyed any more than the father of a family is always obeyed by his

children and servants. It is the same as regards the sensitive

appetite, which, as S. Augustine says, is called in us sinners

concupiscence, and is subject to the will and understanding as the wife

to her husband, because as it was said to the woman: Be under thy

husband, and he shall have dominion over thee, [24] so was it said to

Cain, that the lust of sin should be under him and he should have

dominion over it. [25] And this being under means nothing else than

being submitted and subjected to him. "O man," says S. Bernard, "it is

in thy power if thou wilt to bring thy enemy to be thy servant so that

all things may go well with thee; thy appetite is under thee and thou

shalt domineer over it. Thy enemy can move in thee the feeling of

temptation, but it is in thy power if thou wilt to give or refuse

consent. In case thou permit thy appetite to carry thee away to sin,

then thou shalt be under it, and it shall domineer over thee, for

whosoever sinneth is made the servant of sin, but before thou sinnest,

so long as sin gets not entry into thy consent, but only into thy

sense, that is to say, so long as it stays in the appetite, not going

so far as thy will, thy appetite is subject unto thee and thou lord

over it." Before the Emperor is created he is subject to the electors'

dominion, in whose hands it is to reject him or to elect him to the

imperial dignity; but being once elected and elevated by their means,

henceforth they are under him and he rules over them. Before the will

consents to the appetite, she rules over it, but having once given

consent she becomes its slave.

To conclude, this sensual appetite in plain truth is a rebellious

subject, seditious, restive, and we must confess we cannot so defeat it

that it does not rise again, encounter and assault the reason; yet the

will has such a strong hand over it that she is able, if she please, to

bridle it, break its designs and repulse it, since not to consent to

its suggestions is a sufficient repulse. We cannot hinder concupiscence

from conceiving, but we can from bringing forth and accomplishing, sin.

Now this concupiscence or sensual appetite has twelve movements, by

which as by so many mutinous captains it raises sedition in man. And

because ordinarily they trouble the soul and disquiet the body;

insomuch as they trouble the soul, they are called perturbations,

insomuch as they disquiet the body they are named passions, as S.

Augustine declares. They all place before themselves good or evil, the

former to obtain, the latter to avoid. If good be considered in itself

according to its natural goodness it excites love, the first and

principal passion; if good be regarded as absent it provokes us to

desire; if being desired we think we are able to obtain it we enter

into hope; if we think we cannot obtain it we feel despair; but when we

possess it as present, it moves us to joy.

On the contrary, as soon as we discover evil we hate it, if it be

absent we fly it, if we cannot avoid it we fear it; if we think we can

avoid it we grow bold and courageous, but if we feel it as present we

grieve; and then anger and wrath suddenly rush forth to reject and

repel the evil or at least to take vengeance for it. If we cannot

succeed we remain in grief. But if we repulse or avenge it we feel

satisfaction and satiation, which is a pleasure of triumph, for as the

possession of good gladdens the heart, so the victory over evil exalts

the spirits. And over all this multitude of sensual passions the will

bears empire, rejecting their suggestions, repulsing their attacks,

hindering their effects, or at the very least sternly refusing them

consent, without which they can never harm us, and by refusing which

they remain vanquished, yea in the long run broken down, weakened, worn

out, beaten down, and if not altogether dead, at least deadened or

mortified.

And Theotimus, this multitude of passions is permitted to reside in our

soul for the exercise of our will in virtue and spiritual valour;

insomuch that the Stoics who denied that passions were found in wise

men greatly erred, and so much the more because they practised in deeds

what in words they denied, as S. Augustine shows, recounting this

agreeable history. Aulus Gellius having gone on sea with a famous

Stoic, a great tempest arose, at which the Stoic being frightened began

to grow pale, to blench and to tremble so sensibly that all in the boat

perceived it, and watched him curiously, although they were in the same

hazard with him. In the meantime the sea grew calm, the danger passed,

and safety restoring to each the liberty to talk and even to rally one

another, a certain voluptuous Asiatic reproached him with his fear,

which had made him aghast and pale at the danger, whereas the other on

the contrary had remained firm and without fear. To this the Stoic

replied by relating what Aristippus, a Socratic philosopher, had

answered a man, who for the same reason had attacked him with the like

reproach; saying to him: As for thee, thou hadst no reason to be

troubled for the soul of a wicked rascal: but I should have done myself

wrong not to have feared to lose the life of an Aristippus. And the

value of the story is, that Aulus Gellius, an eye-witness, relates it.

But as to the Stoic's reply contained therein, it did more commend his

wit than his cause, since bringing forward this comrade in his fear, he

left it proved by two irreproachable witnesses, that Stoics were

touched with fear, and with the fear which shows its effects in the

eyes, face and behaviour, and is consequently a passion.

A great folly, to wish to be wise with an impossible wisdom Truly the

Church has condemned the folly of that wisdom which certain

presumptuous Anchorites would formally have introduced, against which

the whole Scripture but especially the great Apostle, cries out: We

have a law in our body which resisteth the law of our mind. [26]

"Amongst us Christians," says the great S. Augustine, "according to

holy Scripture and sound doctrine, the citizens of the sacred city of

Gods living according to God, in the pilgrimage of this world fear,

desire, grieve, rejoice." Yea even the sovereign King of this city has

feared, desired, has grieved and rejoiced, even to tears, wanness,

trembling, sweating of blood; though in him as these were not the

motions of passions like ours, the great S. Jerome, and after him the

School durst not use the name, passions, for reverence of the person in

whom they were, but the respectful name, pro-passions. This was to

testify that sensible movements in Our Saviour held the place of

passions, though they were not such indeed, seeing that he suffered or

endured nothing from them except what seemed good to him and as he

pleased, which we sinners cannot do, who suffer and endure these

motions with disorder, against our wills, to the great prejudice of the

good estate and polity of our soul.

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[24] Gen. iii. 16.

[25] Ib.iv. 7.

[26] Rom. vii. 23.

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CHAPTER IV.

THAT LOVE RULES OVER ALL THE AFFECTIONS, AND PASSIONS, AND EVEN GOVERNS

THE WILL, ALTHOUGH THE WILL HAS ALSO A DOMINION OVER IT.

Love being the first complacency which we take in good, as we shall

presently show, it of course precedes desire; and indeed what other

thing do we desire, but that which we love? It precedes delectation,

for how could we rejoice in the enjoyment of a thing if we loved it

not? It precedes hope, for we hope only for the good which we love: it

precedes hatred, for we hate not evil, except for the love we have for

good: nor is evil evil but because it is contrary to good. And,

Theotimus, it is the same with all the other passions and affections;

for they all proceed from love, as from their source and root.

For which cause the other passions and affections, are good or bad,

vicious or virtuous, according as the love whence they proceed is good

or bad; for love so spreads over them her own qualities, that they seem

to be no other than this same love. S. Augustine reducing all these

passions and affections to four, as did also Boetius, Cicero, Virgil,

with the greatest part of the ancients:--"Love," says he, "tending to

the possession of what it loves, is termed concupiscence or desire;

having and possessing it it is called joy; flying that which is

contrary to it, it is named fear; but if this really seizes it and it

feels it, love is named grief, and consequently these passions are evil

if the love be evil, good if it be good. The citizens of the heavenly

city fear, desire, grieve, love, and because their love is just, all

their affections are also just. Christian doctrine subjects the reason

to God that he may guide and help it, and subjects all these passions

to the spirit, that it may bridle and moderate them and so convert them

to the service of justice and virtue. The right will is good love, the

bad will is evil love;" [27] that is to say, in a word, Theotimus, love

has such dominion over the will as to make it exactly such as it is

itself.

The wife ordinarily changes her condition into that of her husband,

becoming noble if he be noble, queen if he be king, duchess if he be

duke. The will also changes her condition according to the love she

espouses; if this be carnal she becomes carnal, if this be spiritual

she is spiritual, and all the affections of desire, joy, hope, fear,

grief, as children born of the marriage between love and the will,

consequently receive their qualities from love. In short, Theotimus,

the will is only moved by her affections, amongst which love, as the

primum mobile and first affection, gives motion to all the rest, and

causes all the other motions of the soul.

But it does not follow hence that the will does not also rule over

love, seeing that the will only loves while willing to love, and that

of many loves which present themselves she can apply herself to which

she pleases, otherwise there would be no love either forbidden or

commanded. She is then mistress over her loves as a maiden over her

suitors, amongst whom she may make election of which she pleases. But

as after marriage she loses her liberty and of mistress becomes subject

to her husband's power, remaining taken by him whom she took, so the

will which at her own pleasure made election of love, after she has

chosen one remains subject to it. And as the wife is always subject to

the husband whom she has chosen as long as he lives, and if he die

regains her former liberty to marry another, so while a love lives in

the will it reigns there, and the will is subject to its movements, but

if this love die she can afterwards take another. And again there is a

liberty in the will which the wife has not, and it is that the will can

reject her love at her pleasure, by applying her understanding to

motives which make it displeasing, and by taking a resolution to change

the object. For thus, to make divine love live and reign in us, we kill

self-love, and if we cannot entirely annihilate it at least we weaken

it in such a way that though it lives yet it does not reign in us. As,

on the contrary, in forsaking divine love we may adhere to that of

creatures, which is the infamous adultery with which the Divine lover

so often reproaches sinners.

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[27] De Civ. Dei, xiv. ix.

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CHAPTER V.

OF THE AFFECTIONS OF THE WILL.

There are no fewer movements in the intellectual or reasonable appetite

which is called the will, than there are in the sensitive or sensual,

but the first are customarily named affections, the latter passions.

The philosophers and pagans did in some manner love God, the state,

virtue, sciences; they hated vice, aspired after honours, despaired of

escaping death or calumny, were desirous of knowledge, yea even of

beatitude after death. They encouraged themselves to surmount the

difficulties which cross the way of virtue, dreaded blame, avoided some

faults, avenged public injuries, opposed tyrants, without any

self-interest. Now all these movements were seated in the reasonable

part, since the senses, and consequently, the sensual appetite, are not

capable of being applied to these objects, and therefore these

movements were affections of the intellectual or reasonable appetite,

not passions of the sensual.

How often do we feel passions in the sensual appetite or concupiscence,

contrary to the affections which at the same time we perceive in the

reasonable appetite or will? How clearly was shown at one and the same

time the action of the pleasure of the senses and the displeasure of

the will, in that young martyr mentioned by S. Jerom, who, forced to

bear the attacks of sensuality, bit off a piece of his tongue and spat

it in his tempter's face? How often do we tremble amidst the dangers to

which our will carries us and in which it makes us remain? How often do

we hate the pleasure in which the sensual appetite takes delight, and

love the spiritual good with which that is disgusted? In this consists

the war which we daily experience between the spirit and the flesh:

between our exterior man, which is under the senses, and the interior

which is under the reason; between the old Adam who follows the

appetites of his Eve, or concupiscence, and the new Adam who follows

heavenly wisdom and holy reason.

The Stoics, as S. Augustine remarks, [28] denying that the wise man can

have passions, appear to have confessed that he has affections, which

they term eupathies, or good passions, or, as Cicero called them,

constancies: for they said the wise man did not covet but desired, had

not glee but joy; that he had no fear, but only foresight and

precaution, so that he was not moved except by reason and according to

reason: for this cause they peremptorily denied that a wise man could

ever be sorrowful, that being caused by present evil, whereas no evil

can befal a wise man, since no man is hurt but by himself, according to

their maxim. And truly, Theotimus, they were not wrong in holding that

there are eupathies and good affections in the reasonable part of man,

but they erred much in saying that there were no passions in the

sensitive part, and that sorrow did not touch a wise man's heart: for

omitting the fact that they themselves were troubled in this kind (as

was just said), how could it be that wisdom should deprive us of pity,

which is a virtuous sorrow and which comes into our hearts in order to

make them desire to deliver our neighbour from the evil which he

endures? And the wisest man of all paganism, Epictetus, did not hold

this error that passions do not rise in the wise man, as S. Augustine

witnesses, showing further that the Stoics' difference with other

philosophers on this subject was but a mere dispute of words and strife

of language.

Now these affections which we feel in our reasonable part are more or

less noble and spiritual, according as their objects are more or less

sublime, and as they are in a more eminent department of the spirit:

for there are affections in us which proceed from conclusions gained by

the experience of our senses; others by reasonings from human sciences;

others from principles of faith; and finally there are some which have

their origin from the simple sentiment of the truth of God, and

acquiescence in his will. The first are called natural affections, for

who is he that does not naturally desire health, his provision of food

and clothing, sweet and agreeable conversation? The second class of

affections are named reasonable, as being altogether founded upon the

spiritual knowledge of the reason, by which our will is excited to seek

tranquillity of heart, moral virtues, true honour, the contemplation of

eternal things. The third sort of affections are termed Christian,

because they issue from reasonings founded on the doctrine of Our Lord,

who makes us love voluntary Poverty, perfect Chastity, the glory of

heaven. But the affections of the supreme degree are named divine and

supernatural because God himself spreads them abroad in our spirits,

and because they regard God and aim at him, without the medium of any

reasoning, or any light of nature, as it will be easy to understand

from what we shall say afterwards about the acquiescences and

affections which are made in the sanctuary of the soul. And these

supernatural affections are principally three: the love of the mind for

the beautiful in the mysteries of faith, love for the useful in the

goods which are promised us in the other life, and love for the

sovereign good of the most holy and eternal divinity.

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[28] De Civ. Dei, xiv.

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CHAPTER VI.

HOW THE LOVE OF GOD HAS DOMINION OVER OTHER LOVES.

The will governs all the other faculties of man's soul, yet it is

governed by its love which makes it such as its love is. Now of all

loves that of God holds the sceptre, and has the authority of

commanding so inseparably united to it and proper to its nature, that

if it be not master it ceases to be and perishes.

Ismael was not co-heir with Isaac his younger brother, Esau was

appointed to be his younger brother's servant, Joseph was adored, not

only by his brothers, but also by his father, yea, and by his mother

also, in the person of Benjamin, as he had foreseen in the dreams of

his youth. Truly it is not without mystery that the younger of these

brethren thus bear away the advantage from the elder. Divine love is

indeed the last begotten of all the affections of man's heart, for as

the Apostle says: That which is animal is first; afterwards that which

is spiritual: [29] --but this last born inherits all the authority, and

self-love, as another Esau is deputed to his service; and not only all

the other motions of the soul as his brethren adore him and are subject

to him, but also the understanding and will which are to him as father

and mother. All is subject to this heavenly love, who will either be

king or nothing, who cannot live unless he reign, nor reign if not

sovereignly.

Isaac, Jacob and Joseph were supernatural children; for their mothers,

Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel, being sterile by nature, conceived them by

the grace of the divine goodness, and for this cause they were

established masters of their brethren. Similarly, divine love is a

child of miracle, since man's will cannot conceive it if it be not

poured into our hearts by the Holy Ghost. And as supernatural it must

rule and reign over all the affections, yea, even over the

understanding and will.

And although there are other supernatural movements in the soul,--fear,

piety, force, hope,--as Esau and Benjamin were supernatural children of

Rachel and Rebecca, yet is divine love still master, heir and superior,

as being the son of promise, since in virtue of it heaven is promised

to man. Salvation is shown to faith, it is prepared for hope, but it is

given only to charity. Faith points out the way to the land of promise

as a pillar of cloud and of fire, that is, light and dark; hope feeds

us with its manna of sweetness, but charity actually introduces us into

it, as the Ark of alliance, which makes for us the passage of the

Jordan, that is, of the judgment, and which shall remain amidst the

people in the heavenly land promised to the true Israelites, where

neither the pillar of faith serves as guide nor the manna of hope is

used as food.

Divine love makes its abode in the most high and sublime region of the

soul, where it offers sacrifice and holocausts to the divinity as

Abraham did, and as our Saviour sacrificed himself upon the top of

Calvary, to the end that from so exalted a place it may be heard and

obeyed by its people, that is, by all the faculties and affections of

the soul. These he governs with an incomparable sweetness, for love has

no convicts nor slaves, but brings all things under its obedience with

a force so delightful, that as nothing is so strong as love nothing

also is so sweet as its strength.

The virtues are in the soul to moderate its movements, and charity, as

first of all the virtues, governs and tempers them all, not only

because the first in every species of things serves as a rule and

measure to the rest, but also because God, having created man to his

image and likeness, wills that as in himself so in man all things

should be ordered by love and for love.

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[29] 1 Cor. xv. 46.

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CHAPTER VII.

DESCRIPTION OF LOVE IN GENERAL.

The will has so great a sympathy with good that as soon as she

perceives it she turns towards it to delight therein as in her most

agreeable object, to which she is so closely allied that her nature

cannot be explained except by the relation she has thereto, just as one

cannot show the nature of what is good except by the affinity it has

with the will. For, tell me, Theotimus, what is good but that which

every one wills. And what is the will, if not the faculty which bears

us towards and makes us tend to good or what the will believes to be

such?

The will then perceiving and feeling the good, by the help of the

understanding which proposes it, feels at the same time a sudden

delight and complacency at this meeting, which sweetly yet powerfully

moves her towards this pleasing object in order to unite herself with

it, and makes her search out the means most proper to attain this

union.

The will then has a most close affinity with good; this affinity

produces the complacency which the will takes in feeling and perceiving

good; this complacency moves and spurs the will forward to good; this

movement tends to union; and in fine the will moved and tending to

union searches out all the means necessary to get it.

And in truth, speaking generally, love comprises all this together, as

a beautiful tree, whose root is the correspondence which the will has

to good, its foot is the complacency, its trunk is the movement, its

seekings, its pursuits, and other efforts are the branches, but union

and enjoyment are its fruits. Thus love seems to be composed of these

five principal parts under which a number of other little pieces are

contained as we shall see in the course of this work.

Let us consider, I pray you, the exercise of an insensible love between

the loadstone and iron; for it is the true image of the sensible and

voluntary love of which we speak. Iron, then, has such a sympathy with

the loadstone that as soon as it feels the power thereof, it turns

towards it; then it suddenly begins to stir and quiver with little

throbbings, testifying by this the complacency it feels, and then it

advances and moves towards the loadstone striving by all means possible

to be united to it. Do you not see all the parts of love well

represented in these lifeless things?

But to conclude, Theotimus, the complacency and the movement towards,

or effusion of the will upon, the thing beloved is properly speaking

love; yet in such sort that the complacency is but the beginning of

love, and the movement or effusion of the heart which ensues is the

true essential love, so that the one and the other may truly be named

love, but in a different sense: for as the dawning of day may be termed

day, so this first complacency of the heart in the thing beloved may be

called love because it is the first feeling of love. But as the true

heart of the day is measured from the end of dawn till sunset, so the

true essence of love consists in the movement and effusion of the heart

which immediately follows complacency and ends in union. In short,

complacency is the first stirring or emotion which good causes in the

will, and this emotion is followed by the movement and effusion by

which the soul runs towards and reaches the thing beloved, which is the

true and proper love. We may express it thus: the good takes, grasps

and ties the heart by complacency, but by love it draws, conducts and

conveys it to itself, by complacency it makes it start on its way, but

by love it makes it achieve the journey. Complacency is the awakener of

the heart, but love is its action; complacency makes it get up, but

love makes it walk. The heart spreads its wings by complacency but love

is its flight. Love then, to speak distinctly and precisely, is no

other thing than the movement, effusion and advancement of the heart

towards good.

Many great persons have been of opinion that love is no other thing

than complacency itself, in which they have had much appearance of

reason. For not only does the movement of love take its origin from the

complacency which the heart feels at the first approach of good, and

find its end in a second complacency which returns to the heart by

union with the thing beloved,--but further, it depends for its

preservation on this complacency, and can only subsist through it as

through its mother and nurse; so that as soon as the complacency ceases

love ceases. And as the bee being born in honey, feeds on honey, and

only flies for honey, so love is born of complacency, maintained by

complacency, and tends to complacency. It is the weight of things which

stirs them, moves them, and stays them; it is the weight of the stone

that stirs it and moves it to its descent as soon as the obstacles are

removed; it is the same weight that makes it continue its movement

downwards; and finally it is the same weight that makes it stop and

rest as soon as it has reached its place. So it is with the complacency

which excites the will: this moves it, and this makes it repose in the

thing beloved when it has united itself therewith. This motion of love

then having its birth, preservation, and perfection dependent on

complacency, and being always inseparably joined thereto, it is no

marvel that these great minds considered love and complacency to be the

same, though in truth love being a true passion of the soul cannot be a

simple complacency, but must needs be the motion proceeding from it.

Now this motion caused by complacency lasts till the union or fruition.

Therefore when it tends to a present good, it does no more than push

the heart, clasp it, join, and apply it to the thing beloved, which by

this means it enjoys, and then it is called love of complacency,

because as soon as ever it is begotten of the first complacency it ends

in the second, which it receives in being united to its present object.

But when the good towards which the heart is turned, inclined, and

moved is distant, absent or future, or when so perfect a union cannot

yet be made as is desired, then the motion of love by which the heart

tends, makes and aspires towards this absent object, is properly named

desire, for desire is no other thing than the appetite, concupiscence,

or cupidity for things we have not, but which however we aim at

getting.

There are yet certain other motions of love by which we desire things

that we neither expect nor aim at in any way, as when we say:--Why am I

not now in heaven! I wish I were a king; I would to God I were younger;

how I wish I had never sinned, and the like. These indeed are desires,

but imperfect ones, which, to speak properly, I think, might be called

wishings (souhaits). And indeed these affections are not expressed like

desires, for when we express our true desires we say: I desire (Je

desire): but when we signify our imperfect desires we say: I should or

I would desire (je desirerois), or I should like. We may well say: I

would desire to be young; but we do not say: I desire to be young;

seeing that this is not possible; and this motion is called a wishing,

or as the Scholastics term it a velleity, which is nothing else but a

commencement of willing, not followed out, because the will, by reason

of impossibility or extreme difficulty, stops her motion, and ends it

in this simple affection of a wish. It is as though she said: this good

which I behold and cannot expect to get is truly very agreeable to me,

and though I cannot will it nor hope for it, yet so my affection

stands, that if I could will or desire it, I would desire and will it

gladly.

In brief, these wishings or velleities are nothing else but a little

love, which may be called love of simple approbation, because the soul

approves the good she knows, and being unable to effectually desire she

protests she would willingly desire it, and that it is truly to be

desired.

Nor is this all, Theotimus, for there are desires and velleities which

are yet more imperfect than those we have spoken of, forasmuch as their

motions are not stayed by reason of impossibility or extreme

difficulty, but by their incompatibility with other more powerful

desires or willings; as when a sick man desires to eat mushrooms or

melons;--though he may have them at his order, yet he will not eat

them, fearing thereby to make himself worse; for who sees not that

there are two desires in this man, the one to eat mushrooms, the other

to be cured? But because the desire of being cured is the stronger, it

blocks up and suffocates the other and hinders it from producing any

effect. Jephte wished to preserve his daughter, but this not being

compatible with his desire to keep his vow, he willed what he did not

wish, namely, to sacrifice his daughter, and wished what he did not

will, namely, to preserve his daughter. Pilate and Herod wished, the

one to deliver our Saviour, the other his precursor: but because these

wishes were incompatible with the desires, the one to please the Jews

and C�sar, the other, Herodias and her daughter, these wishes were vain

and fruitless. Now in proportion as those things which are incompatible

with our wishes are less desirable, the wishes are more imperfect,

since they are stopped and, as it were, stifled by contraries so weak.

Thus the wish which Herod had not to behead S. John was more imperfect

than that of Pilate to free our Saviour. For the latter feared the

calumny and indignation of the people and of C�sar; the other feared to

disappoint one woman alone.

And these wishes which are hindered, not by impossibility, but by

incompatibility with stronger desires, are called indeed wishes and

desires, but vain, stifled and unprofitable ones. As to wishes of

things impossible, we say: I wish, but cannot; and of the wishes of

possible things we say: I wish, but will not.

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CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT KIND OF AFFINITY (CONVENANCE) IT IS WHICH EXCITES LOVE.

We say the eye sees, the ear hears, the tongue speaks, the

understanding reasons, the memory remembers, the will loves: but still

we know well that it is the man, to speak properly, who by divers

faculties and different organs works all this variety of operations.

Man also then it is who by the affective faculty named the will tends

to and pleases himself in good, and who has for it that great affinity

which is the source and origin of love. Now they have made a mistake

who have believed that resemblance is the only affinity which produces

love. For who knows not that the most sensible old men tenderly and

dearly love little children, and are reciprocally loved by them; that

the wise love the ignorant, provided they are docile, and the sick

their physicians. And if we may draw any argument from the image of

love which is found in things without sense, what resemblance can draw

the iron towards the loadstone? Has not one loadstone more resemblance

with another or with another stone, than with iron which is of a

totally different species? And though some, to reduce all affinities to

resemblance, assure us that iron draws iron and the loadstone the

loadstone, yet they are unable to explain why the loadstone draws iron

more powerfully than iron does iron itself. But I pray you what

similitude is there between lime and water? or between water and a

sponge? and yet both of them drink water with a quenchless desire,

testifying an excessive insensible love towards it. Now it is the same

in human love; for sometimes it takes more strongly amongst persons of

contrary qualities, than among those who are very like. The affinity

then which causes love does not always consist in resemblance, but in

the proportion, relation or correspondence between the lover and the

thing loved. For thus it is not resemblance which makes the doctor dear

to the sick man, but a correspondence of the one's necessity with the

other's sufficiency, in that the one can afford the assistance which

the other stands in need of: as again the doctor loves the sick man,

and the master his apprentice because they can exercise their powers on

them. The old man loves children, not by sympathy, but because the

great simplicity, feebleness and tenderness of the one exalts and makes

more apparent the prudence and stability of the other, and this

dissimilitude is agreeable. On the other hand, children love old men

because they see them busy and careful about them, and by secret

instinct they perceive they have need of their direction. Musical

concord consists in a kind of discord, in which unlike voices

correspond, making up altogether one single multiplex proportion, as

the unlikeness of precious stones and flowers makes the agreeable

composition of enamel and diapry. Thus love is not caused always by

resemblance and sympathy, but by correspondence and proportion, which

consists in this that by the union of one thing to another they

mutually receive one another's perfection, and so become better. The

head certainly does not resemble the body, nor the hand the arm, yet

they have such a correspondence and join so naturally together that by

their conjunction they excellently perfect one the other. Wherefore, if

these parts had each one a distinct soul they would have a perfect

mutual love, not by resemblance, for they have none, but by their

correspondence towards a mutual perfection. For this cause the

melancholy and the joyous, the sour and the sweet, have often a

correspondence of affection, by reason of the mutual impressions which

they receive one of another by which their humours are reciprocally

moderated.

But when this mutual correspondence is joined with resemblance, love

without doubt is engendered much more efficaciously; for resemblance

being the true image of unity, when two like things are united by a

proportion to the same end it seems rather to be unity than union.

The affinity then of the lover and the thing loved is the first source

of love, and this affinity consists in correspondence, which is nothing

else than a mutual relation, which makes things apt to unite in order

to communicate to one another some perfection. But this will be

understood better in the progress of our discourse.

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CHAPTER IX.

THAT LOVE TENDS TO UNION.

The great Solomon describes, in an admirably delicious manner, the

loves of the Saviour and the devout soul, in that divine work which for

its excellent sweetness is named the Canticle of Canticles. And to

raise ourselves by a more easy flight to the consideration of this

spiritual love which is exercised between God and us by the

correspondence of the movements of our hearts with the inspirations of

his divine majesty, he makes use of a perpetual representation of the

loves of a chaste shepherd and a modest shepherdess. Now making the

spouse or bride begin first by manner of a certain surprise of love, he

first puts into her mouth this ejaculation: Let him kiss me with the

kiss of his mouth. [30] Notice, Theotimus, how the soul, in the person

of this shepherdess, has but the one aim, in the first expression of

her desire, of a chaste union with her spouse, protesting that it is

the only end of her ambition and the only thing she aspires after; for,

I pray you, what other thing would this first sigh intimate? Let him

kiss me with the kiss of his mouth.

A kiss from all ages as by natural instinct has been employed to

represent perfect love, that is, the union of hearts, and not without

cause: we express and make known our passions and the movements which

our souls have in common with the animals, by our eyes, eyebrows,

forehead and the rest of our countenance. Man is known by his look,

[31] says the Scripture, and Aristotle giving a reason why ordinarily

it is only the faces of great men that are portrayed,--it is, says he,

because the face shows what we are.

Yet we do not utter our discourse nor the thoughts which proceed from

the spiritual portion of our soul, which we call reason, and by which

we are distinguished from beasts, except by words, and consequently by

help of the mouth; insomuch that to pour out our soul and open out our

heart is nothing else but to speak. Pour out your hearts before God,

[32] says the Psalmist, that is, express and turn the affections of

your hearts into words. And Samuel's pious mother pronouncing her

prayers so softly that one could hardly discern the motion of her lips:

I have poured out my soul before the Lord, [33] said she. And thus one

mouth is applied to another in kissing to testify that we would desire

to pour out one soul into the other, to unite them reciprocally in a

perfect union. For this reason, at all times and amongst the most

saintly men the world has had, the kiss has been a sign of love and

affection, and such use was universally made of it amongst the ancient

Christians as the great S. Paul testifies, when, writing to the Romans

and Corinthians, he says, Salute one another in a holy kiss. [34] And

as many declare, Judas in betraying Our Saviour made use of a kiss to

manifest him, because this divine Saviour was accustomed to kiss his

disciples when he met them; and not only his disciples but even little

children, whom he took lovingly in his arms; as he did him by whose

example he so solemnly invited his disciples to the love of their

neighbour, whom many think to have been S. Martial, as the Bishop

Jansenius [35] says.

Thus then the kiss being a lively mark of the union of hearts, the

spouse who has no other aim in all her endeavours than to be united to

her beloved, Let him kiss me, says she, with the kiss of his mouth; as

if she cried out:--so many sighs and inflamed darts which my love

throws out will they never impetrate that which my soul desires? I

run--Ah! shall I never gain the prize towards which I urge myself,

which is to be united heart to heart, spirit to spirit, to my God, my

spouse my life? When will the hour come in which I shall pour my soul

into his heart, and he will pour his heart into my soul, and thus

happily united we shall live inseparable.

When the Holy Ghost would express a perfect love, he almost always

employs words expressing union or conjunction. And the multitude of

believers, says S. Luke, had but one heart and one soul. [36] Our

Saviour prayed for all the faithful that they all may be one. [37] S.

Paul warns us to be careful to preserve the unity of the spirit in the

bond of peace." [38] These unities of heart, of soul, and of spirit

signify the perfection of love which joins many souls in one. So it is

said that Jonathan's soul was knit to David's, that is to say, as the

Scripture adds, He loved him as his own soul.1 [39] The great Apostle

of France (S. Denis) as well according to his own sentiment as when

giving that of his Hierotheus, writes a hundred times, I think, in a

single chapter of the De Nominibus Divinis, that love is unifying,

uniting, drawing together, embracing, collecting and bringing all

things to unity! S. Gregory Nazianzen and S. Augustine say that their

friends and they had but one soul, and Aristotle approving already in

his time this manner of speech: "When," says he, "we would express how

much we love our friends, we say his and my soul is but one." Hatred

separates us, and love brings us into one. The end then of love is no

other thing than the union of the lover and the thing loved.

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[30] Cant. i. 1.

[31] Eccli. xix. 26.

[32] lxi. 9.

[33] 1 Kings i. 15.

[34] Rom. xvi. 16; 1 Cor. xvi. 20.

[35] Of Ghent, uncle of the heretic, but himself an orthodox and

esteemed writer. (Tr.)

[36] Acts iv. 32.

[37] John xvii. 21.

[38] Eph. iv. 3.

[39] Kings xviii. 1.

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CHAPTER X.

THAT THE UNION TO WHICH LOVE ASPIRES IS SPIRITUAL.

We must, however, take notice that there are natural unions, as those

of similitude, consanguinity, and of cause and effect; and others which

not being natural may be termed voluntary; for though they be according

to Nature yet they are only made at our will: like that union which

takes its origin from benefits--which undoubtedly unite him that

receives them to the giver,--that of conversation, society and the

like. Now natural union produces love, and the love which it produces

inclines us to another and voluntary union, perfecting the natural.

Thus the father and son, the mother and daughter, or two brothers,

being joined in a natural union by the participation of the same blood,

are excited by this union to love, and by love are borne towards a

union of will and spirit which may be called voluntary, because

although its foundation is natural, yet is its action deliberate. In

these loves produced by natural union we need look for no other

affinity than the union itself, by which Nature preventing the will,

obliges it to approve, to love, and to perfect the union it has already

made. But as to voluntary unions, which follow love, love is indeed

their effective cause, but they are its final cause, as being the only

end and aim of love. So that as love tends to union, even so union very

often extends and augments love: for love makes us seek the society of

the beloved, and this often nourishes and increases love; love causes a

desire of nuptial union, and this union reciprocally preserves and

increases love, so that in every sense it is true that love tends to

union.

But to what kind of union does it tend? Did you not note, Theotimus,

that the sacred spouse expressed her desire of being united to her

spouse by the kiss, and that the kiss represents the spiritual union

which is caused by the reciprocal communication of souls? It is indeed

the man who loves, but he loves by his will, and therefore the end of

his love is of the nature of his will: but his will is spiritual, and

consequently the union which love aims at is spiritual also, and so

much the more because the heart, which is the seat and source of love,

would not only not be perfected by union with corporal things, but

would be degraded.

It will not hence be inferred that there are not certain passions in

man which, as mistleto comes on trees by manner of excrescence and

over-growth, sprout up indeed amongst and about love. Nevertheless they

are neither love, nor any part of love, but excrescences and

superfluities thereof, which are so far from being suited to maintain

or perfect love, that on the contrary they greatly harm it, weaken it,

and at last, if they be not cut away, utterly ruin it: and here is the

reason.

In proportion to the number of operations to which the soul applies

herself (whether of the same or of a different kind) she does them less

perfectly and vigorously: because being finite, her active virtue is

also finite, so that furnishing her activity to divers operations it is

necessary that each one of them have less thereof. Thus a man attentive

to several things is less attentive to each of them: we cannot quietly

consider a person's features with our sight, and at the same time give

an exact hearing to the harmony of a grand piece of music, nor at the

same instant be attentive to figure and to colour: if we are talking

earnestly, we cannot attend to anything else.

I am not ignorant of what is said concerning Caesar nor incredulous

about what so many great persons testify of Origen,--that they could

apply their attention at the same time to several objects; yet every

one confesses that according to the measure they applied it to more

objects it became less for each one of them. There is then a difference

between seeing, hearing and understanding more, and seeing, hearing,

and understanding better, for he that sees better, sees less, and he

that sees more, sees not so well: it is rare for those who know much to

know well what they know, because the virtue and force of the

understanding being scattered upon the knowledge of divers things is

less strong and vigorous than when it is restrained to the

consideration of one only object. Hence it is that when the soul

employs her forces in divers operations of love, the action so divided

is less vigorous and perfect. We have three sorts of actions of love,

the spiritual, the reasonable, and the sensitive; when love exerts its

forces through all these three operations, doubtless it is more

extended but less intense, but when through one operation only, it is

more intense though less extended. Do we not see that fire, the symbol

of love, forced to make its way out by the mouth of the cannon alone,

makes a prodigious flash, which would have been much less if it had

found vent by two or three passages? Since then love is an act of our

will, he that desires to have it, not only noble and generous, but also

very vigorous and active, must contain the virtue and force of it

within the limits of spiritual operations, for he that would apply it

to the operations of the sensible or sensitive part of our soul, would

so far forth weaken the intellectual operations, in which essential

love consists.

The ancient philosophers have recognized that there are two sorts of

ecstasies of which the one raises us above ourselves, the other

degrades us below ourselves: as though they would say that man was of a

nature between angels and beasts: in his intellectual part sharing the

angelical nature, and in his sensitive the nature of beasts; and yet

that he could by the acts of his life and by a continual attention to

himself, deliver and emancipate himself from this mean condition, and

habituating himself much to intellectual actions might bring himself

nearer to the nature of angels than of beasts. If however he did much

apply himself to sensible actions, he descended from his middle state

and approached that of beasts: and because an ecstasy is no other thing

than a going out of oneself, whether one go upwards or downwards he is

truly in an ecstasy. Those then who, touched with intellectual and

divine pleasures, let their hearts be carried away by those feelings,

are truly out of themselves, that is, above the condition of their

nature, but by a blessed and desirable out-going, by which entering

into a more noble and eminent estate, they are as much angels by the

operation of their soul as men by the substance of their nature, and

are either to be called human angels or angelic men. On the contrary,

those who, allured by sensual pleasures give themselves over to the

enjoying of them, descend from their middle condition to the lowest of

brute beasts, and deserve as much to be called brutal by their

operations as men by nature: miserable in thus going out of themselves

only to enter into a condition infinitely unworthy of their natural

state.

Now according as the ecstasy is greater, either above us or below us,

by so much more it hinders the soul from returning to itself, and from

doing operations contrary to the ecstasy in which it is. So those

angelic men who are ravished in God and heavenly things, lose

altogether, as long as their ecstasy lasts, the use and attention of

the senses, movement, and all exterior actions, because their soul, in

order to apply its power and activity more entirely and attentively to

that divine object, retires and withdraws them from all its other

faculties, to turn them in that direction. And in like manner brutish

men give up all the use of their reason and understanding to bury

themselves in sensual pleasure. The first mystically imitate Elias

taken up in the fiery chariot amid the angels: the others

Nabuchodonosor brutalized and debased to the rank of savage beasts.

Now I say that when the soul practises love by actions which are

sensual, and which carry her below herself, it is impossible that

thereby the exercise of her superior love, should not be so much the

more weakened. So that true and essential love is so far from being

aided and preserved by the union to which sensual love tends, that it

is impaired, dissipated and ruined by it. Job's oxen ploughed the

ground, while the useless asses fed by them, eating the pasture due to

the labouring oxen. While the intellectual part of our soul is employed

in honest and virtuous love of some worthy object, it comes to pass

oftentimes that the senses and faculties of the inferior part tend to

the union which they are adapted to, and which is their pasture, though

union only belongs to the heart and to the spirit, which also is alone

able to produce true and substantial love.

Eliseus having cured Naaman the Syrian was satisfied with having done

him a service, and refused his gold, his silver and the goods he

offered him, but his faithless servant Giezi, running after him,

demanded and took, against his master's pleasure, that which he had

refused. Intellectual and cordial love, which certainly either is or

should be master in our heart, refuses all sorts of corporal and

sensible unions, and is contented with goodwill only, but the powers of

the sensitive part, which are or should be the handmaids of the spirit,

demand, seek after and take that which reason refused, and without

leave make after their abject and servile love, dishonouring, like

Giezi, the purity of the intention of their master, the spirit. And in

proportion as the soul turns herself to such gross and sensible unions,

so far does she divert herself from the delicate, intellectual and

cordial union.

You see then plainly, Theotimus, that these unions which tend to animal

complacency and passions are so far from producing or preserving love

that they greatly hurt it and render it extremely weak.

Basil, rosemary, marigold, hyssop, cloves, chamomile, nutmeg, lemon,

and musk, put together and incorporated, yield a truly delightful odour

by the mixture of their good perfume; yet not nearly so much as does

the water which is distilled from them, in which the sweets of all

these ingredients separated from their bodies are mingled in a much

more excellent manner, uniting in a most perfect scent, which

penetrates the sense of smelling far more strongly than it would do if

with it and its water the bodies of the ingredients were found mingled

and united. So love may be found in the unions proper to the sensual

powers, mixed with the unions of intellectual powers, but never so

excellently as when the spirits and souls alone, separated from all

corporeal affections but united together, make love pure and spiritual.

For the scent of affections thus mingled is not only sweeter and

better, but more lively, more active and more essential.

True it is that many having gross, earthly and vile hearts rate the

value of love like that of gold pieces, the most massive of which are

the best, and most current; for so their idea is that brutish love is

more strong, because it is more violent and turbulent, more solid,

because more gross and terrene, greater, because more sensible and

fierce:--but on the contrary, love is like fire, which is of clearer

and fairer flame as its matter is more delicate, which cannot be more

quickly extinguished than by beating it down and covering it with

earth; for, in like manner, by how much more exalted and spiritual the

subject of love is, by so much its actions are more lively, subsistent

and permanent: nor is there a more easy way to ruin love than to debase

it to vile and earthly unions. "There is this difference," says S.

Gregory, "between spiritual and corporal pleasures, that corporal ones

beget a desire before we obtain them, and a disgust when we have

obtained them; but spiritual ones, on the contrary, are not cared for

when we have them not, but are desired when we have them."

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CHAPTER XI.

THAT THERE ARE TWO PORTIONS IN THE SOUL, AND HOW.

We have but one soul, Theotimus, and an indivisible one; but in that

one soul there are various degrees of perfection, for it is living,

sensible and reasonable; and according to these different degrees it

has also different properties and inclinations by which it is moved to

the avoidance or to the acceptance of things. For first, as we see that

the vine hates, so to speak and avoids the cabbage, so that the one is

pernicious to the other; and, on the contrary, is delighted in the

olive:--so we perceive a natural opposition between man and the

serpent, so great that a man's fasting spittle is mortal to the

serpent: on the contrary, man and the sheep have a wondrous affinity,

and are agreeable one to the other. Now this inclination does not

proceed from any knowledge that the one has of the hurtfulness of its

contrary, or of the advantage of the one with which it has affinity,

but only from a certain occult and secret quality which produces this

insensible opposition and antipathy, or this complacency and sympathy.

Secondly, we have in us the sensitive appetite, whereby we are moved to

the seeking and avoiding many things by the sensitive knowledge we have

of them; not unlike to the animals, some of which have an appetite to

one thing, some to another, according to the knowledge which they have

that it suits them or not. In this appetite resides, or from it

proceeds, the love which we call sensual or brutish, which yet properly

speaking ought not to be termed love but simply appetite.

Thirdly, inasmuch as we are reasonable, we have a will, by which we are

led to seek after good, according as by reasoning we know or judge it

to be such. Now in our soul, taken as reasonable, we manifestly observe

two degrees of perfection, which the great S. Augustine, and after him

all the doctors, have named two portions of the soul, inferior and

superior. That is called inferior which reasons and draws conclusions

according to what it learns and experiences by the senses; and that is

called superior, which reasons and draws conclusions according to an

intellectual knowledge not grounded upon the experience of sense, but

on the discernment and judgment of the spirit. This superior part is

called the spirit and mental part of the soul, as the inferior is

termed commonly, sense, feeling, and human reason.

Now this superior part can reason according to two sorts of lights;

either according to natural light, as the philosophers and all those

who have reasoned by science did; or according to supernatural light,

as do theologians and Christians, since they establish their reasoning

upon faith and the revealed word of God, and still more especially

those whose spirit is conducted by particular illustrations,

inspirations, and heavenly motions. This is what S. Augustine said,

namely, that it is by the superior portion of the soul that we adhere

and apply ourselves to the observance of the eternal law.

Jacob, pressed by the extreme necessity of his family, let Benjamin be

taken by his brethren into Egypt, which yet he did against his will, as

the sacred History witnesses. In this he shows two wills, the one

inferior, by which he grieved at sending him, the other superior, by

which he took the resolution to part with him. For the reason which

moved him to disapprove his departure was grounded on the pleasure

which he felt in his presence and the pain he would feel in his

absence, which are grounds that touch the senses and the feelings, but

the resolution which he took to send him, was grounded upon the reason

of the state of his family, from his foreseeing future and imminent

necessities. Abraham, according to the inferior portion of his soul

spoke words testifying in him a kind of diffidence when the angel

announced unto him the happy tidings of a son. Shall a son, thinkest

thou, be born to him that is a hundred years old? [40] but according,

to his superior part he believed in God and it was reputed to him unto

justice. [41] According to his inferior part, doubtless he was in great

anguish when he was commanded to sacrifice his son: but according to

his superior part he resolved courageously to sacrifice him.

We also daily experience in ourselves various contrary wills. A father

sending his son either to court or to his studies, does not deny tears

to his departure, testifying, that though according to his superior

part, for the child's advancement in virtue, he wills his departure,

yet according to his inferior part he has a repugnance to the

separation. Again, though a girl be married to the contentment of her

father and mother, yet when she takes their blessing she excites their

tears, in such sort that though the superior will acquiesces in the

departure, yet the inferior shows resistance. We must not hence infer

that a man has two souls or two natures, as the Manicheans dreamed. No,

says S. Augustine, in the 8th book, 10th chapter, of his Confessions,

"but the will inticed by different baits, moved by different reasons,

seems to be divided in itself while it is pulled two ways, until,

making use of its liberty, it chooses the one or the other: for then

the more efficacious will conquers, and gaining the day, leaves in the

soul the feeling of the evil that the struggle caused her, which we

call reluctance (contrecoeur)."

But the example of our Saviour is admirable in this point, and being

considered it leaves no further doubt touching the distinction of the

superior and inferior part of the soul. For who amongst theologians

knows not that he was perfectly glorious from the instant of his

conception in his virgin-mother's womb, and yet at the same time he was

subject to sadness, grief, and afflictions of heart. Nor must we say he

suffered only in the body, or only in the soul as sensitive, or, which

is the same thing, according to sense: for he attests himself that

before he suffered any exterior torment, or saw the tormentors near

him, his soul was sorrowful even unto death. For which cause he prayed

that the cup of his passion might pass away from him, that is, that he

might be excused from drinking it; in which he manifestly shows the

desire of the inferior portion of his soul; which, dwelling upon the

sad and agonizing objects of the passion which was prepared for him

(the lively image whereof was represented to his imagination), he

desired, by a most reasonable consequence, the deliverance and escape

from them, which he begs from his Father. By this we clearly see that

the inferior part of the soul is not the same thing as the sensitive

degree of it, nor the inferior will the same with the sensitive

appetite; for neither the sensitive appetite, nor the soul insomuch as

it is sensitive, is capable of making any demand or prayer, these being

acts of the reasonable power; and they are, specially, incapable of

speaking to God, an object which the senses cannot reach, so as to make

it known to the appetite. But the same Saviour, having thus exercised

the inferior part, and testified that according to it and its

considerations his will inclined to the avoidance of the griefs and

pains, showed afterwards that he had the superior part, by which

inviolably adhering to the eternal will, and to the decree made by his

heavenly Father, he willingly accepted death, and in spite of the

repugnance of the inferior part of reason, he said: Ah! no, my Father,

not my will, but thine be done. When he says my will, he speaks of his

will according to the inferior portion, and inasmuch an he says it

voluntarily, he shows that he has a superior will.

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[40] Gen. xvii. 17.

[41] Ib. xv. 6.

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CHAPTER XII.

THAT IN THESE TWO PORTIONS OF THE SOUL THERE ARE FOUR DIFFERENT DEGREES

OF REASON.

There were three courts in Solomon's temple. One was for the Gentiles

and strangers who, wishing to have recourse to God, went to adore in

Jerusalem; the second for the Israelites, men and women (the separation

of men from women not being made by Solomon); the third for the priests

and Levites; and in fine, besides all this, there was the sanctuary or

sacred house, which was open to the high priest only, and that but once

a year. Our reason, or, to speak better, our soul in so far as it is

reasonable, is the true temple of the great God, who there takes up his

chief residence. "I sought thee," says S. Augustine, "outside myself,

but I found thee not, because thou art within me." In this mystical

temple there are also three courts, which are three different degrees

of reason; in the first we reason according to the experience of sense,

in the second according to human sciences, in the third according to

faith: and in fine, beyond this, there is a certain eminence or supreme

point of the reason and spiritual faculty, which is not guided by the

light of argument or reasoning, but by a simple view of the

understanding and a simple movement of the will, by which the spirit

bends and submits to the truth and the will of God.

Now this extremity and summit of our soul, this highest point of our

spirit, is very naturally represented by the sanctuary or holy place.

For, first, in the sanctuary there were no windows to give light: in

this degree of the soul there is no reasoning which illuminates.

Secondly, all the light entered by the door; in this degree of the soul

nothing enters but by faith, which produces, like rays, the sight and

the sentiment of the beauty and goodness of the good pleasure of God.

Thirdly, none entered the sanctuary save the high priest; in this apex

of the soul reasoning enters not, but only the high, universal and

sovereign feeling that the divine will ought sovereignly to be loved,

approved and embraced, not only in some particular things but in

general for all things, nor generally in all things only, but also

particularly in each thing. Fourthly, the high priest entering into the

sanctuary obscured even that light which came by the door, putting many

perfumes into his thurible, the smoke whereof drove back the rays of

light to which the open door gave entrance: and all the light which is

in the supreme part of the soul is in some sort obscured and veiled by

the renunciations and resignations which the soul makes, not desiring

so much to behold and see the goodness of the truth and the truth of

the goodness presented to her, as to embrace and adore the same, so

that the soul would almost wish to shut her eyes as soon as she begins

to see the dignity of God's will, to the end that not occupying herself

further in considering it, she may more powerfully and perfectly accept

it, and by an absolute complacency perfectly unite and submit herself

thereto. Fifthly, to conclude, in the sanctuary was kept the ark of

alliance, and in that, or at least adjoining to it, the tables of the

law, manna in a golden vessel, and Aaron's rod which in one night bore

flowers and fruit: and in this highest point of the soul are found: 1.

The light of faith, figured by the manna hidden in its vessel, by which

we acquiesce in the truths of the mysteries which we do not

understand. 2. The utility of hope, represented by Aaron's flowering

and fruitful rod, by which we acquiesce in the promises of the goods

which we see not. 3. The sweetness of holy charity, represented by

God's commandments which charity contains, by which we acquiesce in the

union of our spirit with God's, which we scarcely perceive.

For although faith, hope and charity spread out their divine movements

into almost all the faculties of the soul, as well reasonable as

sensitive, reducing and holily subjecting them to their just authority,

yet their special residence, their true and natural dwelling, is in

this supreme region of the soul, from whence as from a happy source of

living water, they run out by divers conduits and brooks upon the

inferior parts and faculties.

So that, Theotimus, in the superior part of reason there are two

degrees of reason. In the one those discourses are made which depend on

faith and supernatural light, in the other the simple acquiescings of

faith, hope and charity. Saint Paul's soul found itself pressed by two

different desires, the one to be delivered from his body, so as to go

to heaven with Jesus Christ, the other to remain in this world to

labour in the conversion of souls; both these desires were without

doubt in the superior part, for they both proceeded from charity, but

his resolution to follow the latter proceeded not from reasoning but

from a simple sight, seeing and loving his master's will, in which the

superior point alone of the spirit acquiesced, putting on one side all

that reasoning might conclude.

But if faith, hope and charity be formed by this holy acquiescence in

the point of the spirit, how can reasonings which depend on the light

of faith be made in the inferior part of the soul? As, Theotimus, we

see that barristers dispute with many arguments on the acts and rights

of parties to a suit, and that the high parliament or senate settles

all the strife by a positive sentence, though even after this is

pronounced the advocates and auditors do not give up discoursing among

themselves the motives parliament may have had:--even so, after

reasoning, and above all the grace of God have persuaded the point and

highest part of the spirit to acquiesce, and make the act of faith

after the manner of a sentence or judgment, the understanding does not

at once cease discoursing upon that same act of faith already

conceived, to consider the motives and reasons thereof. But always the

arguments of theology are stated at the pleading place and bar of the

superior portion of the soul, but the acquiescence is given above, on

the bench and tribunal of the point of the spirit. Now, because the

knowledge of these four degrees of the reason is much required for

understanding all treatises on spiritual things, I have thought well to

explain it rather fully.

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CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE DIFFERENCE OF LOVES.

Love is divided into two species, whereof one is called love of

benevolence (or goodwill) the other of cupidity (convoitise). The love

of cupidity is that by which we love something for the profit we expect

from it. Love of benevolence is that by which we love a thing for its

own good. For what other thing is it to have the love of benevolence

for any one than to wish him good.

If he to whom we wish good have it already and possesses it, then we

wish it him by the pleasure and contentment which we have to see him

possessed of it, and hence springs the love of complacency, which is

simply an act of the will by which it is joined and united to the

pleasure, content and good of another. But in case he to whom we wish

good have not yet obtained it we desire it him, and hence that love is

termed love of desire.

When the love of benevolence is exercised without correspondence on the

part of the beloved, it is called the love of simple benevolence; but

when it is practised with mutual correspondence, it is called the love

of friendship. Now mutual correspondence consists in three things;

friends must love one another, know that they love one another, and

have communication, intimacy and familiarity with one another.

If we love a friend without preferring him before others, the

friendship is simple; if we prefer him, then this friendship will be

called dilection, as if we said love of election, because we choose

this from amongst many things we love, and prefer it.

Again, when by this dilection we do not much prefer one friend before

others it is called simple dilection, but when, on the contrary, we

much more esteem and greatly prefer one friend before others of his

kind, then this friendship is called dilection by excellence.

If the esteem and preference of our friend, though great and without

equal, do yet enter into comparison and proportion with others, the

friendship will be called eminent dilection, but if the eminence of it

be, beyond proportion and comparison, above every other, then it is

graced with the title of incomparable, sovereign and supereminent

dilection, and in a word it will be charity, which is due to the one

God only. And indeed in our language the words cher, cherement,

encherir, [42] represent a certain particular esteem, prize or value,

so that as amongst the people the word man is almost appropriated to

the male-kind as to the more excellent sex, and the word adoration is

almost exclusively kept for God as for its proper object, so the name

of Charity has been kept for the love of God as for supreme and

sovereign dilection.

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[42] Meaning dear, dearly, to endear. The Saint's argument cannot be

given in English. It rests on the connection between cher and charit�,

like the Latin carus and caritas. (Tr.)

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CHAPTER XIV.

THAT CHARITY MAY BE NAMED LOVE.

Origin says somewhere [43] that in his opinion the Divine Scripture

wishing to hinder the word love from giving occasion of evil thoughts

to the weak, as being more proper to signify a carnal passion than a

spiritual affection, instead of this name of love has used the words

charity and dilection, which are more honest. But S. Augustine having

deeply weighed the use of God's word clearly shows that the name love

is no less sacred than the word dilection, and that the one and the

other signify sometimes a holy affection and sometimes also a depraved

passion, alleging to this purpose different passages of Holy Scripture.

But the great S. Denis, as excelling doctor of the proper use of the

divine names, goes much further in favour of the word love, teaching

that theologians, that is, the Apostles and their first disciples (for

this saint knew no other theologians) to disabuse the common people,

and break down their error in taking the word love in a profane and

carnal sense, more willingly employed it in divine things than that of

dilection; and, though they considered that both might be used for the

same thing, yet some of them were of opinion that the word love was

more proper and suitable to God than the word dilection. Hence the

divine Ignatius wrote these words: "My love is crucified." And as these

ancient theologians made use of the word love in divine things to free

it from the taint of impurity of which it was suspected according to

the imagination of the world, so to express human affections they liked

to use the word dilection as exempt from all suspicion of impropriety.

Wherefore one of them, as S. Denis reports, said: "Thy dilection has

entered into my soul like the dilection of women." [44] In fine the

word love signifies more fervour, efficacy, and activity than that of

dilection, so that amongst the Latins dilection is much less

significative than love: "Clodius," says their great orator, "bears me

dilection, and to say it more excellently, he loves me." Therefore the

word love, as the most excellent, has justly been given to charity, as

to the chief and most eminent of all loves; so that for all these

reasons, and because I intend to speak of the acts of charity rather

than of its habit, I have entitled this little work, A Treatise of the

Love of God.

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[43] Hom. I. in Can.

[44] De Div. Nom. iv. � 12. The reference, of course, is to 2 Kings i.

26. S. Francis is careful to quote S. Denis, who used the Septuagint

text, agapesis. The Vulgate does not mark the difference. (Tr.)

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CHAPTER XV.

OF THE AFFINITY THERE IS BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

As soon as man thinks with even a little attention of the divinity, he

feels a certain delightful emotion of the heart, which testifies that

God is God of the human heart; and our understanding is never so filled

with pleasure as in this thought of the divinity, the smallest

knowledge of which, as says the prince of philosophers, is worth more

than the greatest knowledge of other things; as the least beam of the

sun is more luminous than the greatest of the moon or stars, yea is

more luminous than the moon and stars together. And if some accident

terrifies our heart, it immediately has recourse to the Divinity,

protesting thereby that when all other things fail him, It alone stands

his friend, and that when he is in peril, It only, as his sovereign

good, can save and secure him.

This pleasure, this confidence which man's heart naturally has in God,

can spring from no other root than the affinity there is between this

divine goodness and man's soul, a great but secret affinity, an

affinity which each one knows but few understand, an affinity which

cannot be denied nor yet be easily sounded. We are created to the image

and likeness of God:--what does this mean but that we have an extreme

affinity with his divine majesty?

Our soul is spiritual, indivisible, immortal; understands and wills

freely, is capable of judging, reasoning, knowing, and of having

virtues, in which it resembles God. It resides whole in the whole body,

and whole in every part thereof, as the divinity is all in all the

world, and all in every part thereof. Man knows and loves himself by

produced and expressed acts of his understanding and will, which

proceeding from the understanding and the will, and distinct from one

another, yet are and remain inseparably united in the soul, and in the

faculties from whence they proceed. So the Son proceeds from the Father

as his knowledge expressed, and the Holy Ghost as love breathed forth

and produced from the Father and the Son, both the Persons being

distinct from one another and from the Father, and yet inseparable and

united, or rather one same, sole, simple, and entirely one indivisible

divinity.

But besides this affinity of likenesses, there is an incomparable

correspondence between God and man, for their reciprocal perfection:

not that God can receive any perfection from man, but because as man

cannot be perfected but by the divine goodness, so the divine goodness

can scarcely so well exercise its perfection outside itself, as upon

our humanity: the one has great want and capacity to receive good, the

other great abundance and inclination to bestow it. Nothing is so

agreeable to poverty as a liberal abundance, nor to a liberal abundance

as a needy poverty, and by how much the good is more abundant, by so

much more strong is the inclination to pour forth and communicate

itself. By how much more the poor man is in want, so much the more

eager is he to receive, as a void is to fill itself. The meeting then

of abundance and indigence is most sweet and agreeable, and one could

scarcely have said whether the abounding good have a greater

contentment in spreading and communicating itself, or the failing and

needy good in receiving and in drawing to itself, until Our Saviour had

told us that it is more blessed to give than to receive. [45] Now where

there is more blessedness there is more satisfaction, and therefore the

divine goodness receives greater pleasure in giving than we in

receiving.

Mothers' breasts are sometimes so full that they must offer them to

some child, and though the child takes the breast with great avidity,

the nurse offers it still more eagerly, the child pressed by its

necessity, and the mother by her abundance.

The sacred spouse wished for the holy kiss of union: O, said she, let

him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth. [46] But is there affinity

enough, O well-beloved spouse of the well-beloved, between thee and thy

loving one to bring to the union which thou desirest? Yes, says she:

give me it; this kiss of union, O thou dear love of my heart: for thy

breasts are better than wine, smelling sweet of the best ointment. New

wine works and boils in itself by virtue of its goodness, and cannot be

contained within the casks; but thy breasts are yet better, they press

thee more strongly, and to draw the children of thy heart to them, they

spread a perfume attractive beyond all the scent of ointments. Thus,

Theotimus, our emptiness has need of the divine abundance by reason of

its want and necessity, but God's abundance has no need of our poverty

but by reason of the excellency of his perfection and goodness; a

goodness which is not at all bettered by communication, for it acquires

nothing in pouring itself out of itself, on the contrary it gives: but

our poverty would remain wanting and miserable, if it were not enriched

by the divine abundance.

Our soul then seeing that nothing can perfectly content her, and that

nothing the world can afford is able to fill her capacity, considering

that her understanding has an infinite inclination ever to know more,

and her will an insatiable appetite to love and find the good;--has she

not reason to cry out: Ah! I am not then made for this world, there is

a sovereign good on which I depend, some infinite workman who has

placed in me this endless desire of knowing, and this appetite which

cannot be appeased! And therefore I must tend and extend towards Him,

to unite and join myself to the goodness of Him to whom I belong and

whose I am! Such is the affinity between God and man's soul.

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[45] Acts xx. 35.

[46] Cant. i. 1.

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CHAPTER XVI.

THAT WE HAVE A NATURAL INCLINATION TO LOVE GOD ABOVE ALL THINGS.

If there could be found any men who were in the integrity of original

justice in which Adam was created, though otherwise not helped by

another assistance from God than that which he affords to each

creature, in order that it may be able to do the actions befitting its

nature, such men would not only have an inclination to love God above

all things but even naturally would be able to put into execution so

just an inclination. For as this heavenly author and master of nature

co-operates with and lends his strong hand to fire to spring on high,

to water to flow towards the sea, to earth to sink down to its centre

and stay there--so having himself planted in man's heart a special

natural inclination not only to love good in general but to love in

particular and above all things his divine goodness which is better and

sweeter than all things--the sweetness of his sovereign providence

required that he should contribute to these blessed men of whom we

speak as much help as should be necessary to practise and effectuate

that inclination. This help would be on the one hand natural, as being

suitable to nature, and tending to the love of God as author and

sovereign master of nature, and on the other hand it would be

supernatural, because it would correspond not with the simple nature of

man, but with nature adorned, enriched and honoured by original

justice, which is a supernatural quality proceeding from a most special

favour of God. But as to the love above all things which such help

would enable these men to practise, it would be called natural, because

virtuous actions take their names from their objects and motives, and

this love of which we speak would only tend to God as acknowledged to

be author, lord and sovereign of every creature by natural light only,

and consequently to be amiable and estimable above all things by

natural inclination and tendency.

And although now our human nature be not endowed with that original

soundness and righteousness which the first man had in his creation,

but on the contrary be greatly depraved by sin, yet still the holy

inclination to love God above all things stays with us, as also the

natural light by which we see his sovereign goodness to be more worthy

of love than all things; and it is impossible that one thinking

attentively upon God, yea even by natural reasoning only, should not

feel a certain movement of love which the secret inclination of our

nature excites in the bottom of our hearts, by which at the first

apprehension of this chief and sovereign object, the will is taken, and

perceives itself stirred up to a complacency in it.

It happens often amongst partridges that one steals away another's eggs

with intention to sit on them, whether moved by greediness to become a

mother, or by a stupidity which makes them mistake their own, and

behold a strange thing, yet well supported by testimony!--the young one

which was hatched and nourished under the wings of a stranger

partridge, at the first call of the true mother, who had laid the egg

whence she was hatched, quits the thief-partridge, goes back to the

first mother, and puts herself in her brood, from the correspondence

which she has with her first origin. Yet this correspondence appeared

not, but remained secret, shut up and as it were sleeping in the bottom

of nature, till it met with its object; when suddenly excited, and in a

sort awakened, it produces its effect, and turns the young partridge's

inclination to its first duty. It is the same, Theotimus, with our

heart, which though it be formed, nourished and bred amongst corporal,

base and transitory things, and in a manner under the wings of nature,

notwithstanding, at the first look it throws on God, at its first

knowledge of him, the natural and first inclination to love God which

was dull and imperceptible, awakes in an instant, and suddenly appears

as a spark from amongst the ashes, which touching our will gives it a

movement of the supreme love due to the sovereign and first principle

of all things.

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CHAPTER XVII.

THAT WE HAVE NOT NATURALLY THE POWER TO LOVE GOD ABOVE ALL THINGS.

Eagles have a great heart, and much strength of flight, yet they have

incomparably more sight than flight, and extend their vision much

quicker and further than their wings. So our souls animated with a holy

natural inclination towards the divinity, have far more light in the

understanding to see how lovable it is than force in the will to love

it. Sin has much more weakened man's will than darkened his intellect,

and the rebellion of the sensual appetite, which we call concupiscence,

does indeed disturb the understanding, but still it is against the will

that it principally stirs up sedition and revolt: so that the poor

will, already quite infirm, being shaken with the continual assaults

which concupiscence directs against it, cannot make so great progress

in divine love as reason and natural inclination suggest to it that it

should do.

Alas! Theotimus, what fine testimonies not only of a great knowledge of

God, but also of a strong inclination towards him, have been left by

those great philosophers, Socrates, Plato, Trismegistus, Aristotle,

Hippocrates, Seneca, Epictetus? Socrates, the most highly praised

amongst them, came to the clear knowledge of the unity of God, and felt

in himself such an inclination to love him, that as S. Augustine

testifies, many were of opinion that he never had any other aim in

teaching moral philosophy than to purify minds that they might better

contemplate the sovereign good, which is the simple unity of the

Divinity. And as for Plato, he sufficiently declares himself in his

definition of philosophy and of a philosopher; saying that to do the

part of a philosopher is nothing else but to love God, and that a

philosopher is no other thing than a lover of God. What shall I say of

the great Aristotle, who so efficaciously proves the unity of God and

has spoken so honourably of it in so many places?

But, O eternal God! those great spirits which had so great an

inclination to love it, were all wanting in force and courage to love

it well. By visible creatures they have known the invisible things of

God, yea even his eternal power also and divinity, says the Apostle, so

that they are inexcusable. Because that, when they knew God, they have

not glorified him as God, or given thanks. [47] They glorified him

indeed in some sort, attributing to him sovereign titles of honour, yet

they did not glorify him as they ought, that is, they did not glorify

him above all things; not having the courage to destroy idolatry, but

communicating with idolators, detaining the truth which they knew in

injustice, prisoner in their hearts, and preferring the honour and vain

repose of their lives before the honour due unto God, they grew vain in

their knowledge.

Is it not a great pity, Theotimus, to see Socrates, as Plato reports,

speak upon his deathbed concerning the gods as though there had been

many, he knowing so well that there was but one only? Is it not a thing

to be deplored that Plato who understood so clearly the truth of the

divine unity should ordain that sacrifice should be offered to many

gods? And is it not a lamentable thing that Mercury Trismegistus should

so basely lament and grieve over the abolition of idolatry, who on so

many occasions had spoken so worthily of the divinity? But above all I

wonder at the poor good man Epictetus, whose words and sentences are so

sweet in our tongue, in the translation which the learned and agreeable

pen of the R. F. D. John of S. Francis, Provincial of the Congregation

of the Feuillants in the Gauls, has recently put before us. For what a

pity it is, I pray you, to see this excellent philosopher speak of God

sometimes with such relish, feeling, and zeal that one would have taken

him for a Christian coming from some holy and profound meditation, and

yet again from time to time talking of gods after the Pagan manner!

Alas! this good man, who knew so well the unity of God, and had so much

delight in his goodness, why had he not the holy jealousy of the divine

honour, so as not to stumble or dissemble in a matter of so great

consequence?

In a word, Theotimus, our wretched nature spoilt by sin, is like

palm-trees in this land of ours, which indeed make some imperfect

productions and as it were experiments of fruits, but to bear entire,

ripe and seasoned dates--that is, reserved for hotter climates. For so

our human heart naturally produces certain beginnings of God's love,

but to proceed so far as to love him above all things, which is the

true ripeness of the love due unto this supreme goodness,--this belongs

only to hearts animated and assisted with heavenly grace, and which are

in the state of holy charity. This little imperfect love of which

nature by itself feels the stirrings, is but a will without will, a

will that would but wills not, a sterile will, which does not produce

true effects, a will sick of the palsy, which sees the healthful pond

of holy love, but has not the strength to throw itself into it. To

conclude, this will is an abortion of good will, which has not the life

of generous strength necessary to effectually prefer God before all

things. Whereupon the Apostle speaking in the person of the sinner,

cries out: To will good is present with me, but to accomplish that

which is good I find not. [48]

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[47] Rom. i. 20.

[48] Rom. vii. 18.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

THAT THE NATURAL INCLINATION WHICH WE HAVE TO LOVE GOD IS NOT USELESS.

But seeing we have not power naturally to love God above all things,

why have we naturally an inclination to it? Is not nature vain to

incite us to a love which she cannot bestow upon us? Why does she give

us a thirst for a precious water of which she cannot give us to drink?

Ah! Theotimus, how good God has been to us! The perfidy which we

committed in offending him deserved truly that he should have deprived

us of all the marks of his benevolence, and of the favour which he

deigned to our nature when he imprinted upon it the light of his divine

countenance, and gave to our hearts the joyfulness of feeling

themselves inclined to the love of the divine goodness: so that the

angels seeing this miserable man would have had occasion to say in

pity: Is this the creature of perfect beauty, the joy of all the earth?

[49]

But this infinite clemency could never be so rigorous to the work of

his hands; he saw that we were clothed with flesh a wind which goeth

and returneth not, [50] and therefore according to the bowels of his

mercy he would not utterly ruin us, nor deprive us of the sign of his

lost grace, in order that seeing this, and feeling in ourselves this

alliance, and this inclination to love him, we should strive to do so,

that no one might justly say: Who showeth us good things? [51] For

though by this sole natural inclination we cannot be so happy as to

love God as we ought, yet if we employed it faithfully, the sweetness

of the divine piety would afford us some assistance, by means of which

we might make progress, and if we second this first assistance the

paternal goodness of God would bestow upon us another greater, and

conduct us from good to better in all sweetness, till he brought us to

the sovereign love, to which our natural inclination impels us: since

it is certain that to him who is faithful in a little, and who does

what is in his power, the divine benignity never denies its assistance

to advance him more and more.

This natural inclination then which we have to love God above all

things is not left for nothing in our hearts: for on God's part it is a

handle by which he can hold us and draw us to himself;--and the divine

goodness seems in some sort by this impression to keep our hearts tied

as little birds in a string, by which he can draw us when it pleases

his mercy to take pity upon us--and on our part it is a mark and

memorial of our first principle and Creator, to whose love it moves us,

giving us a secret intimation that we belong to his divine goodness;

even as harts upon whom princes have had collars put with their arms,

though afterwards they cause them to be let loose and run at liberty in

the forest, do not fail to be recognized by any one who meets them not

only as having been once taken by the prince whose arms they bear, but

also as being still reserved for him. And in this way was known the

extreme old age of a hart which according to some historians was taken

three hundred years after the death of C�sar; because there was found

on him a collar with C�sar's device upon it, and these words: C�sar let

me go.

In truth the honourable inclination which God has left in our hearts

testifies as well to our friends as to our enemies that we did not only

sometime belong to our Creator, but furthermore, though he has left us

and let us go at the mercy of our free will, that we still appertain to

him, and that he has reserved the right of taking us again to himself,

to save us, according as his holy and sweet providence shall require.

Hence the royal prophet terms this inclination not only a light, in

that it makes us see whither we are to tend, but also a joy and

gladness, [52] for it comforts us when we stray, giving us a hope that

he who engraved and left in us this clear mark of our origin intends

also and desires to reduce and bring us back thither, if we be so happy

as to let ourselves be retaken by his divine goodness.

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[49] Lam. ii. 15.

[50] Ps. lxxvii. 39.

[51] Ps. iv. 6.

[52] Ibid. 7.

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THE SECOND BOOK.

THE HISTORY OF THE GENERATION AND HEAVENLY BIRTH OF DIVINE LOVE.

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CHAPTER I.

THAT THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS ARE ONLY A SINGLE BUT INFINITE PERFECTION.

When the sun rises red and soon after looks black, or hollow and sunk;

or again when it sets wan, pale, and dull, we say it is a sign of rain.

Theotimus, the sun is not red, nor black, nor grey, nor green: that

great luminary is not subject to these vicissitudes and changes of

colour, having for its sole colour its most clear and perpetual light

which, unless by miracle, is invariable. But we use this manner of

speaking, because it seems such to us, according to the variety of

vapours interposed between him and our eyes, which make him appear in

different ways.

In like manner we discourse of God, not so much according to what he is

in himself, as according to his works, by means of which we contemplate

him; for according to our various considerations we name him variously,

even as though he had a great multitude of different excellences and

perfections. If we regard him inasmuch as he punishes the wicked, we

term him just; if as he delivers sinners from their misery, we proclaim

him merciful; since he has created all things and done many wonders, we

name him omnipotent; as exactly fulfilling his promises we call him

true; as ranging all things in so goodly an order we call him most

wise; and thus, continuing and following the variety of his works, we

attribute unto him a great diversity of perfections. But, all the time,

in God there is neither variety, nor any difference whatever of

perfections. He is himself one most sole, most simple and most

indivisible, unique perfection: for all that is in him is but himself,

and all the excellences which we say are in him in so great diversity

are really there in a most simple and pure unity. And as the sun has

none of the colours which we ascribe unto it, but one sole most clear

light surpassing all colour, and giving colour to all colours,--so in

God there is not one of those perfections which we imagine, but an only

most pure excellence, which is above all perfection and gives

perfection to all that is perfect. Now to assign a perfect name to this

supreme excellence, which in its most singular unity comprehends, yea

surmounts, all excellence, is not within the reach of the creature,

whether human or angelic; for as is said in the Apocalypse: Our Lord

has a name which no man knoweth but himself: [53] because as he only

perfectly knows his own infinite perfection he also alone can express

it by a suitable name. Whence the ancients have said that no one but

God is a true theologian, as none but he can reach the full knowledge

of the infinite greatness of the divine perfection, nor, consequently,

represent it in words. And for this cause, God, answering by the angel

Samson's father who demanded his name, said: Why asketh thou my name

which is wonderful? [54] As though he had said: My name may be admired,

but never pronounced by creatures; it must be adored, but cannot be

comprehended save by me, who alone can pronounce the proper name by

which truly and to the life I express my excellence. Our thoughts are

too feeble to form a conception which should represent an excellence so

immense, which comprehends in its most simple and most sole perfection,

distinctly and perfectly, all other perfections in a manner infinitely

excellent and eminent, to which our thoughts cannot raise themselves.

We are forced, then, in order to speak in some way of God, to use a

great number of names, saying that he is good, wise, omnipotent, true,

just, holy, infinite, immortal, invisible;--and certainly we speak

truly; God is all this together, because he is more than all this, that

is to say, he is all this in so pure, so excellent and so exalted a

way, that in one most simple perfection he contains the virtue, vigour

and excellence of all perfection.

In the same way, the manna was one meat, which, containing in itself

the taste and virtue of all other meats, might have been said to have

the taste of the lemon, the melon, the grape, the plum and the pear.

Yet one might have said with still greater truth that it had not all

these tastes, but one only, which was its own proper one, but which

contained in its unity all that was agreeable and desirable in all the

diversity of other tastes: like the herb dodecatheos, which, says

Pliny, while curing all diseases, is nor rhubarb, nor senna, nor rose,

nor clove, nor bugloss, but one simple, which in its own proper

simplicity contains as much virtue as all other medicaments together. O

abyss of the divine perfections! How admirable art thou, to possess in

one only perfection the excellence of all perfection in so excellent a

manner that none can comprehend it but thyself!

We shall say much, says the Scripture, and yet shall want words: but

the sum of our words is: He is all. What shall we be able to do to

glorify him, for the Almighty himself is above all his works? The Lord

is terrible, and exceeding great, and his power is admirable. Glorify

the Lord as much as ever you can, for he will yet far exceed, and his

magnificence is wonderful. Blessing the Lord, exalt him as much as you

can: for he is above all praise. When you exalt him put forth all your

strength, and be not weary: for you can never go far enough. [55] No,

Theotimus, we can never comprehend him, since, as St. John says, he is

greater than our heart. [56] Nevertheless, let every spirit praise the

Lord, calling him by all the most eminent names which may be found, and

for the greatest praise we can render unto him let us confess that

never can he be sufficiently praised; and for the most excellent name

we can attribute unto him let us protest that his name surpasses all

names, nor can we worthily name him.

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[53] Apoc. xix. 12.

[54] Judges xiii. 18.

[55] Ecclus. xliii. 29

[56] 1 John iii. 20.

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CHAPTER II.

THAT IN GOD THERE IS BUT ONE ONLY ACT, WHICH IS HIS OWN DIVINITY.

There is in us great diversity of faculties and habits, which produce

also a great variety of actions, and those actions an incomparable

multitude of works. Thus differ the faculties of hearing, seeing,

tasting, touching, moving, feeding, understanding, willing; and the

habits of speaking, walking, playing, singing, sewing, leaping,

swimming: as also the actions and works which issue from these

faculties and habits are greatly different.

But it is not the same in God; for in him there is one only most simple

infinite perfection, and in that perfection one only most sole and most

pure act: yea to speak more holily and sagely, God is one unique and

most uniquely sovereign perfection, and this perfection is one sole

most purely simple and most simply pure act, which being no other thing

than the proper divine essence, is consequently ever permanent and

eternal. Nevertheless poor creatures that we are, we talk of God's

actions as though daily done in great number and variety, though we

know the contrary. But our weakness, Theotimus, forces us to this; for

our speech can but follow our understanding, and our understanding the

customary order of things with us. Now, as in natural things there is

hardly any diversity of works without diversity of actions, when we

behold so many different works, such great variety of productions, and

the innumerable multitude of the effects of the divine might, it seems

to us at first that this diversity is caused by as many acts as we see

different effects, and we speak of them in the same way, in order to

speak more at our ease, according to our ordinary practice and our

customary way of understanding things. And indeed we do not in this

violate truth, for though in God there is no multitude of actions, but

one sole act which is the divinity itself, yet this act is so perfect

that it comprehends by excellence the force and virtue of all the acts

which would seem requisite to the production of all the different

effects we see.

God spoke but one word, and in virtue of that in a moment were made the

sun, moon and that innumerable multitude of stars, with their

differences in brightness, motion and influence. He spoke and they were

made. [57] A single word of God's filled the air with birds, and the

sea with fishes, made spring from the earth all the plants and all the

beasts we see. For although the sacred historian, accommodating himself

to our fashion of understanding, recounts that God often repeated that

omnipotent word: Let there be: according to the days of the world's

creation, nevertheless, properly speaking, this word was singularly

one; so that David terms it a breathing or spirit of the divine mouth;

[58] that is, one single act of his infinite will, which so powerfully

spreads its virtue over the variety of created things, that it makes us

conceive this act as if it were multiplied and diversified into as many

differences as there are in these effects, though in reality it is most

simply and singularly one. Thus S. Chrysostom remarks that what Moses

said in many words describing the creation of the world, the glorious

S. John expressed in a single word, saying that by the word, that is by

that eternal word who is the Son of God, all things were made. [59]

This word then, Theotimus, whilst most simple and most single, produces

all the distinction of things; being invariable produces all fit

changes, and, in fine, being permanent in his eternity gives

succession, vicissitude, order, rank and season to all things.

Let us imagine, I pray you, on the one hand, a painter making a picture

of Our Saviour's birth (and I write this in the days dedicated to this

holy mystery). Doubtless he will give a thousand and a thousand touches

with his brush, and will take, not only days, but weeks and months, to

perfect this picture, according to the variety of persons and other

things he wants to represent in it. But on the other hand, let us look

at a printer of pictures, who having spread his sheet upon the plate

which has the same mystery of the Nativity cut in it, gives but a

single stroke of the press: in this one stroke, Theotimus, he will do

all his work, and instantly he will draw off a picture representing in

a fine engraving all that has been imagined, as sacred history records

it. Now though with one movement he performed the work, yet it contains

a great number of personages, and other different things, each one well

distinguished in its order, rank, place, distance and proportion: so

that one not acquainted with the secret would be astonished to see

proceed from one act so great a variety of effects. In the same way,

Theotimus, nature as a painter multiplies and diversifies her acts

according as the works she has in hand are various, and it takes her a

great time to finish great effects, but God, like the printer, has

given being to all the diversity of creatures which have been, are, or

shall be, by one only stroke of his omnipotent will. He draws from his

idea as from a well cut plate, this admirable difference of persons and

of things, which succeed one another in seasons, in ages, and in times,

each one in its order, as they were to be. For this sovereign unity of

the divine act is opposed to confusion and disorder, and not to

distinction and variety; these on the contrary it purposely uses, to

make beauty from them, by reducing all differences and diversities to

proportion, proportion to order, and order to the unity of the world,

which comprises all things created, visible and invisible. All these

together are called the universe, perhaps because all their diversity

is reduced to unity as though one said "unidiverse," that is, one and

diverse, one with diversity and diverse with unity.

To sum up, the sovereign divine unity diversifies all, and his

permanent eternity gives change to all things, because the perfection

of this unity being above all difference and variety, it has wherewith

to furnish all the diversities of created perfections with their

beings, and contains a virtue to produce them; in sign of which the

Scripture having told us that God in the beginning said: Let there be

lights made in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day and the

night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons and for days and

years, [60] --we see even to this day a perpetual revolution and

succession of times and seasons which shall continue till the end of

the world. So we learn that as he spoke and they were made, so the

single eternal will of his divine Majesty extends its force from age to

age, yea to ages of ages, to all that has been, is, or shall be

eternally; and nothing at all has existence save by this sole most

singular, most simple, and most eternal divine act, to which be honour

and glory. Amen.

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[57] Ps. cxlviii. 5.

[58] Ps. xxxii. 6.

[59] 1 John i. 3.

[60] Gen. i. 14.

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CHAPTER III.

OF THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN GENERAL.

God, then, Theotimus, needs not many acts, because one only divine act

of his all-powerful will, by reason of its infinite perfection, is

sufficient to produce all the variety of his works. But we mortals must

treat them after the method and manner of understanding which our small

minds can attain to; according to which, to speak of divine providence,

let us consider, I pray you, the reign of the great Solomon, as a

perfect model of the art of good government.

This great king then, knowing by divine inspiration that the

commonwealth is to religion as the body to the soul, and religion to

the commonwealth as the soul to the body, disposed with himself all the

parts requisite as well for the establishment of religion as of the

commonwealth. As to religion, he determined that a temple must be

erected of such and such length, breadth, and height, so many porches

and courts, so many windows and thus of all the rest which belonged to

the temple; then so many sacrificers, so many singers and other

officers of the temple. And as for the commonwealth he determined to

make a royal palace and court for his majesty, and in this so many

stewards, so many gentlemen and other courtiers; and, for the people,

judges, and other magistrates who were to execute justice further, for

the assurance of the kingdom, and securing of the public peace which it

enjoyed, he arranged to have in time of peace a powerful preparation

for war, and to this effect two hundred and fifty commanders in various

charges, forty thousand horses, and all that great equipage which the

Scripture and historians record.

Now having disposed and arranged in his mind all the principal things

requisite for his kingdom, he came to the act of providing them, and

thought out all that was necessary to construct the temple, to maintain

the sacred officers, the royal ministers and magistrates, and the

soldiers whom he intended to appoint, and resolved to send to Hiram for

fit timber, to begin commerce with Peru [61] and Ophir, and to take all

convenient means to procure all things requisite for the fulfilment and

success of his undertaking. Neither stayed he there, Theotimus, for

having made his project and deliberated with himself about the proper

means to accomplish it, coming to the practice, he actually created

officers as he had disposed, and by a good government caused provision

to be made of all things requisite to carry out and to accomplish their

charges. So that having the knowledge of the art of reigning well, he

put it into practice, executed that disposition which he had made in

his mind for the creation of officers of every sort, and provided in

effect what he had seen it necessary to provide; and so his art of

government which consisted in disposition, and in providence or

foresight, was put into practice by the creation of officers and by

actual government and good management. But inasmuch as the disposing is

useless without the creation of officers, and creation also vain

without that provident foresight which looks after what is needed to

maintain the officers created or appointed; and since this maintaining

by good government is nothing more than a providence put into effect,

therefore not only the disposition but also the creation and good

government of Solomon were called by the name of providence, nor do we

indeed say that a man is provident unless he govern well.

Now, Theotimus, speaking of heavenly things according to the impression

we have gained by the consideration of human things, we affirm that

God, having had an eternal and most perfect knowledge of the art of

making the world for his glory, disposed before all things in his

divine understanding all the principal parts of the universe which

might render him honour; to wit, angelic and human nature,--and in the

angelic nature the variety of hierarchies and orders, as the sacred

Scripture and holy doctors teach us; as also among men he ordained that

there should be that great diversity which we see. Further, in this

same eternity he provided and determined in his mind all the means

requisite for men and angels to come to the end for which he had

ordained them, and so made the act of his providence; and not stopping

there, he, in order to effect what he had disposed, really created

angels and men, and to effect his providence he did and does by his

government furnish reasonable creatures with all things necessary to

attain glory, so that, to say it in a word, sovereign providence is no

other thing than the act whereby God furnishes men or angels with the

means necessary or useful for the obtaining of their end. But because

these means are of different kinds we also diversify the name of

providence, and say that there is one providence natural, another

supernatural, and that the latter again is general, or special, or

particular.

And because hereafter, Theotimus, I shall exhort you to unite your will

to God's providence, I would, while on this part of my subject, say a

word about natural providence. God then, willing to provide men with

the natural means necessary for them to render glory to the divine

goodness, produced in their behalf all the other animals and the

plants, and to provide for the other animals and the plants, he has

produced a variety of lands, seasons, waters, winds, rains; and, as

well for man as for the other things appertaining to him, he created

the elements, the sky, the stars, ordaining in an admirable manner that

almost all creatures should mutually serve one another. Horses carry

us, and we care for them; sheep feed and clothe us, and we feed them;

the earth sends vapours to the air; and the air rain to the earth; the

hand serves the foot, and the foot the hand. O! he who should consider

this general commerce and traffic which creatures have together, in so

perfect a correspondence--with how strong an amorous passion for this

sovereign wisdom would he be moved, crying out: Thy providence O great

and eternal Father governs all things! [62] S. Basil and S. Ambrose in

their Hexaemerons, the good Louis of Granada in his introduction to the

Creed, and Louis Richeome in many of his beautiful works, will furnish

ample motives to loving souls profitably to employ this consideration.

Thus, dear Theotimus, this providence reaches all, reigns over all, and

reduces all to its glory. There are indeed fortuitous cases and

unexpected accidents, but they are only fortuitous or unexpected to us,

and are of course most certain to the divine providence, which foresees

them, and directs them to the general good of the universe. These

accidents happen by the concurrence of various causes, which having no

natural alliance one with the other, produce each of them its

particular effect, but in such a way that from their concourse there

issues another effect of a different nature, to which though one could

not foresee it, all these different causes contributed. For example, it

was reasonable to chastise the curiosity of the poet �schylus, who

being told by a diviner that he would perish by the fall of some house,

kept himself all that day in the open country, to escape his fate, and

as he was standing up bareheaded, a falcon which held in its claws a

tortoise, seeing this bald head, and thinking it to be the point of a

rock, let the tortoise fall upon it, and behold �schylus dies

immediately, crushed by the house and shell of a tortoise. This was

doubtless a fortuitous accident, for this man did not go into the

country to die, but to escape death, nor did the falcon dream of

crushing a poet's head, but the head and shell of a tortoise to make

itself master of the meat within: yet it chanced to the contrary, for

the tortoise remained safe and poor �schylus was killed. According to

us this chance was unexpected, but in respect of the Divine providence

which looked from above and saw the concurrence of causes, it was an

act of justice punishing the superstition of the man. The adventures of

Joseph of old were admirable in their variety and the way they passed

from one extreme to the other. His brethren who to ruin him had sold

him, were amazed to see that he had become viceroy, and were mightily

apprehensive that he remained sensible of the wrong they had done him:

but no said he: Not by your counsel was I sent hither, but by the will

of God. You thought evil against me, but God turned it into good. [63]

You see, Theotimus, the world would have termed this a chance, or

fortuitous event, which Joseph called a design of the sovereign

providence, which turns and reduces all to its service. It is the same

with all things that happen in the world yea, even with monstrosities,

whose birth makes complete and perfect works more esteemed, begets

admiration, provokes discussion, and many good thoughts; in a word they

are in the world as the shades in pictures, which give grace and seem

to bring out the colours.

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[61] According to the opinion not uncommon in. S. Francis's day. (Tr.)

[62] Wisdom xiv. 3.

[63] Gen. xlv. 8; l. 20.

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CHAPTER IV.

OF THE SUPERNATURAL PROVIDENCE WHICH GOD USES TOWARDS REASONABLE

CREATURES

All God's works are ordained to the salvation of men and angels; and

the order of his providence is this, as far as, by attention to the

Holy Scriptures and the doctrine of the Fathers, we are able to

discover and our weakness permits us to describe it.

God knew from all eternity that he could make an innumerable multitude

of creatures with divers perfections and qualities, to whom he might

communicate himself, and considering that amongst all the different

communications there was none so excellent as that of uniting himself

to some created nature, in such sort that the creature might be

engrafted and implanted in the divinity, and become one single person

with it, his infinite goodness, which of itself and by itself tends

towards communication, resolved and determined to communicate himself

in this manner. So that, as eternally there is an essential

communication in God by which the Father communicates all his infinite

and indivisible divinity to the Son in producing him, and the Father

and the Son together producing the Holy Ghost communicate to him also

their own singular divinity;--so this sovereign sweetness was so

perfectly communicated externally to a creature, that the created

nature and the divinity, retaining each of them its own properties,

were notwithstanding so united together that they were but one same

person.

Now of all the creatures which that sovereign omnipotence could

produce, he thought good to make choice of the same humanity which

afterwards in effect was united to the person of God the Son; to which

he destined that incomparable honour of personal union with his divine

Majesty, to the end that for all eternity it might enjoy by excellence

the treasures of his infinite glory. Then having selected for this

happiness the sacred humanity of our Saviour, the supreme providence

decreed not to restrain his goodness to the only person of his

well-beloved Son, but for his sake to pour it out upon divers other

creatures, and out of the mass of that innumerable quantity of things

which he could produce, he chose to create men and angels to accompany

his Son, participate in his graces and glory, adore and praise him for

ever. And inasmuch as he saw that he could in various manners form the

humanity of this Son, while making him true man, as for example by

creating him out of nothing, not only in regard of the soul but also in

regard of the body; or again by forming the body of some previously

existing matter as he did that of Adam and Eve, or by way of ordinary

human birth, or finally by extraordinary birth from a woman without

man, he determined that the work should be effected by the last way,

and of all the women he might have chosen to this end he made choice of

the most holy virgin Our Lady, through whom the Saviour of our souls

should not only be man, but a child of the human race.

Furthermore the sacred providence determined to produce all other

things as well natural as supernatural in behalf of Our Saviour, in

order that angels and men might, by serving him, share in his glory; on

which account, although God willed to create both angels and men with

free-will, free with a true freedom to choose evil or good, still, to

show that on the part of the divine goodness they were dedicated to

good and to glory, he created them all in original justice, which is no

other thing than a most sweet love, which disposed, turned and set them

forward towards eternal felicity.

But because this supreme wisdom had determined so to temper this

original love with the will of his creatures that love should not force

the will but should leave it in its freedom, he foresaw that a part,

yet the less part, of the angelic nature, voluntarily quitting holy

love, would consequently lose glory. And because the angelic nature

could only commit this sin by an express malice, without temptation or

any motive which could excuse them, and on the other hand the far

greater part of that same nature would remain constant in the service

of their Saviour,--therefore God, who had so amply glorified his mercy

in the work of the creation of angels, would also magnify his justice,

and in the fury of his indignation resolved for ever to abandon that

woful and accursed troop of traitors, who in the fury of their

rebellion had so villanously abandoned him.

He also clearly foresaw that the first man would abuse his liberty and

forsaking grace would lose glory, yet would he not treat human nature

so rigorously as he determined to treat the angelic. It was human

nature of which he had determined to take a blessed portion to unite it

to his divinity. He saw that it was a feeble nature, a wind which goeth

and returneth not, [64] that is, which is dissipated as it goes. He had

regard to the surprise by which the malign and perverse Satan had taken

the first man, and to the greatness of the temptation which ruined him.

He saw that all the race of men was perishing by the fault of one only,

so that for these reasons he beheld our nature with the eye of pity and

resolved to admit it to his mercy.

But in order that the sweetness of his mercy might be adorned with the

beauty of his justice, he determined to save man by way of a rigorous

redemption. And as this could not properly be done but by his Son, he

settled that he should redeem man not only by one of his amorous

actions, which would have been perfectly sufficient to ransom a million

million of worlds: but also by all the innumerable amorous actions and

dolorous passions which he would perform or suffer till death, and the

death of the cross, to which he destined him. He willed that thus he

should make himself the companion of our miseries to make us afterwards

companions of his glory, showing thereby the riches of his goodness, by

this copious, abundant, superabundant, magnificent and excessive

redemption, which has gained for us, and as it were reconquered for us,

all the means necessary to attain glory, so that no man can ever

complain as though the divine mercy were wanting to any one.

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[64] Ps. lxxvii. 39.

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CHAPTER V.

THAT HEAVENLY PROVIDENCE HAS PROVIDED MEN WITH A MOST ABUNDANT

REDEMPTION.

Now when saying, Theotimus, that God had seen and willed first one

thing and then secondly another, observing an order in his wills: I

meant this in the sense I declared before, namely, that though all this

passed in a most singular and simple act, yet in that act the order,

distinction and dependence of things were no less observed than if

there had been indeed several acts in the understanding and will of

God. And since every well-ordered will which determines itself to love

several objects equally present, loves better and above all the rest

that which is most lovable; it follows that the sovereign Providence,

making his eternal purpose and design of all that he would produce,

first willed and preferred by excellence the most amiable object of his

love which is Our Saviour; and then other creatures in order, according

as they more or less belong to the service, honours and glory of him.

Thus were all things made for that divine man, who for this cause is

called the first-born of every creature: [65] possessed by the divine

majesty in the beginning of his ways, before he made anything from the

beginning. [66] For in him were all things created in heaven, and on

earth, visible, and invisible, whether thrones, or dominations, or

principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and in him:

And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the

first-born from among the dead: that in all things he may hold the

primacy. [67] The principal reason of planting the vine is the fruit,

and therefore the fruit is the first thing desired and aimed at, though

the leaves and the buds are first produced. So our great Saviour was

the first in the divine intention, and in that eternal project which

the divine providence made of the production of creatures, and in view

of this desired fruit the vine of the universe was planted, and the

succession of many generations established, which as leaves or blossoms

proceed from it as forerunners and fit preparatives for the production

of that grape which the sacred spouse so much praises in the Canticles,

and the juice of which rejoices God and men.

But now, my Theotimus, who can doubt of the abundance of the means of

salvation, since we have so great a Saviour, in consideration of whom

we have been made, and by whose merits we have been ransomed. For he

died for all because all were dead, and his mercy was more salutary to

buy back the race of men than Adam's misery was to ruin it. Indeed

Adam's sin was so far from overwhelming the divine benignity that on

the contrary it excited and provoked it. So that by a most sweet and

most loving reaction and struggle, it received vigour from its

adversary's presence, and as if re-collecting its forces for victory,

it made grace to superabound where sin had abounded. [68] Whence the

holy Church by a pious excess of admiration cries out upon Easter-eve:

"O truly necessary sin of Adam which was blotted out by the death of

Jesus Christ! O blessed fault, which merited to have such and so great

a Redeemer!" Truly, Theotimus, we may say as did he of old, "we were

ruined had we not been undone:" that is, ruin brought us profit, since

in effect human nature has received more graces by its Saviour

redeeming, than ever it would have received by Adam's innocence, if he

had persevered therein.

For though the divine Providence has left in man deep marks of his

severity, yea, even amidst the very grace of his mercy, as for example

the necessity of dying, diseases, labours, the rebellion of

sensuality,--yet the divine favour floating as it were over all this,

takes pleasure in turning these miseries to the greater profit of those

who love him, making patience spring from labours, contempt of the

world from the necessity of death, a thousand victories from out of

concupiscence; and, as the rainbow touching the thorn aspalathus makes

it more odoriferous than the lily, so Our Saviour's Redemption touching

our miseries, makes them more beneficial and worthy of love than

original innocence could ever have been. I say to you, says Our

Saviour, there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth

penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance, [69] and

so the state of redemption is a hundred times better than that of

innocence. Verily by the watering of Our Saviour's blood made with the

hyssop of the cross, we have been replaced in a whiteness incomparably

more excellent than the snow of innocence. We come out, like Naaman,

from the stream of salvation more pure and clean than if we had never

been leprous, to the end that the divine Majesty, as he has ordained

also for us, should not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good,

[70] that mercy (as a sacred oil) should keep itself above judgment,

[71] and his tender mercies be over all his works. [72]

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[65] Col. i. 15.

[66] Prov. viii. 22.

[67] Col. i. 16.

[68] Rom. v. 20.

[69] Luke xv. 7.

[70] Rom. xii. 21.

[71] James ii. 13.

[72] Ps. cxliv. 9.

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CHAPTER VI.

OF CERTAIN SPECIAL FAVOURS EXERCISED BY THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN THE

REDEMPTION OF MAN.

God indeed shows to admiration the incomprehensible riches of his power

in this great variety of things which we see in nature, yet he makes

the infinite treasures of his goodness still more magnificently appear

in the incomparable variety of the goods which we acknowledge in grace.

For, Theotimus, he was not content, in the holy excess of his mercy,

with sending to his people, that is, to mankind, a general and

universal redemption, by means whereof every one might be saved, but he

has diversified it in so many ways, that while his liberality shines in

all this variety, this variety reciprocally embellishes his liberality.

And thus he first of all destined for his most holy Mother a favour

worthy of the love of a Son who, being all wise, all mighty, and all

good, wished to prepare a mother to his liking; and therefore he willed

his redemption to be applied to her after the manner of a preserving

remedy, that the sin which was spreading from generation to generation

should not reach her. She then was so excellently redeemed, that though

when the time came, the torrent of original iniquity rushed to pour its

unhappy waves over her conception, with as much impetuosity as it had

done on that of the other daughters of Adam; yet when it reached there

it passed not beyond, but stopped, as did anciently the Jordan in the

time of Josue, and for the same respect: for this river held its stream

in reverence for the passage of the Ark of Alliance; and original sin

drew back its waters, revering and dreading the presence of the true

Tabernacle of the eternal alliance. In this way then God turned away

all captivity from his glorious Mother, giving her the blessing of both

the states of human nature; since she had the innocence which the first

Adam had lost, and enjoyed in an excellent sort the redemption acquired

for her. Whence as a garden of election which was to bring forth the

fruit of life, she was made to flourish in all sorts of perfections;

this son of eternal love having thus clothed his mother in gilded

clothing, surrounded with variety, [73] that she might be the queen of

his right hand, that is to say, the first of all the elect to enjoy the

delights of God's right hand: [74] so that this sacred mother as being

altogether reserved for her son, was by him redeemed not only from

damnation but also from all peril of damnation, he giving her grace and

the perfection of grace, so that she went like a lovely dawn, which,

beginning to break, increases continually in brightness till perfect

daylight. Admirable redemption! master-piece of the redeemer! and first

of all redemptions! by which the son with a truly filial heart

preventing his mother with the blessings of sweetness, preserved her

not only from sin as he did the angels, but also from all danger of sin

and from everything that might divert or retard her in the exercise of

holy love. And he protests that amongst all the reasonable creatures he

has chosen, this mother is his one dove, his all perfect one, his all

dear love, beyond all likeness and all comparison.

God also appointed other favours for a small number of rare creatures

whom he would preserve from the peril of damnation, as is certain of S.

John Baptist and very probable of Jeremias and some others, whom the

Divine providence seized upon in their mother's womb, and thereupon

established them in the perpetuity of his grace, that they might remain

firm in his love, though subject to checks and venial sins, which are

contrary to the perfection of love though not to love itself. And these

souls in comparison with others, are as queens, ever crowned with

charity, holding the principal place in the love of their Saviour next

to his mother, who is queen of queens, a queen crowned not only with

love but with the perfection of love, yea, what is yet more, crowned

with her own Son, the sovereign object of love, since children are the

crown of their father and mother.

There are yet other souls whom God determined for a time to leave

exposed to the danger, not of losing their salvation, but yet of losing

his love; yea he permitted them actually to lose it, not assuring them

love for the whole time of their life, but only for the end of it and

for a certain time preceding. Such were the Apostles, David, Magdalen

and many others, who for a time remained out of God's grace, but in the

end being once for all converted were confirmed in grace until death;

so that though from that time they continued subject to some

imperfections, yet were they exempt from all mortal sin, and

consequently from danger of losing the divine love, and were sacred

spouses of the heavenly bridegroom. And they were indeed adorned with a

wedding garment of his most holy love, yet they were not crowned

because a crown is an ornament of the head, that is, of the chief part

of a person; now the first part of the life of this rank of souls

having been subject to earthly love, they were not to be adorned with

the crown of heavenly love, but it is sufficient for them to wear the

robe, which fits them for the marriage bed of the heavenly spouse, and

for being eternally happy with him.

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[73] Ps. xliv. 10.

[74] Ps. xv. 11.

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CHAPTER VII.

HOW ADMIRABLE THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE IS IN THE DIVERSITY OF GRACES GIVEN

TO MEN.

There was then in the eternal providence an incomparable privilege for

the queen of queens, mother of fair love, and most singularly all

perfect. There were also for certain others some special favours. But

after this the sovereign goodness poured an abundance of graces and

benedictions over the whole race of mankind and upon the angels, with

which all were watered as with a rain that falleth on the just and

unjust, all were illuminated as with a light that enlighteneth every

man coming into this world; every one received his portion as of seed,

which falls not only upon the good ground but upon the highway, amongst

thorns, and upon rocks, that all might be inexcusable before the

Redeemer, if they employ not this most abundant redemption for their

salvation.

But still, Theotimus, although this most abundant sufficiency of grace

is thus poured out over all human nature, and although in this we are

all equal that a rich abundance of benedictions is offered to us all,

yet the variety of these favours is so great, that one cannot say

whether the greatness of all these graces in so great a diversity, or

the diversity in such greatness, is more admirable. For who sees not

that the means of salvation amongst Christians are greater and more

efficacious than amongst barbarians, and again that amongst Christians

there are people and towns where the pastors get more fruit, and are

more capable? Now to deny that these exterior means were benefits of

the divine providence, or to doubt whether they did avail to the

salvation and perfection of souls, were to be ungrateful to the divine

goodness, and to belie certain experience, by which we see that

ordinarily where these exterior helps abound, the interior are more

efficacious and succeed better.

In truth, as we see that there are never found two men perfectly

resembling one another in natural gifts, so are there never found any

wholly equal in supernatural ones. The angels, as the great S.

Augustine and S. Thomas assure us, received grace according to the

variety of their natural conditions; now they are all either of a

different species or at least of a different condition, since they are

distinguished one from another; therefore as many angels as there are,

so many different graces are there. And though grace is not given to

men according to their natural conditions, yet the divine sweetness

rejoicing, and as one would say exulting, in the production of graces,

infinitely diversifies them, to the end that out of this variety the

fair enamel of his redemption and mercy may appear: whence the church

upon the feast of every Confessor and Bishop sings "There was not found

the like to him." And as in heaven no one knows the new name, save him

that receives it, [75] because each one of the blessed has his own

apart, according to the new being of glory which he acquires; similarly

on earth every one receives a grace so special that all are different.

Our Saviour also compares his grace to pearls, which as Pliny says are

otherwise called unities, because each one of them is so singular in

its qualities that two of them are never found perfectly alike; and as

one star differeth from another in glory, [76] so shall men be

different from one another in glory, an evident sign that they will

have been so in grace. Now this variety in grace, or this grace in

variety, composes a most sacred beauty and most sweet harmony,

rejoicing all the holy city of the heavenly Jerusalem.

But we must be very careful never to make inquiry why the supreme

wisdom bestows a grace rather upon one than another, nor why it makes

its favours abound rather in one behalf than another. No, Theotimus,

never enter into this curiosity, for having all of us sufficiently, yea

abundantly, that which is requisite to salvation, what reason can any

creature living have to complain if it please God to bestow his graces

more amply upon one than another? If one should ask why God made melons

larger than strawberries, or lilies larger than violets, why the

rosemary is not a rose, or why the pink is not a marigold, why the

peacock is more beautiful than a bat, or why the fig is sweet and the

lemon acid,--one would laugh at his question, and say: poor man, since

the beauty of the world requires variety it is necessary there should

be difference and inequality in things, and that the one should not be

the other. That is why some things are little, others big, some bitter,

others sweet, the one more, the other less beautiful. Now it is the

same in supernatural things. Every one hath his proper gift from God;

one after this manner, and another after that, [77] says the Holy

Ghost. It is then an impertinence to search out why S. Paul had not the

grace of S. Peter, or S. Peter that of S. Paul; why S. Antony was not

S. Athanasius, or S. Athanasius S. Jerome; for one would answer to

these inquiries that the church is a garden diapered with innumerable

flowers; it is necessary then they should be of various sizes, various

colours, various odours, in fine of different perfections. All have

their price, their charm and their colour, and all of them in the

collection of their differences make up a most grateful perfection of

beauty.

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[75] Apoc. ii. 17.

[76] 1 Cor. xv. 41.

[77] 1 Cor. vii. 7.

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CHAPTER VIII.

HOW MUCH GOD DESIRES WE SHOULD LOVE HIM.

Although our Saviour's redemption is applied to us in as many different

manners as there are souls, yet still, love is the universal means of

salvation which mingles with everything, and without which nothing is

profitable, as we shall show elsewhere. The Cherubim were placed at the

gate of the earthly paradise with their flaming sword, to teach us that

no one shall enter into the heavenly paradise who is not pierced

through with the sword of love. For this cause, Theotimus, the sweet

Jesus who bought us with his blood, is infinitely desirous that we

should love him that we may eternally be saved, and desires we may be

saved that we may love him eternally, his love tending to our salvation

and our salvation to his love. Ah! said he: I am come to cast fire on

the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled? [78] But to set out

more to the life the ardour of this desire, he in admirable terms

requires this love from us. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy

whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is

the greatest and the first commandment. [79] Good God! Theotimus, how

amorous the divine heart is of our love. Would it not have sufficed to

publish a permission giving us leave to love him, as Laban permitted

Jacob to love his fair Rachel, and to gain her by services? Ah no! he

makes a stronger declaration of his passionate love of us, and commands

us to love him with all our power, lest the consideration of his

majesty and our misery, which make so great a distance and inequality

between us, or some other pretext, might divert us from his love. In

this, Theotimus, he well shows that he did not leave in us for nothing

the natural inclination to love him, for to the end it may not be idle,

he urges us by this general commandment to employ it, and that this

commandment may be effected, he leaves no living man without furnishing

him abundantly with all means requisite thereto. The visible sun

touches everything with its vivifying heat, and as the universal lover

of inferior things, imparts to them the vigour requisite to produce,

and even so the divine goodness animates all souls and encourages all

hearts to its love, none being excluded from its heat. Eternal wisdom,

says Solomon, preacheth abroad, she uttereth her voice in the streets:

At the head of multitudes she crieth out, in the entrance of the gates

of the city she uttereth her words, saying: O children, how long will

you love childishness, and fools covet those things which are hurtful

to themselves, and the unwise hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof:

behold I will utter my spirit to you, and will show you my words. [80]

And the same wisdom continues in Ezechiel saying: Our iniquities and

our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them: how then can we live?

Say to them: As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of

the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live. [81] Now

to live according to God is to love, and he that loveth not abideth in

death. [82] See now, Theotimus, whether God does not desire we should

love him!

But he is not content with announcing thus publicly his extreme desire

to be loved, so that every one may have a share in his sweet

invitation, but he goes even from door to door, knocking and protesting

that, if any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the door, I will

come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me: [83] that is, he

will testify all sorts of good will towards him.

Now what does all this mean, Theotimus, except that God does not only

give us a simple sufficiency of means to love him, and in loving him to

save ourselves, but also a rich, ample and magnificent sufficiency, and

such as ought to be expected from so great a bounty as his. The great

Apostle speaking to obstinate sinners: Despisest thou, says he, the

riches of his goodness, and patience, and long-suffering? Knowest thou

not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance? But according to

thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath,

against the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God.

[84] My dear Theotimus, God does not therefore employ a simple

sufficiency of remedies to convert the obstinate, but uses to this end

the riches of his goodness. The Apostle, as you see, opposes the riches

of God's goodness against the treasures of the impenitent heart's

malice, and says that the malicious heart is so rich in iniquity that

he despises even the riches of the mildness by which God leads him to

repentance; and mark that the obstinate man not only contemns the

riches of God's goodness, but also the riches which lead to penance,

riches whereof one can scarcely be ignorant. Verily this rich, full and

plenteous sufficiency of means which God freely bestows upon sinners to

love him appears almost everywhere in the Scriptures. Behold this

divine lover at the gate, he does not simply knock, but stands

knocking; he calls the soul, come, arise, make haste, my love, [85] and

puts his hand into the lock to try whether he cannot open it. If he

uttereth his voice in the streets he does not simply utter it, but he

goes crying out, that is, he continues to cry out. When he proclaims

that every one must be converted, he thinks he has never repeated it

sufficiently. Be converted, do penance, return to me, live, why dost

thou die, O house of Israel? [86] In a word this heavenly Saviour

forgets nothing to show that his mercies are above all his works, that

his mercy surpasses his judgment, that his redemption is copious, that

his love is infinite, and, as the Apostle says, that he is rich in

mercy, and consequently he will have all men to be saved; not willing

that any should perish. [87]

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[78] Luke xii. 49.

[79] Matt. xxii. 37, 38.

[80] Prov. i. 20, 21, 22, 23.

[81] Ezech. xxxiii. 10, 12.

[82] 1 John iii. 14.

[83] Apoc. iii. 20.

[84] Rom. ii. 4., 5.

[85] Cant. ii. 16.

[86] Ezech. xviii. 30.

[87] 1 Tim. ii. 4.

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CHAPTER IX.

HOW THE ETERNAL LOVE OF GOD PREVENTS OUR HEARTS WITH HIS INSPIRATIONS

IN ORDER THAT WE MAY LOVE HIM.

I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn

thee, taking pity on thee. And I will build thee again, and thou shalt

be built, O virgin of Israel. [88] These are the words of God, by which

he promises that the Saviour coming into the world shall establish a

new kingdom in his Church, which shall be his virgin-spouse, and true

spiritual Israelite.

Now as you see, Theotimus, it was not by the works of justice, which we

have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, [89] by that

ancient, yea, eternal, charity which moved his divine Providence to

draw us unto him. No man can come to me except the Father, who hath

sent me, draw him. [90] For if the Father had not drawn us we had never

come to the Son, our Saviour, nor consequently to salvation.

There are certain birds, Theotimus, which Aristotle calls apodes, [91]

because having extremely short legs, and feeble feet, they use them no

more than if they had none. And if ever they light upon the ground they

must remain there, so that they can never take flight again of their

own power, because having no use of their legs or feet, they have

therefore no power to move and start themselves into the air: hence

they remain there motionless, and die, unless some wind, propitious to

their impotence, sending out its blasts upon the face of the earth,

happen to seize upon and bear them up, as it does many other things. If

this happen, and they make use of their wings to correspond with this

first start and motion which the wind gives them, it also continues its

assistance to them, bringing them by little and little into flight.

Theotimus, the angels are like to those birds, which for their beauty

and rarity are called birds-of-paradise, never seen on earth but dead.

For those heavenly spirits had no sooner forsaken divine love to attach

themselves to self-love, than suddenly they fell as dead, buried in

hell, seeing that the same effect which death has on men, separating

them everlastingly from this mortal life, the same had the angels' fall

on them, excluding them for ever from eternal life. But we mortals

rather resemble apodes: for if it chance that we, quitting the air of

holy divine love, fall upon earth and adhere to creatures, which we do

as often as we offend God, we die indeed, yet not so absolute a death

but that there remains in us a little movement, besides our legs and

feet, namely, some weak affections, which enable us to make some essays

of love, though so weakly, that in truth we are impotent of ourselves

to detach our hearts from sin, or start ourselves again in the flight

of sacred love, which, wretches that we are, we have perfidiously and

voluntarily forsaken.

And truly we should well deserve to remain abandoned of God, when with

this disloyalty we have thus abandoned him. But his eternal charity

does not often permit his justice to use this chastisement, but rather,

exciting his compassion, it provokes him to reclaim us from our misery,

which he does by sending us the favourable wind of his most holy

inspirations, which, blowing upon our hearts with a gentle violence,

seizes and moves them, raising our thoughts, and moving our affections

into the air of divine love.

Now this first stirring or motion which God causes in our hearts to

incite them to their own good, is effected indeed in us but not by us;

for it comes unexpectedly, before we have either thought of it or been

able to think of it, seeing we are not sufficient to think anything

towards our salvation of ourselves as of ourselves, but our sufficiency

is from God, [92] who did not only love us before we were, but also to

the end we might be, and might be saints. For which cause he prevents

us with the blessings of his fatherly sweetness, and excites our souls,

in order to bring them to holy repentance and conversion. See, I pray

you, Theotimus, the prince of the Apostles, stupefied with sin in the

sad night of his Master's passion; he no more thought of sorrowing for

his sin, than though he had never known his heavenly Saviour. And as a

miserable apode fallen to earth, he would never have been raised, had

not the cock, as an instrument of divine providence, struck his ears

with its voice, at the same instant in which his sweet Redeemer casting

upon him a gracious look, like a dart of love, transpierced that heart

of stone, which afterwards sent forth water in such abundance, like the

ancient rock smitten by Moses in the desert. But look again and see

this holy Apostle sleeping in Herod's prison, bound with two chains: he

is there in quality of a martyr, and nevertheless he represents the

poor man who sleeps amid sin, prisoner and slave to Satan. Alas! who

will deliver him? The angel descends from heaven, and striking the

great Saint Peter, the prisoner, upon the side, awakens him, saying:

Arise quickly! So the inspiration comes from heaven like an angel, and

striking upon the poor sinner's heart, stirs him up to rise from his

iniquity. Is it not true then, my dear Theotimus, that this first

emotion and shock which the soul perceives, when God, preventing it

with love, awakens it and excites it to forsake sin and return unto him

and not only this shock, but also the whole awakening, is done in us,

and for us, but not by us? We are awake, but have not awakened of

ourselves, it is the inspiration which has awakened us, and to awaken

us has shaken and moved us. I slept, says that devout spouse, but my

beloved, who is my heart, watched. Ah! see that it is he who awakens

me, calling me by the name of our loves, and I know well by his voice

that it is he. It is unawares and unexpectedly that God calls and

awakens us by his holy inspiration, and in this beginning of grace we

do nothing but feel the touch which God gives, in us, as S. Bernard

says, but without us.

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[88] Jerem. xxxi. 3.

[89] Titus iii. 5.

[90] John vi. 44.

[91] i.e., Footless. [Tr.]

[92] 2 Cor. iii. 5.

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CHAPTER X.

HOW WE OFTENTIMES REPULSE THE INSPIRATION AND REFUSE TO LOVE GOD.

Wo to thee, Corozain, wo to thee, Bethsaida: for if in Tyre and Sidon

had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had

long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes. [93] Such is the word of

Our Saviour. Hark I pray you, Theotimus, how the inhabitants of

Corozain and Bethsaida, instructed in the true religion, and having

received favours so great that they would effectually have converted

the pagans themselves, remained nevertheless obstinate, and never

willed to use them, rejecting this holy light by an incomparable

rebellion. Certainly at the day of judgment the Ninivites and the Queen

of Saba will rise up against the Jews, and will convict them as worthy

of damnation: because, as to the Ninivites, though idolators and

barbarians, at the voice of Jonas they were converted and did penance;

and as to the Queen of Saba, she, though engaged in the affairs of a

kingdom, yet having heard the renown of Solomon's wisdom, forsook all,

to go and hear him. Yet the Jews, hearing with their ears the heavenly

wisdom of the true Solomon, the Saviour of the world; seeing with their

eyes his miracles; touching with their hands his virtues and benefits;

ceased not for all that to be hardened, and to resist the grace which

was proffered them. See then again, Theotimus, how they who had less

attractions are brought to penance, and those who had more remain

obdurate: those who have less occasion to come, come to the school of

wisdom, and those who have more, stay in their folly.

Thus will be made the judgment of comparison, as all doctors have

remarked, which can have no foundation save in this, that

notwithstanding some have had as many calls as others have, or more,

they will have denied consent to God's mercy, whereas others, assisted

with the like, yea even lesser helps, will have followed the

inspiration, betaking themselves to holy penance. For how could one

otherwise reasonably reproach the impenitent with their impenitence, in

comparison with such as are converted?

Certainly Our Saviour clearly shows, and all Christians in simplicity

understand, that in this just judgment the Jews shall be condemned in

comparison with the Ninivites, because those have had many favours and

yet no love, much assistance and no repentance, these less favour and

more love, less assistance and much penitence.

The great S. Augustine throws a great light on this reasoning, by his

own arguments in Book XII. of the 'City of God,' Chapters vi., vii.,

viii., ix. For though he refers particularly to the angels, still he

likens men to them in this point.

Now, after having taken, in the sixth chapter, two men, entirely equal

in goodness and in all things, attacked by the same temptation, he

presupposes that one resists, the other gives way to the enemy; then in

the ninth chapter, having proved that all the angels were created in

charity, stating further as probable that grace and charity were equal

in them all, he asks how it came to pass that some of them persevered,

and made progress in goodness even to the attaining of glory, while

others forsook good to embrace evil unto damnation, and he answers that

no other answer can be rendered, than that the one company persevered

by the grace of their Creator in the chaste love which they received in

their creation, the other, having been good, made themselves bad by

their own sole will.

But if it is true, as S. Thomas extremely well proves, that grace was

different in the angels in proportion and according to their natural

gifts, the Seraphim must have had a grace incomparably more excellent

than the simple angels of the last order. How then did it happen that

some of the Seraphim, yea even the first of all, according to the

common and most probable opinion of the ancients, fell, while an

innumerable multitude of other angels, inferior in nature and grace,

excellently and courageously persevered? How came it to pass that

Lucifer, so excellent by nature and so superexcellent by grace, fell,

while so many angels with less advantages remained upright in their

fidelity? Truly those who persevered ought to render all the praise

thereof to God, who of his mercy created and maintained them good. But

to whom can Lucifer and all his crew ascribe their fall, if not, as S.

Augustine says, to their own will, which by their liberty divorced them

from God's grace that had so sweetly prevented them? How art thou

fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning? [94] Who

didst come out into this invisible world clothed with original charity

as with the beginning of the brightness of a fair day, which was to

increase unto the mid-day of eternal glory? Grace did not fail thee,

for thou hadst it, like thy nature, the most excellent of all, but thou

wast wanting to grace. God did not deprive thee of the operation of his

love, but thou didst deprive his love of thy co-operation. God would

never have rejected thee if thou hadst not rejected his love. O

all-good God! thou dost not forsake unless forsaken, thou never takest

away thy gifts till we take away our hearts.

We rob God of his right if we attribute to ourselves the glory of our

salvation, but we dishonour his mercy if we say he failed us. If we do

not confess his benefits we wrong his liberality, but we blaspheme his

goodness if we deny that he has assisted and succoured us. In fine, God

cries loud and clear in our ears: Destruction is thy own, O Israel: thy

help is only in me. [95]

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[93] Matt. xi. 21.

[94] Isa. xiv. 12.

[95] Osee xiii. 9.

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CHAPTER XI.

THAT IT IS NO FAULT OF THE DIVINE GOODNESS IF WE HAVE NOT A MOST

EXCELLENT LOVE.

O God! Theotimus, if we received divine inspirations to the full extent

of their virtue, in how short a time should we make a great progress in

sanctity? Be the fountain ever so copious, its streams enter not into a

garden according to their plenty, but according to the littleness or

greatness of the channel by which they are conducted thither. Although

the Holy Ghost, as a spring of living water, flows up to every part of

our heart to spread his graces in it, yet as he will not have them

enter without the free consent of our will, he will only pour them out

according to his good pleasure and our own disposition and cooperation,

as the Holy Council says, which also, by reason, as I suppose, of the

correspondence between our consent and grace, calls the reception

thereof a voluntary reception.

In this sense S. Paul exhorts us not to receive God's grace in vain.

[96] For as a sick man, who having received a draught in his hand did

not take it into his stomach, would truly have received the potion, yet

without receiving it, that is, he would have received it in a useless

and fruitless way, so we receive the grace of God in vain, when we

receive it at the gate of our heart, and not within the consent of our

heart; for so we receive it without receiving it, that is, we receive

it without fruit, since it is nothing to feel the inspiration without

consenting unto it. And as the sick man who had the potion given into

his hand, if he took it not wholly but only partly, would also have the

operation thereof in part only, and not wholly,--so when God sends a

great and mighty inspiration to move us to embrace his holy love, if we

consent not according to its whole extent it will but profit us in the

same measure. It happens that being inspired to do much we consent not

to the whole inspiration but only to some part thereof, as did those

good people in the Gospel, who upon the inspiration which Our Lord gave

them to follow him wished to make reservations, the one to go first and

bury his father, the other to go to take leave of his people.

As long as the poor widow had empty vessels, the oil which Eliseus had

by prayer miraculously multiplied never left off running, but when she

had no more vessels to receive it, it ceased to flow. In the same

measure in which our heart dilates itself, or rather in the measure in

which it permits itself to be enlarged and dilated, keeping itself

empty by the simple fact of not refusing consent to the divine mercy,

this ever pours forth and ceaselessly spreads its sacred inspirations,

which ever increase and make us increase more and more in heavenly

love; but when there is no more room, that is, when we no longer give

consent, it stops.

How comes it then that we are not so advanced in the love of God as S.

Augustine, S. Francis, S. Catharine of Genoa or S. Frances? Theotimus,

it is because God has not given us the grace. But why has he not given

us the grace? Because we did not correspond with his inspirations as we

should have done. And why did we not correspond? Because being free we

have herein abused our liberty. But why did we abuse our liberty? Ah!

Theotimus, we must stop there, for, as S. Augustine says, the

depravation of our will proceeds from no cause, but from some

deficiency in the agent (cause) who commits the sin. And we must not

expect to be able to give a reason of the fault which occurs in sin,

because the fault would not be a sin if it was not without reason.

The devout Brother Rufinus upon a certain vision which he had of the

glory which the great S. Francis would attain unto by his humility,

asked him this question: My dear father, I beseech you, tell me truly

what opinion you have of yourself? The Saint answered: Verily I hold

myself to be the greatest sinner in the world, and the one who serves

Our Lord least. But, Brother Rufinus replied, how can you say this in

truth and conscience, seeing that many others, as we manifestly see,

commit many great sins from which, God be thanked, you are exempt. To

which S. Francis answered: If God had favoured those others of whom you

speak with as great mercy as he has favoured me, I am certain, be they

ever so bad now, they would have acknowledged God's gifts far better

than I do, and would serve him much better than I do, and if my God

abandoned me I should commit more wickedness than any one else.

You see, Theotimus, the opinion of this man, who indeed was scarcely

man, but a seraph upon earth. I know it was humility that moved him to

speak thus of himself, yet nevertheless he believed for a certain truth

that an equal grace granted by an equal mercy might be more faithfully

employed by one sinner than by anothor. Now I hold for an oracle the

sentiment of this great doctor in the science of the saints, who,

brought up in the school of the Crucifix, breathed nothing but the

divine inspirations. And this maxim has been praised and repeated by

all the most devout who have followed him, many of whom are of opinion

that the great Apostle S. Paul said in the same sense that he was the

chief of all sinners. [97]

The Blessed Mother (S.) Teresa of Jesus, also, in good truth, a quite

angelic virgin, speaking of the prayer of quiet, says these

words:--"There are divers souls who come up to this perfection, but

those who pass beyond are a very small number: I know not the cause of

it, certainly the fault is not on God's side, for since his divine

majesty aids us and gives us the grace to arrive at this point, I

believe that he would not fail to give us still more if it were not for

our fault, and the impediment which we on our part place." Let us

therefore, Theotimus, be attentive to advance in the love which we owe

to God, for that which he bears us will never fail us.

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[96] 2 Cor. vi. 1.

[97] 1 Tim. i. 15.

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CHAPTER XII.

THAT DIVINE INSPIRATIONS LEAVE US IN FULL LIBERTY TO FOLLOW OR REPULSE

THEM.

I will not here speak, my dear Theotimus, of those miraculous graces

which have almost in an instant transformed wolves into shepherds,

rocks into waters, persecutors into preachers. I leave on one side

those all-powerful vocations, and holily violent attractions by which

God has brought some elect souls from the extremity of vice to the

extremity of grace, working as it were in them a certain moral and

spiritual transubstantiation: as it happened to the great Apostle, who

of Saul, vessel of persecution, became suddenly Paul, vessel of

election. [98] We must give a particular rank to those privileged souls

in regard of whom it pleased God to make not the mere outflowing, but

the inundation--to exercise, if one may so say, not the simple

liberality and effusion, but the prodigality and profusion of his love.

The divine justice chastises us in this world with punishments which,

as they are ordinary, so they remain almost always unknown and

imperceptible; sometimes, however, he sends out deluges and abysses of

punishments, to make known and dreaded the severity of his indignation.

In like manner his mercy ordinarily converts and graces souls so

sweetly, gently and delicately, that its movement is scarcely

perceived; and yet it happens sometimes that this sovereign goodness,

overflowing its ordinary banks (as a flood swollen and overcharged with

the abundance of waters and breaking out over the plain) makes an

outpouring of his graces so impetuous, though loving, that in a moment

he steeps and covers the whole soul with benedictions, in order that

the riches of his love may appear, and that as his justice proceeds

commonly by the ordinary way and sometimes by the extraordinary, so his

mercy may exercise liberality upon the common sort of men in the

ordinary way, and on some also by extraordinary ways.

But what are then the ordinary cords whereby the divine providence is

accustomed to draw our hearts to his love? Such truly as he himself

marks, describing the means which he used to draw the people of Israel

out of Egypt, and out of the desert, unto the land of promise. I will

draw them, says he by Osee, with the cords of Adam, with the bands of

love, [99] and of friendship. Doubtless, Theotimus, we are not drawn to

God by iron chains, as bulls and wild oxen, but by enticements, sweet

attractions, and holy inspirations, which, in a word, are the cords of

Adam, and of humanity, that is, proportionate and adapted to the human

heart, to which liberty is natural. The band of the human will is

delight and pleasure. We show nuts to a child, says S. Augustine, and

he is drawn by his love, he is drawn by the cords, not of the body, but

of the heart. Mark then how the Eternal Father draws us: while

teaching, he delights us, not imposing upon us any necessity; he casts

into our hearts delectations and spiritual pleasures as sacred baits,

by which he sweetly draws us to take and taste the sweetness of his

doctrine.

In this way then, dearest Theotimus, our free-will is in no way forced

or necessitated by grace, but notwithstanding the all-powerful force of

God's merciful hand, which touches, surrounds and ties the soul with

such a number of inspirations, invitations and attractions, this human

will remains perfectly free, enfranchised and exempt from every sort of

constraint and necessity. Grace is so gracious, and so graciously

seizes our hearts to draw them, that she noways offends the liberty of

our will; she touches powerfully but yet so delicately the springs of

our spirit that our free will suffers no violence from it. Grace has

power, not to force but to entice the heart; she has a holy violence

not to violate our liberty but to make it full of love; she acts

strongly, yet so sweetly that our will is not overwhelmed by so

powerful an action; she presses us but does not oppress our liberty; so

that under the very action of her power, we can consent to or resist

her movements as we list. But what is as admirable as it is veritable

is, that when our will follows the attractions and consents to the

divine movement, she follows as freely as she resists freely when she

does resist, although the consent to grace depends much more on grace

than on the will, while the resistance to grace depends upon the will

only. So sweet is God's hand in the handling of our hearts! So

dexterous is it in communicating unto us its strength without depriving

us of liberty, and in imparting unto us the motion of its power without

hindering that of our will! He adjusts his power to his sweetness in

such sort, that as in what regards good his might sweetly gives us the

power, so his sweetness mightily maintains the freedom of the will. If

thou didst know the gift of God, said our Saviour to the Samaritan

woman, and who he is that saith to thee, give me to drink; thou perhaps

wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

[100] Note, I pray you, Theotimus, Our Saviour's manner of speaking of

his attractions. If thou didst know, he means, the gift of God, thou

wouldst without doubt be moved and attracted to ask the water of

eternal life, and perhaps thou wouldst ask it. As though he said: Thou

wouldst have power and wouldst be provoked to ask, yet in no wise be

forced or constrained; but only perhaps thou wouldst have asked, for

thy liberty would remain to ask it or not to ask it. Such are our

Saviour's words according to the ordinary edition, and according to S.

Augustine upon S. John.

To conclude, if any one should say that our free-will does not

co-operate in consenting to the grace with which God prevents it, or

that it could not reject and deny consent thereto, he would contradict

the whole Scripture, all the ancient Fathers, and experience, and would

be excommunicated by the sacred Council of Trent. But when it is said

that we have power to reject the divine inspirations and motions, it is

of course not meant that we can hinder God from inspiring us or

touching our hearts, for as I have already said, that is done in us and

yet without us. These are favours which God bestows upon us before we

have thought of them, he awakens us when we sleep, and consequently we

find ourselves awake before we have thought of it; but it is in our

power to rise, or not to rise, and though he has awakened us without

us, he will not raise us without us. Now not to rise, and to go to

sleep again, is to resist the call, seeing we are called only to the

end we should rise. We cannot hinder the inspiration from taking us, or

consequently from setting us in motion, but if as it drives us forwards

we repulse it by not yielding ourselves to its motion, we then make

resistance. So the wind, having seized upon and raised our apodes, will

not bear them very far unless they display their wings and co-operate,

raising themselves aloft and flying in the air, into which they have

been lifted. If, on the contrary, allured may be by some verdure they

see upon the ground, or benumbed by their stay there, in lieu of

seconding the wind they keep their wings folded and cast themselves

again upon the earth, they have received indeed the motion of the wind,

but in vain, since they did not help themselves thereby. Theotimus,

inspirations prevent us, and even before they are thought of make

themselves felt, but after we have felt them it is ours either to

consent to them so as to second and follow their attractions, or else

to dissent and repulse them. They make themselves felt by us without

us, but they do not make us consent without us.

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[98] Acts ix. 15.

[99] Osee xi. 4.

[100] John iv. 10.

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CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE FIRST SENTIMENTS OF LOVE WHICH DIVINE INSPIRATIONS CAUSE IN THE

SOUL BEFORE SHE HAS FAITH.

The wind that raises the apodes blows first upon their feathers, as the

parts most light and most susceptible of its agitation, by which it

gives the beginning of motion to their wings, extending and displaying

them in such sort that they give a hold by which to seize the bird and

waft it into the air. And if they, thus raised, do contribute the

motion of their wings to that of the wind, the same wind that took them

will still aid them more and more to fly with ease. Even so, my dear

Theotimus, when the inspiration, as a sacred gale, comes to blow us

forward into the air of holy love, it first takes our will, and by the

sentiment of some heavenly delectation it moves it, extending and

unfolding the natural inclination which the will has to good, so that

this same inclination serves as a hold by which to seize our spirit.

And all this, as I have said, is done in us without us, for it is the

divine favour that prevents us in this sort. But if our will thus

holily prevented, perceiving the wings of her inclination moved,

displayed, extended, stirred, and agitated, by this heavenly wind,

contributes, be it never so little, its consent--Ah! how happy it is,

Theotimus. The same favourable inspiration which has seized us,

mingling its action with our consent, animating our feeble motions with

its vigour, and vivifying our weak cooperation by the power of its

operation, will aid, conduct, and accompany us, from love to love, even

unto the act of most holy faith requisite for our conversion.

True God! Theotimus, what a consolation it is to consider the secret

method by which the Holy Ghost pours into our hearts the first rays and

feelings of his light and vital heat! O Jesus! how delightful a

pleasure it is to see celestial love, which is the sun of virtues, as

little by little with a progress which insensibly becomes sensible, it

displays its light upon a soul, and stops not till it has it all

covered with the splendour of its presence, giving it at last the

perfect beauty of love's day! O how cheerful, beautiful, sweet and

agreeable this daybreak is! Nevertheless true it is that break of day

is either not day, or if it be day, it is but a beginning day, a rising

of the day, and rather the infancy of the day than the day itself. In

like manner without doubt these motions of love which forerun the act

of faith required for our justification are either not love properly

speaking, or but a beginning and imperfect love. They are the first

verdant buds which the soul, warmed with the heavenly sun, begins, as a

mystical tree, to put forth in springtime, rather presages of fruit

than fruit itself.

S. Pachomius then a young soldier and without knowledge of God,

enrolled under the colours of the army which Constantine had levied

against the tyrant Maxentius, came, with the troop to which he

belonged, to lodge nigh a little town not far distant from Thebes,

where he, and indeed the whole army, were in extreme want of victuals.

The inhabitants of the little town having understood this, being by

good fortune of the faithful of Jesus Christ, and consequently friendly

and charitable to their neighbours, immediately succoured the soldiers

in their necessities, but with such care, courtesy and love, that

Pachomius was struck with admiration thereat, and asking what nation it

was that was so good, amiable and gracious, it was answered him that

they were Christians; and inquiring again what law and manner of life

were theirs, he learned that they believed in Jesus Christ the only Son

of God, and did good to all sorts of people, with a firm hope of

receiving from God himself an ample recompense. Alas! Theotimus, the

poor Pachomius, though of a good natural disposition, was as yet asleep

in the bed of his infidelity, and behold how upon a sudden God was

present at the gate of his heart, and by the good example of these

Christians, as by a sweet voice, he calls him, awakens him, and gives

him the first feelings of the vital heat of his love. For scarcely had

he heard, as I have said, of the sweet law of Our Saviour, than, all

filled with a new light and interior consolation, having retired apart,

and mused for a space, he lifted up his hands towards heaven, and with

a profound sigh he said: Lord God, who hast made heaven and earth, if

thou deign to cast thine eyes upon my baseness and misery, and to give

me the knowledge of thy divinity, I promise to serve thee, and obey thy

commandments all the days of my life! After this prayer and promise,

the love of the true good and of piety so increased in him, that he

ceased not to practise a thousand thousand acts of virtue.

Methinks I see in this example a nightingale which, awaking at the peep

of day, begins to stir, and to stretch itself, unfold its plumes, skip

from branch to branch in its grove, and little by little warble out its

delicious wood-music. For did you not note, how the good example of the

charitable Christians excited and awakened with a sudden start the

blessed Pachomius? Truly this astonished admiration he had was nothing

else than his awakening, in which God touched him, as the sun touches

the earth, with a ray of his brightness, which filled him with a great

feeling of spiritual pleasure. For which cause Pachomius shakes himself

loose from distractions, to the end he may with more attention and

facility gather together and relish the grace he has received,

withdrawing himself to think thereupon. Then he extends his heart and

hands towards heaven, whither the inspiration is drawing him, and

beginning to display the wings of his affections, flying between

diffidence of himself, and confidence in God, he entones in a humbly

amorous air the canticle of his conversion. He first testifies that he

already knows one only God Creator of heaven and earth: but withal he

knows that he does not yet know him sufficiently to serve him as he

ought, and therefore he petitions that a more perfect knowledge may be

imparted to him, that thereby he may come to the perfect service of his

divine majesty.

Behold, therefore, I pray you, Theotimus, how gently God moves,

strengthening by little and little the grace of his inspiration in

consenting hearts, drawing them after him, as it were step by step,

upon this Jacob's ladder. But what are his drawings? The first, by

which he prevents and awakens us, is done by him in us and without our

action; all the others are also done by him and in us, but not without

our action. Draw me: says the sacred spouse, we will run after thee to

the odour of thy ointments, [101] that is, begin thou first: I cannot

awake of myself, I cannot move unless thou move me; but when thou shalt

once have given motion, then, O dear spouse of my heart, we run, we

two, thou runnest before me drawing me ever forward, and, as for me, I

will follow thee in thy course consenting to thy drawing. But let no

one think that thou draggest me after thee like a forced slave, or a

lifeless wagon. Ah! no, thou drawest me by the odour of thy ointments;

though I follow thee, it is not that thou trailest me but that thou

enticest me; thy drawing is mighty, but not violent, since its whole

force lies in its sweetness. Perfumes have no other force to draw men

to follow them than their sweetness, and sweetness--how could it draw

but sweetly and delightfully?

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[101] Cant. i. 3.

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CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE SENTIMENT OF DIVINE LOVE WHICH IS HAD BY FAITH.

When God gives us faith he enters into our soul and speaks to our

spirit, not by manner of discourse, but by way of inspiration,

proposing in so sweet a manner unto the understanding that which ought

to be believed, that the will receives therefrom a great complacency,

so great indeed that it moves the understanding to consent and yield to

truth without any doubt or distrust, and here lies the marvel: for God

proposes the mysteries of faith to our souls amidst obscurities and

darkness, in such sort that we do not see the truths but we only

half-see them. [102] It is like what happens sometimes when the face of

the earth is covered with mist so that we cannot see the sun, but only

see a little more brightness in the direction where he is. Then, as one

would say, we see it without seeing it; because on the one hand we see

it not so well that we can truly say we see it, yet again we see it not

so little that we can say we do not see it; and this is what we call

half-seeing. And yet, when this obscure light of faith has entered our

spirit, not by force of reasoning or show of argument, but solely by

the sweetness of its presence, it makes the understanding believe and

obey it with so much authority that the certitude it gives us of the

truth surpasses all other certitudes, and keeps the understanding and

all its workings in such subjection that they get no hearing in

comparison with it.

May I, Theotimus, have leave to say this? Faith is the chief beloved of

our understanding, and may justly speak to human sciences which boast

that they are more evident and clear than she, as did the sacred spouse

to the other shepherdesses. I am black but beautiful, [103] --O human

reasonings, O acquired knowledge! I am black, for I am amidst the

obscurities of simple revelation, which have no apparent evidence, and

which make me look black, putting me well-nigh out of knowledge: yet I

am beautiful in myself by reason of my infinite certainty; and if

mortal eyes could behold me such as I am by nature they would find me

all fair. And must it not necessarily follow that in effect I am

infinitely to be loved, since the gloomy darkness and thick mists, amid

which I am--not seen but only half-seen cannot hinder me from being so

dearly loved, that the soul, prizing me above all, cleaving the crowd

of all other knowledges, makes them all give place to me and receives

me as his queen, placing me on the highest throne in his palace, from

whence I give the law to all sciences, and keep all argument and all

human sense under? Yea, verily, Theotimus, even as the commanders of

the army of Israel taking off their garments, put them together and

made a royal throne of them, on which they placed Jehu, and said: Jehu

is king: [104] so on the arrival of faith, the understanding puts off

all discourse and arguments, and laying them underneath faith, makes

her sit upon them, acknowledging her as Queen, and with great joy cries

out: Long live faith!

Pious discourses and arguments, the miracles and other advantages of

the Christian religion, make it extremely credible and knowable, but

faith alone makes it believed and acknowledged, enamouring men with the

beauty of its truth, and making them believe the truth of its beauty,

by means of the sweetness faith pours into their wills, and the

certitude which it gives to their understanding. The Jews saw the

miracles and heard the marvellous teachings of Our Saviour, but being

indisposed to receive faith, that is, their will not being susceptible

of the gentle sweetness of faith, on account of the bitterness and

malice with which they were filled, they persisted in their infidelity.

They perceived the force of the argument, but they relished not the

sweetness of the conclusion, and therefore did not acquiesce in its

truth. But the act of faith consists in this very acquiescence of our

spirit, which having received the grateful light of truth, accepts it

by means of a sweet, yet powerful and solid assurance and certitude

which it finds in the authority of the revelation which has been made

to her.

You have heard, Theotimus, that in general councils there are great

disputations and inquiries made about truth by discourse, reasons and

theological arguments, but the matters being discussed, the Fathers,

that is, the bishops, and especially the Pope who is the chief of the

bishops, conclude, resolve and determine; and the determination being

once pronounced, every one fully accepts it and acquiesces in it, not

in consideration of the reasons alleged in the preceding discussion and

inquisition, but in virtue of the authority of the Holy Ghost, who,

presiding invisibly in councils, has judged, determined and concluded,

by the mouth of his servants whom he has established pastors of

Christianity. The inquisition then and the disputation are made in the

priests' court by the doctors, but the resolution and acquiescence are

formed in the sanctuary, where the Holy Ghost who animates the body of

his Church, speaks by the mouth of its chiefs, as Our Lord has

promised. In like manner the ostrich lays her eggs upon the sands of

Libya, but the sun alone hatches her young ones; and doctors by their

inquiry and discourse propose truth, but only the beams of the sun of

justice give certainty and acquiescence. To conclude then, Theotimus,

this assurance which man's reason finds in things revealed and in the

mysteries of faith, begins by an amorous sentiment of complacency which

the will receives from the beauty and sweetness of the proposed truth;

so that faith includes a beginning of love, which the heart feels

towards divine things.

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[102] Nous ne voyons pas, ains seluement nous entrevoyons.

[103] Cant. i. 4.

[104] 4 Kings ix. 13.

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CHAPTER XV.

OF THE GREAT SENTIMENT OF LOVE WHICH WE RECEIVE BY HOLY HOPE.

As when exposed to the rays of the sun at mid-day, we hardly see the

brightness before we suddenly feel the heat; so the light of faith has

no sooner spread the splendour of its truths in our understanding, but

immediately our will feels the holy heat of heavenly love. Faith makes

us know by an infallible certitude that God is, that he is infinite in

goodness, that he can communicate himself unto us, and not only that he

can, but that he will; so that by an ineffable sweetness he has

provided us with all things requisite to obtain the happiness of

immortal glory. Now we have a natural inclination to the sovereign

good, by reason of which our heart is touched with a certain inward

anxious desire and continual uneasiness, not being able in any way to

quiet itself, or to cease to testify that its perfect satisfaction and

solid contentment are wanting to it. But when holy faith has

represented to our understanding this lovely object of our natural

inclination,--Oh! Theotimus, what joy! what pleasure! how our whole

soul is thrilled, and, all amazed at the sight of so excellent a

beauty, it cries out with love: Behold, thou art fair, my beloved,

behold thou art fair! [105]

Eliezer sought a wife for the son of his master Abraham; how could he

tell whether he should find her beautiful and gracious as he desired?

But when he had found her at the fountain, and saw her so excellent in

beauty and so perfect in sweetness, and especially when he had obtained

her, he adored God, and blessed him with thanksgiving, full of

incomparable joy. Man's heart tends to God by its natural inclination,

without fully knowing what he is; but when it finds him at the fountain

of faith, and sees him so good, so lovely, so sweet and gracious to

all, and so ready to give himself, as the sovereign good, to all who

desire him,--O God! what delight! and what sacred movements in the

soul, to unite itself for ever to this goodness so sovereignty amiable!

I have found, says the soul thus inspired, I have at last found that

which my heart desired, and now I am at rest. And as Jacob, having seen

the fair Rachel, after he had holily kissed her, melted into tears of

sweetness for the happiness he experienced in so desirable a meeting,

so our poor heart, having found God, and received of him the first

kiss, the kiss of holy faith, it dissolves forthwith in sweetness of

love for the infinite good which it presently discovers in that

sovereign beauty.

We sometimes experience in ourselves a certain joyousness which comes

as it were unexpectedly, without any apparent reason, and this is often

a presage of some greater joy; whence many are of opinion that our good

angels, foreseeing the good which is coming unto us, give us by this

means a foretaste thereof, as on the contrary they give us certain

fears and terrors amidst dangers we are not aware of, to make us invoke

God's assistance and stand upon our guard. Now when the presaged good

arrives, we receive it with open arms, and reflecting upon the

joyousness we formerly felt without knowing its cause, we only then

begin to perceive that it was a forerunner of the happiness we now

enjoy. Even so, my dear Theotimus, our heart having had for so long a

time an inclination to its sovereign good, knew not to what end this

motion tended: but so soon as faith has shown it, then man clearly

discerns that this was what his soul coveted, his understanding sought,

and his inclination tended towards. Certainly, whether we wish or wish

not, our soul tends towards the sovereign good. But what is this

sovereign good? We are like those good Athenians who sacrificed unto

the true God, although he was unknown to them, till the great S. Paul

taught them the knowledge of him. For so our heart, by a deep and

secret instinct, in all its actions tends towards, and aims at,

felicity, seeking it here and there, as it were groping, without

knowing where it resides, or in what it consists, till faith shows and

describes the infinite marvels thereof. But then, having found the

treasure it sought for,--ah! what a satisfaction to this poor human

heart! What joy, what complacency of love! O I have met with him, whom

my heart sought for without knowing him! O how little I knew whither my

aims tended, when nothing contented me of all I aimed at, because, in

fact, I knew not what I was aiming at. I was seeking to love and knew

not what to love, and therefore my intention not finding its true love,

my love remained ever in a true but ignorant intention. I had indeed

sufficient foretaste of love to make me seek, but not sufficient

knowledge of the goodness I had to love, to actually practise love.

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[105] Cant. i. 14.

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CHAPTER XVI.

HOW LOVE IS PRACTISED IN HOPE.

Man's understanding then, being property applied to the consideration

of that which faith represents to it touching its sovereign good, the

will instantly conceives an extreme complacency in this divine object,

which, as yet absent, begets an ardent desire of its presence, whence

the soul holily cries out: Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth.

[106] My soul panteth after thee, O God. [107]

And as the unhooded falcon having her prey in view suddenly launches

herself upon the wing, and if held in her leash struggles upon the hand

with extreme ardour; so faith, having drawn the veil of ignorance, and

made us see our sovereign good, whom nevertheless we cannot yet

possess, detained by the condition of this mortal life,--Ah! Theotimus,

we then desire it in such sort that, as the hart panteth after the

fountains of waters; so my soul panteth after thee, O God! My soul hath

thirsted after the strong living God; when shall I come and appear

before the face of God? [108]

This desire is just, Theotimus, for who would not desire so desirable a

good? But it would be a useless desire, and would be but a continual

torment to our heart if we had not assurance that we should at length

satiate it. He who on account of the delay of this happiness, protests

that his tears were his ordinary bread day and night, so long as his

God was absent, and his enemies demanded: where is thy God? [109]

--Alas! what would he have done if he had not had some hope of one day

enjoying this good, after which he sighed. The divine spouse goes

weeping and languishing with love, [110] because she does not at once

find the well-beloved she is searching for. The love of the

well-beloved had bred in her a desire, that desire begot an ardour to

pursue it, and that ardour caused in her a languishing which would have

consumed and annihilated her poor heart, unless she had hoped at length

to meet with what she sought after. So then, lest the unrest and

dolorous languor which the efforts of desiring love cause in our souls

should make us fail in courage or reduce us to despair, the same

sovereign good which moves in us so vehement a desire, also by a

thousand thousand promises made in his Word and his inspirations, gives

us assurance, that we may with ease obtain it, provided always that we

will to employ the means which he has prepared for use and offers us to

this effect.

Now these divine promises and assurances, by a particular marvel,

increase the cause of our disquiet, and yet, while they increase the

cause, they undo and destroy the effects. Yea, verily, Theotimus; for

the assurance which God gives us that paradise is ours, infinitely

strengthens the desire we have to enjoy it, and yet weakens, yea

altogether destroys, the trouble and disquiet which this desire brought

unto us; so that our hearts by the promises which the divine goodness

has made us, remain quite calmed, and this calm is the root of the most

holy virtue which we call hope. For the will, assured by faith that she

has power to enjoy the sovereign good by using the means appointed,

makes two great acts of virtue: by the one she expects from God the

fruition of his sovereign goodness, by the other she aspires to that

holy fruition.

And indeed, Theotimus, between hoping and aspiring (esperer et aspirer)

there is but this difference, that we hope for those things which we

expect to get by another's assistance, and we aspire unto those things

which we think to reach by means that lie in our own power. And since

we attain the fruition of our sovereign good, which is God, by his

favour, grace and mercy, and yet the same mercy will have us co-operate

with his favour, by contributing the weakness of our consent to the

strength of his grace; our hope is thence in some sort mingled with

aspiring, so that we do not altogether hope without aspiring, nor do we

ever aspire without entirely hoping. Hope then keeps ever the principal

place, as being founded upon divine grace, without which, as we cannot

even so much as think of our sovereign good in the way required to

reach it, so can we never without this grace aspire towards our

sovereign God in the way required to obtain it.

Aspiration then is a scion of hope, as our co-operation is of grace:

and as those that would hope without aspiring, would be rejected as

cowardly and negligent; so those that should aspire without hoping,

would be rash, insolent and presumptuous. But when hope is seconded

with aspiration, when, hoping we aspire and aspiring we hope, then dear

Theotimus, hope by aspiration becomes a courageous desire, and

aspiration is changed by hope into a humble claim, and we hope and

aspire as God inspires us. But both are caused by that desiring love

which tends to our sovereign good, to that good which the more surely

it is hoped for, the more it is loved; yea hope is no other thing than

the loving complacency we take in the expecting and seeking our

sovereign good. All that is there is love, Theotimus. As soon as faith

has shown me my sovereign good, I have loved it; and because it was

absent I have desired it, and having understood that it would bestow

itself upon me, I have loved and desired it yet more ardently; for

indeed its goodness is so much more to be beloved and desired by how

much more it is disposed to communicate itself. Now by this progress

love has turned its desire into hope, seeking and expectation, so that

hope is an expectant and aspiring love; and because the sovereign good

which hope expects is God, and because also she expects it from God

himself, to whom and by whom she hopes and aspires, this holy virtue of

hope, abutting everywhere on God, is by consequence a divine or

theological virtue.

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[106] Cant. i. 1.

[107] Ps. xli. 1.

[108] Ibid. 1, 2.

[109] Ps. xli. 4.

[110] Cant. v. 8.

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CHAPTER XVII.

THAT THE LOVE WHICH IS IN HOPE IS VERY GOOD, THOUGH IMPERFECT.

The love which we practise in hope goes indeed to God, Theotimus, but

it returns to us; its sight is turned upon the divine goodness, yet

with some respect to our own profit; it tends to that supreme

perfection, but aiming at our own satisfaction. That is to say, it

bears us to God, not because he is sovereignty good in himself, but

because he is sovereignty good to us, in which as you see there is

something of the our and the us, so that this love is truly love, but

love of cupidity and self-interest. Yet I do not say that it does in

such sort return to ourselves that it makes us love God only for the

love of ourselves; O God! no: for the soul which should only love God

for the love of herself, placing the end of the love which she bears to

God in her own interest, would, alas! commit an extreme sacrilege. If a

wife loved her husband only for the love of his servant, she would love

her husband as a servant, and his servant as a husband: and the soul

that only loves God for love of herself, loves herself as she ought to

love God, and God as she ought to love herself.

But there is a great difference between this expression: I love God for

the good which I expect from him, and this: I only love God for the

good which I expect from him: as again it is a very different thing to

say: I love God for myself: and I love God for the love of myself. For

when I say I love God for myself, it is as if I said: I love to have

God, I love that God should be mine, should be my sovereign good; which

is a holy affection of the heavenly spouse, who a hundred times in

excess of delight protests: My beloved to me, and I to him, who feedeth

among the lilies. [111] But to say: I love God for love of myself, is

as if one should say; the love which I bear to myself is the end for

which I love God; in such sort that the love of God would be dependent,

subordinate, and inferior to self-love, to our love for ourselves,

which is a matchless impiety.

This love, then, which we term hope, is a love of cupidity, but of a

holy and well-ordered cupidity, by means whereof we do not draw God to

us nor to our utility, but we adjoin ourselves unto him as to our final

felicity. By this love we love ourselves together with God, yet not

preferring or equalizing ourselves to him; in this love the love of

ourselves is mingled with that of God, but that of God floats on the

top; our own love enters indeed, but as a simple motive, not as a

principal end; our own interest has some place there, but God holds the

principal rank. Yes, without doubt, Theotimus: for when we love God as

our sovereign good, we love him for a quality by which we do not refer

him to us but ourselves to him. We are not his end, aim, or perfection,

but he is ours; he does not appertain to us, but we to him; he depends

not on us but we on him; and, in a word, by the quality of sovereign

good for which we love him, he receives nothing of us, but we receive

of him. He exercises towards us his affluence and goodness, and we our

indigence and scarcity; so that to love God under the title of

sovereign good is to love him under an honourable and respectful title,

by which we acknowledge him to be our perfection, repose and end, in

the fruition of which our felicity consists. Some goods there are which

we use for ourselves when we employ them, as our slaves, servants,

horses, clothes: and the love which we bear unto them is a love of pure

cupidity, since we love them only for our own profit. Other goods there

are which we possess, but with a possession which is reciprocal and

equal on each side, as in the case of our friends: for the love we have

unto them inasmuch as they content us is indeed a love of cupidity, yet

of an honest cupidity, by which they are ours and we similarly theirs,

they belong to us and we equally to them. But there are yet other goods

which we possess with a possession of dependence, participation and

subjection, as we do the benevolence, or presence, or favour of our

pastors, princes, father, mother: for the love which we bear unto them

is then truly a love of cupidity, when we love them in that they are

our pastors, our princes, our fathers, our mothers, since it is not

precisely the quality of pastor, nor of prince, nor of father, nor of

mother, which is the cause of our affection towards them, but the fact

that they are so to us and in our regard. Still this cupidity is a love

of respect, reverence and honour; for we love our father, for example,

not because he is ours but because we are his; and after the same

manner it is that we love and aspire to God by hope, not to the end he

may become our good, but because he is it; not to the end he may become

ours, but because we are his; not as though he existed for us, but

inasmuch as we exist for him.

And note, Theotimus, that in this love, the reason why we love (that

is, why we apply our heart to the love of the good which we desire) is

because it is our good; but the measure and quantity of this love

depend on the excellence and dignity of the good which we love. We love

our benefactors because they are such to us, but we love them more or

less as they are more or less our benefactors. Why then do we love God,

Theotimus, with this love of cupidity? Because he is our good. But why

do we sovereignly love him? Because he is our sovereign good.

But when I say we love God sovereignly, I do not therefore say that we

love him with sovereign love. Sovereign love is only in charity,

whereas in hope love is imperfect, because it does not tend to his

infinite goodness as being such in itself, but only because it is such

to us. Still, because in this kind of love there is no motive more

excellent than that which proceeds from the consideration of the

sovereign good, we say that by it we love sovereignly, though in real

truth no one is able by virtue of this love either to keep God's

commandments, or obtain life everlasting, because it is a love that

yields more affection than effect, when it is not accompanied with

charity.

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[111] Cant. ii. 16.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

THAT LOVE IS EXERCISED IN PENITENCE, AND FIRST, THAT THERE ARE DIVERS

SORTS OF PENITENCE.

To speak generally, penitence is a repentance whereby a man rejects and

detests the sin he has committed, with the resolution to repair as much

as in him lies the offence and injury done to him against whom he has

sinned. I comprehend in penitence a purpose to repair the offence,

because that repentance does not sufficiently detest the fault which

voluntarily permits the principal effect thereof, to wit the offence

and injury, to subsist; and it permits it to subsist, so long as, being

able in some sort to make reparation, it does not do so.

I omit here the penitence of certain pagans, who, as Tertullian

witnesses, had some appearances of it amongst them, but so vain and

fruitless that they often had penitence for having done well; for I

speak only of virtuous penitence, which according to the different

motives whence it proceeds is also of various species. There is one

sort purely moral and human, as was that of Alexander the Great, who

having slain his dear Clitus determined to starve himself to death, so

great, says Cicero, was the force of penitence: or that of Alcibiades,

who, being convinced by Socrates that he was not a wise man, began to

weep bitterly, being sorrowful and afflicted for not being what he

ought to have been, as S. Augustine says. Aristotle also, recognising

this sort of penitence, assures us that the intemperate man who of set

purpose gives himself over to pleasures is wholly incorrigible, because

he cannot repent, and he that is without repentance is incurable.

Certainly, Seneca, Plutarch and the Pythagoreans, who so highly commend

the examen of conscience, but especially the first, who speaks so

feelingly of the torment which interior remorse excites in the soul,

must have understood that there was a repentance; and as for the sage

Epictetus, he so well describes the way in which a man should reprehend

himself that it could scarcely be better expressed.

There is yet another penitence which is indeed moral, yet religious

too, yea in some sort divine, proceeding from the natural knowledge

which we have of our offending God by sin. For certainly many

philosophers understood that to live virtuously was a thing agreeable

to the divinity, and that consequently to live viciously was offensive

to him. The good man Epictetus makes the wish to die a true Christian

(as it is very probable he did), and amongst other things he says he

should be content if dying he could lift up his hands to God and say

unto him: For my part I have not dishonoured Thee: and, further, he

will have his philosopher to make an admirable oath to God never to be

disobedient to his divine Majesty, nor to question or blame anything

coming from him, nor in any sort to complain thereof; and in another

place he teaches that God and our good angel are present during our

actions. You see clearly then, Theotimus, that this philosopher, while

yet a pagan, knew that sin offended God, as virtue honoured him, and

consequently he willed that it should be repented of, since he even

ordained an examen of conscience at night, about which, with

Pythagoras, he lays down this maxim

If thou hast ill done, chide thyself bitterly,

If thou hast well done, rest thee contentedly.

Now this kind of repentance joined to the knowledge and love of God

which nature can give, was a dependence of moral religion. But as

natural reason bestowed more knowledge than love upon the philosophers,

who did not glorify God in proportion to the knowledge they had of him,

so nature has furnished more light to understand how much God is

offended by sin, than heat to excite the repentance necessary for the

reparation of the offence.

But although religious penitence may have been in some sort recognized

by some of the philosophers, yet this has been so rarely and feebly,

that those who were reputed the most virtuous amongst them, to wit the

Stoics, maintained that the wise man was never grieved, whereupon they

framed a maxim as contrary to reason, as the proposition on which it

was grounded was contrary to experience, namely, that the wise man

sinned not.

We may therefore well say, Theotimus, that penitence is a virtue wholly

Christian, since on the one side it was so little known to the pagans,

and, on the other side, it is so well recognized amongst true

Christians, that in it consists a great part of the evangelical

philosophy, according to which whosoever affirms that he sins not, is

senseless, and whosoever expects without penitence to redress his sin

is mad; for it is our Saviour's exhortation of exhortations: Do

penance. [112] And now let me give a brief description of the progress

of this virtue.

We enter into a profound apprehending of the fact that, as far as is in

us, we offend God by our sins, despising and dishonouring him, giving

way to disobedience and rebellion against him; and he also on his part

considers himself as offended, irritated, and despised; for he

dislikes, reproves and abominates iniquity. From this true apprehension

there spring several motives, which all, or several together, or each

one apart, may carry us to this repentance.

For we consider sometimes how God who is offended has established a

rigorous punishment in hell for sinners, and how he will deprive them

of the paradise prepared for the good. And as the desire of paradise is

extremely honourable, so the fear of losing it is an excellent fear;

and not only so, but the desire of paradise being very worthy of

esteem, the fear of its contrary, which is hell, is good and

praiseworthy. Ah! who would not dread so great a loss, so great a

torment! And this double fear--the one servile, the other

mercenary--greatly bears us on towards a repentance for our sins, by

which we have incurred them. And to this effect in the Holy Word this

fear is a hundred and a hundred times inculcated. At other times we

consider the deformity and malice of sin, according as faith teaches

us; for example, because by it the likeness and image of God which we

have, is defiled and disfigured, the dignity of our soul dishonoured,

we are made like brute beasts, we have violated our duty towards the

Creator of the world, forfeited the good of the society of the angels,

to associate and subject ourselves to the devil, making ourselves

slaves of our passions, overturning the order of reason, offending our

good angels to whom we have so great obligations.

At other times we are provoked to repentance by the beauty of virtue,

which brings as much good with it as sin does evil; further we are

often moved to it by the example of the saints; for who could ever have

cast his eyes upon the exercises of the incomparable penitence of

Magdalen, of Mary of Egypt, or of the penitents of the monastery called

Prison, described by S. John Climacus, without being moved to

repentance for his sins, since the mere reading of the history incites

to it such as are not altogether insensible.

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[112] Matt. iv. 17.

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CHAPTER XIX.

THAT PENITENCE WITHOUT LOVE IS IMPERFECT.

Now all these motives are taught us by faith and the Christian

religion, and therefore the repentance which results from them is very

laudable though imperfect. Laudable certainly it is, for neither Holy

Scripture nor the Church would stir us up by such motives if the

penitence thence proceeding were not good, and we see manifestly that

it is a most reasonable thing to repent of sin for these

considerations, yea, that it is impossible that he who considers them

attentively should not repent. Yet still it is an imperfect repentance,

because divine love is not as yet found in it. Ah! do you not see,

Theotimus, that all these repentances are made for the sake of our own

soul, of its felicity, of its interior beauty, its honour, its dignity,

and in a word for love of ourselves, although a lawful, just and

well-ordered love.

And note, that I do not say that these repentances reject the love of

God, but only that they do not include it; they do not repulse it, yet

they do not contain it ; they are not contrary to it, but as yet are

without it; it is not forbidden entrance, and yet it is not in. The

will which simply embraces good is very good, yet if it so embrace this

as to reject the better, it is truly ill-ordered, not in accepting the

one but in repulsing the other. So the vow to give alms this day is

good, yet the vow to give only this day is bad, because it would

exclude the better, which is to give both to-day, to-morrow, and every

day when we are able. Certainly it is good, and this cannot be denied,

to repent of our sins in order to avoid the pains of hell and obtain

heaven, but he that should make the resolution never to be willing to

repent for any other motive, would wilfully shut out the better, which

is to repent for the love of God, and would commit a great sin. And

what father would not be ill pleased that his son was willing indeed to

serve him, yet never with love, or by love?

The beginning of good things is good, the progress better, the end the

best. At the same time, it is as a beginning that the beginning is

good, and as progress that progress is good: and to wish to finish the

work by its beginning or in its progress would be to invert the order

of things. Infancy is good, but to desire to remain always a child

would be bad; for the child of a hundred years old is despised. It is

laudable to begin to learn, yet he that should begin with intention

never to perfect himself would go against all reason. Fear, and those

other motives of repentance of which I spoke, are good for the

beginning of Christian wisdom, which consists in penitence; but he who

deliberately willed not to attain to love which is the perfection of

penitence, would greatly offend him who ordained all to his love, as to

the end of all things.

To conclude: the repentance which excludes the love of God is infernal

like to that of the damned. The repentance which does not reject the

love of God, though as yet it be without it, is a good and desirable

penitence, but imperfect, and it cannot give salvation until it attain

love and is mingled therewith. So that as the great Apostle said that

though he should deliver his body to be burned, and all his goods to

the poor, wanting charity it would profit him nothing, [113] so we may

truly say, that though our penitence were so great that it should cause

our eyes to dissolve in tears, and our hearts to break with sorrow, yet

if we have not the holy love of God, all this would profit nothing for

eternal life.

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[113] 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

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CHAPTER XX.

HOW THE MINGLING OF LOVE AND SORROW TAKES PLACE IN CONTRITION.

Nature, as far as I know, never converts fire into water, though some

waters turn into fire. Yet God did it once by miracle. For as it is

written in the Book of Machabees, [114] when the children of Israel

were conducted into Babylon, in the time of Sedecias, the priests, by

the counsel of Jeremias, hid the holy fire in a valley, in a dry well,

and upon their return, the children of those that had hid it went to

seek it, following the direction their fathers had given them, and they

found it converted into a thick water, which being drawn by them, and

poured upon the sacrifices, as Nehemias commanded, was, when the

sunbeams touched it, converted into a great fire.

Theotimus, amongst the tribulations and remorse of a lively repentance

God often puts in the bottom of our heart the sacred fire of his love,

this love is converted into the water of tears, they by a second change

into another and greater fire of love. Thus the famous penitent lover

first loved her Saviour, her love was converted into tears, and these

tears into an excellent love; whence Our Saviour told her that many

sins were pardoned her because she had loved much. [115] And as we see

fire turns wine into a certain water which is called almost everywhere

aquavit�, which so easily takes and augments fire that in many places

it is also termed ardent; so the amorous consideration of the goodness

which, while it ought to have been sovereignly loved, has been offended

by sin, produces the water of holy penitence; and from this water the

fire of divine love issues, thence properly termed water of life or

ardent. Penitence is indeed a water in its substance, being a true

displeasure, a real sorrow and repentance; yet is it ardent, in that it

contains the virtue and properties of love, as arising from a motive of

love, and by this property it gives the life of grace. So that perfect

penitence has two different effects; for in virtue of its sorrow and

detestation it separates us from sin and the creature, to which

delectation had attached us; but in virtue of the motive of love,

whence it takes its origin, it reconciles us and reunites us to our

God, from whom we had separated ourselves by contempt: so that it at

once reclaims us from sin in quality of repentance, and reunites us to

God in quality of love.

But I do not mean to say that the perfect love of God, by which we love

him above all things, always precedes this repentance, or that this

repentance always precedes this love. For though it often so happens,

still at other times, as soon as divine love is born in our hearts,

penitence is born within the love, and oftentimes penitence entering

into our heart, love enters in penitence. And as when Esau was born,

Jacob his twin brother held him by the foot, that their births might

not only follow the one the other, but also might cleave together and

be intermingled; so repentance, rude and rough in regard of its pain,

is born first, as another Esau; and love, gentle and gracious as Jacob,

holds him by the foot, and cleaves unto him so closely that their birth

is but one, since the end of the birth of repentance is the beginning

of that of perfect love. Now as Esau first appeared so repentance

ordinarily makes itself to be seen before love, but love, as another

Jacob, although the younger, afterwards subdues penitence, converting

it into consolation.

Mark, I pray you, Theotimus, the well-beloved Magdalen, how she weeps

with love: They have taken away my Lord, says she, melting into tears;

and I know not where they have laid him, [116] but having with sighs

and tears found him, she holds and possesses him by love. Imperfect

love desires and runs after him, penitence seeks and finds him; perfect

love holds and clasps him. It is with it as is said to be with

Ethiopian rubies, whose fire is naturally very faint, but when they are

dipped in vinegar it sparkles out and casts a most brilliant lustre:

for the love which goes before repentance is ordinarily imperfect; but

being steeped in the sharpness of penitence, it gains strength end

becomes excellent love.

It even happens sometimes that repentance, though perfect, contains not

in itself the proper action of love, but only the virtue and property

of it. You will ask me, what virtue or property of love can repentance

have, if it have not the action? Theotimus, God's goodness is the

motive of perfect repentance, which it displeases us to have offended:

now this motive is a motive only because it stirs us and gives us

movement. But the movement which the divine goodness gives unto the

heart which considers it, can be no other than the movement of love,

that is, of union. And therefore true repentance, though it seem not

so, and though we perceive not the proper effect of love, yet ever

takes the movement of love, and the unitive quality of love, by which

it re-unites and re-joins us to the divine goodness. Tell me, I

pray:--it is the property of the loadstone to draw and unite iron unto

itself; but do we not see that iron touched with the loadstone, without

having either it or its nature, but only its virtue and attractive

quality, can draw and unite to itself another iron? So perfect

repentance, touched with the motive of love, is not without the virtue

and quality thereof, that is, the movement of union to re-join and

re-unite our hearts to the divine will. But you will reply, what

difference is there between this movement of penitence, and the proper

action of love? Theotimus, the action of love is indeed a movement of

union, but it is made by complacency, whereas the movement of union

which is in penitence is not made by way of complacency, but by

displeasure, repentance, reparation, reconciliation. Forasmuch

therefore as this motive unites, it has the quality of love; inasmuch

as it is bitter and dolorous it has the quality of penitence, and in

fine, by its natural condition it is a true movement of penitence, but

one which has the virtue and uniting quality of love.

So Theriacum-wine is not so named because it contains the proper

substance of Theriacum, for there is none at all in it; but it is so

called because the plant of the vine having been steeped in Theriacum,

the grapes and the wine which have sprung from it have drawn into

themselves the virtue and operation of Theriacum against all sorts of

poison. We must not therefore think it strange if penitence, according

to the Holy scripture, blots out sin, saves the soul, makes her

grateful God and justifies her, which are effects appertaining to love,

and which apparently should only be attributed to love: for though love

itself be not always found in perfect penitence, yet its virtue and

properties are always there, having flowed into it by the motive of

love whence it springs.

Nor must we wonder that the force of love should be found in penitence

before love be formed in it, since we see that by the reflection of the

rays of the sun beating upon a mirror, heat, which is the virtue and

the proper quality of fire, grows by little and little so strong that

it begins to burn before it has yet well produced the fire, or at least

before we have perceived it. For so the Holy Ghost casting into our

understanding the consideration of the greatness of our sins, in that

by them we have offended so sovereign a goodness, and our will

receiving the reflection of this knowledge, repentance by little and

little grows so strong, with a certain affective heat and desire to

return into grace with God, that in fine this movement comes to such a

height, that it burns and unites even before the love be fully formed,

though love, as a sacred fire, is always at once lighted, at this

point. So that repentance never comes to this height of burning and

re-uniting the heart to God, which is her utmost perfection, without

finding herself wholly converted into fire and flame of love, the end

of the one giving the other a beginning; or rather, the end of

penitence is within the commencement of love, as Esau's foot was within

Jacob's hand; in such sort that while Esau was ending his birth, Jacob

was beginning his, the end of the one's birth being joined and fastened

to, yea, what is more, included in, the beginning of the other's: for

so the beginning of perfect love not only follows the end of penitence

but even cleaves and ties itself to it; and to say all in one word,

this beginning of love mingles itself with the end of penitence, and in

this moment of mingling, penitence and contrition merit life

everlasting.

Now because this loving repentance is ordinarily practised by

elevations and raisings of the heart to God, like to those of the

ancient penitents: I am thine, save thou me. Have mercy on me, O God,

have mercy on me: for my soul trusteth in thee! Save me, O God; for the

waters are come in even unto my soul! Make me as one of thy hired

servants! O God be merciful to me a sinner!--it is not without reason

that some have said, that prayer justifies; for the repentant prayer,

or the suppliant repentance, raising up the soul to God and re-uniting

it to his goodness, without doubt obtains pardon in virtue of the holy

love, which gives it the sacred movement. And therefore we ought all to

have very many such ejaculatory prayers, made in the sense of a loving

repentance and of sighs which seek our reconciliation with God, so that

by these laying our tribulation before Our Saviour, we may pour out our

souls before and within his pitiful heart, which will receive them to

mercy.

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[114] 2 Mach. i.

[115] Luke vii. 47.

[116] John xx. 13.

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CHAPTER XXI.

HOW OUR SAVIOUR'S LOVING ATTRACTIONS ASSIST AND ACCOMPANY US TO FAITH

AND CHARITY.

Between the first awaking from sin or infidelity to the final

resolution of a perfect belief, there often runs a good deal of time in

which we are able to pray, as we have seen S. Pachomius did, and as

that poor lunatic's father, who, as S. Mark relates, giving assurance

that he believed, that is, that he began to believe, knew at the same

time that he did not believe sufficiently; whence he cried out: I do

believe, Lord help my unbelief, [117] as though he would say: I am no

longer in the obscurity of the night of infidelity, the rays of your

faith already enlighten the horizon of my soul: but still I do not yet

believe as I ought; it is a knowledge as yet weak and mixed with

darkness; Ah! Lord, help me. And the great S. Augustine solemnly

pronounces these remarkable words: "But listen, O man! and understand.

Art thou not drawn? pray, in order that thou mayest be drawn." In which

words his intention is not to speak of the first movement which God

works in us without us, when he excites and awakens us out of the sleep

of sin: for how could we ask to be awakened seeing no man can pray

before he be awakened? But he speaks of the resolution which we make to

be faithful, for he considers that to believe is to be drawn, and

therefore he admonishes such as have been excited to believe in God, to

ask the gift of faith. And indeed no one could better know the

difficulties which ordinarily pass between the first movement God makes

in us, and the perfect resolution of believing fully, than S.

Augustine, who having had so great a variety of attractions by the

words of the glorious S. Ambrose, by the conference he had with

Politian, and a thousand other means, yet made so many delays and had

so much difficulty in resolving. For more truly to him than to any

other might have been applied that which he afterwards said to others:

Alas! Augustine, if thou be not drawn, if thou believe not, pray that

thou mayest be drawn, and that thou mayest believe.

Our Saviour draws hearts by the delights that he gives them, which make

them find heavenly doctrine sweet and agreeable, but, until this

sweetness has engaged and fastened the will by its beloved bonds to

draw it to the perfect acquiescence and consent of faith, as God does

not fail to exercise his greatness upon us by his holy inspirations, so

does not our enemy cease to practise his malice by temptations. And

meantime we remain in full liberty, to consent to the divine drawings

or to reject them; for as the sacred Council of Trent has clearly

decreed: "If any one should say that man's freewill, being moved and

incited by God, does not in any way co-operate, by consenting to God,

who moves and calls him that he may dispose and prepare himself to

obtain the grace of justification, and that he is unable to refuse

consent though he would," truly such a man would be excommunicated, and

reproved by the Church. But if we do not repulse the grace of holy

love, it dilates itself by continual increase in our souls, until they

are entirely converted; like great rivers, which finding open plains

spread themselves, and ever take up more space.

But if the inspiration, having drawn us to faith, find no resistance in

us, it draws us also to penitence and charity. S. Peter, as an apode,

raised by the inspiration which came from the eyes of his master,

freely letting himself be moved and carried by this gentle wind of the

Holy Ghost, looks upon those life-giving eyes which had excited him; he

reads as in the book of life the sweet invitation to pardon which the

divine clemency offers him; he draws from it a just motive of hope; he

goes out of the court, considers the horror of his sin, and detests it;

he weeps, he sobs, he prostrates his miserable heart before his

Saviour's mercy, craves pardon for his faults, makes a resolution of

inviolable loyalty, and by this progress of movements, practised by the

help of grace which continually conducts, assists, and helps him, he

comes at length to the holy remission of his sins, and passes so from

grace to grace: according to what S. Prosper lays down, that without

grace a man doos not run to grace.

So then to conclude this point, the soul, prevented by grace, feeling

the first drawings, and consenting to their sweetness, as if returning

to herself after a long swoon, begins to sigh out these words: Ah! my

dear spouse, my friend! Draw me, I beseech thee, and take hold of me

under my arms, for otherwise I am not able to walk: but if thou draw me

we run, thou in helping me by the odour of thy perfumes, and I

corresponding by my weak consent, and by relishing thy sweetnesses

which strengthen and reinvigorate me, till the balm of thy sacred name,

that is the salutary ointment of my justification be poured out over

me. Do you see, Theotimus, she would not pray if she were not excited;

but as soon as she is, and feels the attractions, she prays that she

may be drawn; being drawn she runs, nevertheless she would not run if

the perfumes which draw her and by which she is drawn did not inspirit

her heart by the power of their precious odour; and as her course is

more swift, and as she approaches nearer her heavenly spouse, she has

ever a more delightful sense of the sweetnesses which he pours out,

until at last he himself flows out in her heart, like a spread balm,

whence she cries, as being surprised by this delight, not so quickly

expected, and as yet unlooked for: O my spouse, thou art as balm poured

into my bosom; it is no marvel that young souls cherish thee dearly.

In this way, my dear Theotimus, the divine inspiration comes to us, and

prevents use moving our wills to sacred love. And if we do not repulse

it, it goes with us and keeps near us, to incite us and ever push us

further forwards; and if we do not abandon it, it does not abandon us,

till such time as it has brought us to the haven of most holy charity,

performing for us the three good offices which the great angel Raphael

fulfilled for his dear Tobias: for it guides us through all our journey

of holy penitence, it preserves us from dangers and from the assaults

of the devil, and it consoles, animates, and fortifies us in our

difficulties.

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[117] Mark ix. 23.

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CHAPTER XXII.

A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF CHARITY.

Behold at length, Theotimus, how God, by a progress full of ineffable

sweetness, conducts the soul which he makes leave the Egypt of sin,

from love to love, as from mansion to mansion, till he has made her

enter into the land of promise, I mean into most holy charity, which to

say it in one word, is a friendship, and a disinterested love, for by

charity we love God for his own sake, by reason of his most sovereignly

amiable goodness. But this friendship is a true friendship, being

reciprocal, for God has loved eternally all who have loved him, do, or

shall love him temporally. It is shown and acknowledged mutually, since

God cannot be ignorant of the love we bear him, he himself bestowing it

upon us, nor can we be ignorant of his love to us, seeing that he has

so published it abroad, and that we acknowledge all the good we have,

to be true effects of his benevolence. And in fine we have continual

communications with him, who never ceases to speak unto our hearts by

inspirations, allurements, and sacred motions; he ceases not to do us

good, or to give all sorts of testimonies of his most holy affection,

having openly revealed unto us all his secrets, as to his confidential

friends. And to crown his holy loving intercourse with us, he has made

himself our proper food in the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist;

and as for us, we have freedom to treat with him at all times when we

please in holy prayer, having our whole life, movement and being not

only with him, but in him and by him.

Now this friendship is not a simple friendship, but a friendship of

dilection, by which we make election of God, to love him with a special

love. He is chosen, says the sacred spouse, out of thousands [118]

--she says out of thousands, but she means out of all, whence this love

is not a love of simple excellence, but an incomparable love; for

charity loves God by a certain esteem and preference of his goodness so

high and elevated above all other esteems, that other loves either are

not true loves in comparison of this, or if they be true loves, this

love is infinitely more than love; and therefore, Theotimus, it is not

a love which the force of nature either angelic or human can produce,

but the Holy Ghost gives it and pours it abroad in our hearts. [119]

And as our souls which give life to our bodies, have not their origin

from the body but are put in them by the natural providence of God, so

charity which gives life to our hearts has not her origin from our

hearts, but is poured into them as a heavenly liquor by the

supernatural providence of his divine Majesty.

For this reason, and because it has reference to God and tends unto him

not according to the natural knowledge we have of his goodness, but

according to the supernatural knowledge of faith, we name it

supernatural friendship. Whence it, together with faith and hope, makes

its abode in the point and summit of the spirit, and, as a queen of

majesty, is seated in the will as on her throne, whence she conveys

into the soul her delights and sweetnesses, making her thereby all

fair, agreeable and amiable to the divine goodness. So that if the soul

be a kingdom of which the Holy Ghost is king, charity is the queen set

at his right hand in gilded clothing surrounded with variety; [120] if

the soul be a queen, spouse to the great king of heaven, charity is her

crown, which royally adorns her head; and if the soul with the body be

a little world, charity is the sun which beautifies all, heats all, and

vivifies all.

Charity, then, is a love of friendship, a friendship of dilection, a

dilection of preference, but a preference incomparable, sovereign, and

supernatural, which is as a sun in the whole soul to enlighten it with

its rays, in all the spiritual faculties to perfect them, in all the

powers to moderate them, but in the will as on its throne, there to

reside and to make it cherish and love its God above all things. O how

happy is the soul wherein this holy love is poured abroad, since all

good things come together with her! [121]

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[118] Cant. v. 10.

[119] Rom v. 5.

[120] Ps. xliv. 10.

[121] Wisdom vii. 11.

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BOOK III.

OF THE

PROGRESS AND PERFECTION OF LOVE.

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CHAPTER I.

THAT HOLY LOVE MAY BE AUGMENTED STILL MORE AND MORE IN EVERY ONE OF US.

The sacred Council of Trent assures us, that the friends of God,

proceeding from virtue to virtue, are day by day renewed, that is, they

increase by good works in the justice which they have received by God's

grace, and are more and more justified, according to those heavenly

admonitions; He that is just let him be justified still: and he that is

holy, let him be sanctified still. [122] And: Be not afraid to be

justified even to death. [123] The path of the just, as a shining

light, goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day. [124] Doing

the truth in charity, let us in all things grow up in him who is the

head, even Christ. [125] And finally: This I pray, that your charity

may more and more abound in knowledge and in all understanding. [126]

All these are sacred words out of David, S. John, Ecclesiasticus, and

S. Paul.

I never heard of any living creature whose growth was not bounded and

limited, except the crocodile, who from an extremely little beginning

never ceases to grow till it comes to its end, representing equally in

this the good and the wicked: For the pride of them that hate thee

ascendeth continually, [127] says the great king David; and the good

increase as the break of day, from brightness to brightness. And to

remain at a standstill is impossible; he that gains not, loses in this

traffic; he that ascends not, descends upon this ladder; he that

vanquishes not in this battle, is vanquished: we live amidst the

dangers of the wars which our enemies wage against us, if we resist not

we perish; and we cannot resist unless we overcome, nor overcome

without triumph. For as the glorious S. Bernard says: "It is written in

particular of man that he never continueth in the same state; [128] he

necessarily either goes forward or returns backward. All run indeed but

one obtains the prize, so run that you may obtain. [129] Who is the

prize but Jesus Christ? And how can you take hold on him if you follow

him not? But if you follow him you will march and run continually, for

he never stayed, but continued his course of love and obedience until

death and the death of the cross."

Go then, says S. Bernard; go, I say with him; go, my dear Theotimus,

and admit no other bounds than those of life, and as long as it remains

run after this Saviour. But run ardently and swiftly: for what better

will you be for following him, if you be not so happy as to take hold

of him! Let us hear the Prophet: I have inclined my heart to do thy

justifications for ever, [130] he does not say that he will do them for

a time only, but for ever, and because he desires eternally to do well,

he shall have an eternal reward. Blessed are the undefiled in the way,

who walk in the law of the Lord. [131] Accursed are they who are

defiled, who walk not in the law of the Lord: it is only for the devil

to say that he will sit in the sides of the north. [132] Detestable

one, wilt thou sit? Ah! knowest thou not that thou art upon the way,

and that the way is not made to sit down but to go in, and it is so

made to go in, that going is called making way. And God speaking to one

of his greatest friends says: Walk before me and be perfect. [133]

True virtue has no limits, it goes ever further; but especially holy

charity, which is the virtue of virtues, and which, having an infinite

object, would be capable of becoming infinite if it could meet with a

heart capable of infinity. Nothing hinders this love from being

infinite except the condition of the will which receives it, and which

is to act by it: a condition which prevents any one loving God as much

as God is amiable, as it prevents them from seeing him as much as he is

visible. The heart which could love God with a love equal to the divine

goodness would have a will infinitely good, which cannot be but in God.

Charity then in us may be perfected up to the infinite, but

exclusively; that is, charity may become more and more, and ever more,

excellent, yet never infinite. The Holy Ghost may elevate our hearts,

and apply them to what supernatural actions it may please him, so they

be not infinite. Between little and great things, though the one exceed

the other never so much, there is still some proportions provided

always that the excess of the thing which exceeds be not an infinite

excess: but between finite and infinite there is no proportion, and to

make any, it would be necessary, either to raise the finite and make it

infinite, or to lower the infinite and make it finite, which is

impossible.

So that even the charity which is in our Redeemer, as he is man, though

greater than Angels or men can comprehend, yet is not infinite of

itself and in its own being, but only in regard to its value and merit,

as being the charity of a divine Person who is the eternal Son of the

omnipotent Father.

Meanwhile it is an extreme honour to our souls that they may still grow

more and more in the love of their God, as long as they shall live in

this failing life: Ascending by steps from virtue to virtue. [134]

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[122] Apoc. xxii. 11.

[123] Ecclus. xviii. 22.

[124] Prov. iv. 18.

[125] Eph. iv. 15.

[126] Phil. i. 9.

[127] Ps. lxxiii. 23.

[128] Job xiv. 2.

[129] 1 Cor. ix. 24.

[130] Ps. cxviii. 112.

[131] Ibid. 1.

[132] Is. xiv. 13.

[133] Gen. xvii. 1.

[134] Ps. lxxxiii. 6.

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CHAPTER II.

HOW EASY OUR SAVIOUR HAS MADE THE INCREASE OF LOVE.

Do you see, Theotimus, that glass of water or that piece of bread which

a holy soul gives to a poor body for God's sake; it is a small matter,

God knows, and in human judgment hardly worthy of consideration: God,

notwithstanding, recompenses it, and forthwith gives for it some

increase of charity. The goat's-hair which was anciently presented to

the Tabernacle was received in good part, and had place amongst the

holy offerings; and the little actions which proceed from charity are

agreeable to God, and have their place among merits. For as in Araby

the Blest, not only the plants which are by nature aromatic, but even

all the others, are sweet, gaining a share in the felicity of that

soil; so in a charitable soul not only the works which are excellent of

their own nature, but also the little actions, smell of the virtue of

holy love, and have a good odour before the majesty of God, who in

consideration of them increases charity. And I say God does it, because

Charity does not produce her own increase as a tree does, which by its

own virtue produces and throws out, one from another, its boughs: but

as Faith, Hope and Charity are virtues which have their origin from the

divine goodness, so thence also they draw their increase and

perfection, not unlike bees, which, having their extraction from honey,

have also their food from it.

Wherefore, as pearls are not only bred of dew but fed also with it, the

mother-pearls to this end opening their shells towards heaven to beg,

as it were, the drops which the freshness of the air makes fall at the

break of day, so we, having received Faith, Hope and Charity from the

heavenly bounty, ought always to turn our hears and keep them turned

towards it, thence to obtain the continuation and augmentation of the

same virtues. "O, Lord," does holy Church our mother teach us to say,

"give us the increase of faith, hope and charity." And this is in

imitation of those that said to Our Saviour: Lord increase our faith,

[135] and following the counsel of S. Paul, who assures us that: God

alone is able to make all grace abound in us. [136]

It is God therefore that gives this increase, in consideration of the

use we make of his grace, as it is written; For he that hath, that is,

who uses well the favours received, to him shall be given, and he shall

abound. [137] Thus is Our Saviour's exhortation practised: Lay up to

yourselves treasures in heaven: [138] as though he said: add ever new

good works to the former ones; for fasting, prayer and alms-deeds are

the coins whereof your treasures are to consist. Now as amongst the

treasures of the temple, the poor widow's mite was much esteemed, and

as indeed, by the addition of many little pieces treasures become

great, and their value increases, so the least little good works, even

though performed somewhat coldly, and not according to the whole extent

of the charity which is in us, are agreeable to God, and esteemed by

him; in such sort that though of themselves they cannot cause any

increase in the existing love, being of less force than it, yet the

divine Providence, counting, and out of his goodness, valuing them,

forthwith rewards them with increase of charity for the present, and

assigns to them a greater heavenly glory for the future.

Theotimus, bees make the delicious honey which is their chief work; but

the wax, which they also make, does not therefore cease to be of some

worth, or to make their labour valuable. The loving heart ought to

endeavour to bring forth works full of fervour, and of high value, that

it may powerfully augment charity: yet if it bring forth some of lesser

value, it shall not lose its recompense; for God will be pleased by

these, that is to say he will love us ever a little more for them. Now

God never loves a soul more without bestowing also upon her more

charity, our love towards him being the proper, and special effect, of

his love towards us.

The more attentively we regard our image in a looking-glass, the more

attentively it regards us again; and the more lovingly God casts his

gracious eyes upon our soul, which is made to his image and likeness,

our soul in return, with so much the more attention and fervour is

fixed upon the divine goodness, answering, according to her littleness,

every increase which this sovereign sweetness makes of his divine love

towards her. The Council of Trent says thus: "If any say that justice

received is not preserved, yea that it is not augmented, by good works

in the sight of God, but that works are only the fruits and signs of

justification acquired, and not the cause of its increase, let him be

anathema." Do you see, Theotimus, the justification wrought by charity

is augmented by good works, and, which is to be noted, by good works

without exception: for, as S. Bernard says excellently well on another

subject, nothing is excepted where nothing is distinguished. The

Council speaks of good works indifferently, and without reservation,

giving us to understand, that not only the great and fervent, but also

the little and feeble works cause the increase of holy Charity, but the

great ones greatly, and the little much less.

Such is the love which God bears to our souls, such his desire to make

us increase in the love which we owe to him. The divine sweetness

renders all things profitable to us, takes all to our advantage, and

turns all our endeavours, though never so lowly and feeble, to our

gain.

In the action of moral virtues little works bring no increase to the

virtue whence they proceed, yea, if they be very little, they impair

it: for a great liberality perishes if it occupies itself in bestowing

things of small value, and of liberality becomes niggardliness. But in

the actions of those virtues which issue from God's mercy, and

especially of charity, every work gives increase. Nor is it strange

that sacred love, as King of virtues, has nothing either great or small

which is not loveable, since the balm tree, prince of aromatic trees,

has neither bark nor leaf that is not odoriferous: and what could love

bring forth that were not worthy of love, or did not tend to love?

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[135] Luke xvii. 5.

[136] 2 Cor. ix. 8.

[137] Matt. xiii. 12.

[138] Matt vi. 20.

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CHAPTER III.

HOW A SOUL IN CHARITY MAKES PROGRESS IN IT.

Let us make use of a parable, Theotimus, seeing that this method was so

agreeable to the sovereign Master of the love which we are teaching. A

great and brave King, having espoused a most amiable young princess,

and having on a certain day led her into a very retired cabinet, there

to converse with her more at his pleasure, after some discourse saw her

by a certain sudden accident fall down as dead at his feet. Alas! he

was extremely disturbed at this, and it well nigh put him also into a

swoon; for she was dearer to him than his own life. Yet the same love

that gave him this assault of grief, gave him an equal strength to

sustain it, and set him into action to remedy, with an incomparable

promptitude, the evil which had happened to the dear companion of his

life. Therefore rapidly opening a sideboard which stood by, he takes a

cordial-water, infinitely precious, and having filled his mouth with

it, by force he opens the lips and the set teeth of his well-beloved

princess, then breathing and spurting the precious liquor which he held

in his mouth, into that of his poor lifeless one who lay in a swoon,

and pouring what was left in the phial about the nostrils, the temples,

and the heart, he made her return to herself and to her senses again;

that done, he helps her up gently, and by virtue of remedies so

strengthens and revives her, that she begins to stand and walk very

quietly with him; but in no sort without his help, for he goes

assisting and sustaining her by her arm, till at length he lays to her

heart an epithem so precious and of so great virtue, that finding

herself entirely restored to her wonted health, she walks all alone,

her dear spouse not now sustaining her so much, but only holding her

right hand softly between his, and his right arm folded over hers on to

her bosom. Thus he went on treating her, and fulfilling to her in all

this four most agreeable offices: for 1. He gave testimony that his

heart was lovingly careful of her. 2. He continued ever a little

nursing her. 3. If she had felt any touch of her former faintness he

would have sustained her. 4. If she had lighted on any rough and

difficult place in her walking he would have been her support and stay:

and in accidents, or when she would make a little more haste, he raised

her and powerfully succoured her. In fine he stayed by her with this

heartfelt care till night approached, and then he assisted to lay her

in her royal bed.

The soul is the spouse of Our Saviour when she is just; and because she

is never just but when she is in charity, she is also no sooner spouse

than she is led into the cabinet of those delicious perfumes mentioned

in the Canticles. Now when the soul which has been thus honoured

commits sin, she falls as if dead in a spiritual swoon; and this is in

good truth a most unlooked-for accident: for who would ever think that

a creature could forsake her Creator and sovereign good for things so

trifling as the allurements of sin? Truly the heavens are astonished at

it, and if God were subject to passions he would fall down in a swoon

at this misfortune, as when he was mortal he died upon the cross for

our redemption. But seeing it is not now necessary that he should

employ his love in dying for us, when he sees the soul overthrown by

sin he commonly runs to her succour, and by an unspeakable mercy, lays

open the gates of her heart by the stings and remorses of conscience

which come from the divers lights and apprehensions which he casts into

our hearts, with salutary movements, by which, as by odorous and vital

liquors, he makes the soul return to herself, and brings her back to

good sentiments. And all this, Theotimus, God works in us without our

action, [139] by his all-amiable Goodness which prevents us with its

sweetness. For even as our bride, having fainted, would have died in

her swoon, if the King had not assisted her; so the soul would remain

lost in her sin if God prevented her not. But if the soul thus excited

add her consent to the solicitation of grace, seconding the inspiration

which prevents her, and accepting the required helps provided for her

by God; he will fortify her, and conduct her through various movements

of faith, hope and penitence, even till he restore her to her true

spiritual health, which is no other thing than charity. And while he

thus makes her walk in the virtues by which he disposes her to this

holy love, he does not conduct her only, but in such sort sustains her,

that as she for her part goes as well as she is able so he on his part

supports and sustains her; and it is hard to say whether she goes or is

carried; for she is not so carried that she goes not, and yet her going

is such that if she were not carried she could not go. So that, to

speak apostolically, she must say; I walk, not I alone, but the grace

of God with me. [140]

But the soul being entirely restored to her health by the excellent

epithem of charity which the Holy Ghost infuses into her heart, she is

then able to walk and keep herself upon her feet of herself, yet by

virtue of this health and this sacred epithem of holy love. Wherefore

though she is able to walk of herself, yet is she to render the glory

thereof to God, who has bestowed upon her a health so vigorous and

strong: for whether the Holy Ghost fortify us by the motions which he

enables our heart to make, or sustain us by the charity which he

infuses into them, whether he succour us by manner of assistance in

raising and carrying us, or strengthen our hearts by pouring into them

fortifying and quickening love, we always live, walk, and work, in him

and by him.

And although by means of charity poured into our hearts, we are able to

walk in the presence of God, and make progress in the way of salvation,

yet still it is the goodness of God which ever helps the soul to whom

he has given his love, continually holding her with his holy hand; for

so 1: He doth better make appear the sweetness of his love towards

her. 2. He ever animates her more and more. 3. He supports her

against depraved inclinations and evil habits contracted by former

sins. 4. And finally, he supports her and defends her against

temptations.

Do we not often see, Theotimus, that sound and robust men must be

provoked to employ their strength and power well; and, as one would

say, must be drawn by the hand to the work? So God having given us his

charity, and by it the force and the means to gain ground in the way of

perfection, his love does not permit him to let us walk thus alone, but

makes him put himself upon the way with us, urges him to urge us, and

solicits his heart to solicit and drive forward ours to make good use

of the charity which he has given us, repeating often, by means of his

inspirations, S. Paul's admonitions: See that you receive not the grace

of God in vain. [141] Whilst we have time, let us work good to all men.

[142] So run that you may obtain. [143] So that we are often to think

that he repeats in our ears the words which he used to the good father

Abraham: Walk before me and be perfect. [144]

But principally the special assistance of God to the soul endowed with

charity is required in sublime and extraordinary enterprises; for

though charity, however weak it be, gives us enough inclination, and,

as I think, enough power, to do the works necessary for salvation, yet,

to aspire to and undertake excellent and extraordinary actions, our

hearts stand in need of being pushed and raised by the hand and motion

of this great heavenly lover; as the princess in our parable, although

restored to health, could not ascend nor go fast, unless her dear

spouse raised and strongly supported her. Thus S. Antony and S. Simeon

Stylites were in the grace of God and charity when they designed so

exalted a life; as also the B. Mother (S.) Teresa when she made her

particular vow of obedience, S. Francis and S. Louis, when they

undertook their journey beyond-seas for the advancement of God's glory,

the Blessed Francis Xavier, when he consecrated his life to the

conversion of the Indians, S. Charles, in exposing himself to serve the

plague-stricken, S. Paulinus, when he sold himself to redeem the poor

widow's child; yet still never would they have struck such mighty and

generous blows, unless God, to that charity which they had in their

hearts, had added special inspirations, invitations, lights and forces,

whereby he animated and pushed them forward to these extraordinary

exploits of spiritual valour.

Do you not mark the young man of the gospel, whom Our Saviour loved,

and who, consequently, was in charity? Certainly, he never dreamed of

selling all he had to give it to the poor, and following Our Saviour:

nay though Our Saviour had given him such an inspiration, yet had he

not the courage to put it into execution. For these great works,

Theotimus, we need not only to be inspired, but also to be fortified,

in order to effect what the inspiration inclines us to. As again in the

fierce assaults of extraordinary temptations, a special and particular

presence of heavenly succour is absolutely necessary. For this cause

holy church makes us so frequently cry out: "Excite our hearts O Lord:"

"Prevent our actions by thy holy inspirations and further them with thy

continual help:" "O Lord, make haste to help us:" and the like, in

order by such prayers to obtain grace to be able to effect excellent

and extraordinary works, and more frequently and fervently to do

ordinary ones; as also more ardently to resist small temptations, and

boldly to combat the greatest. S. Antony was assailed by a hideous

legion of devils, and having long sustained their attacks, not without

incredible pain and torment, at length saw the roof of his cell burst

open, and a heavenly ray enter the breach, which made the black and

darksome troop of his enemies vanish in a moment, and delivered him

from all the pain of the wounds received in that battle; whence he

perceived God's particular presence, and fetching a profound sigh

towards the vision--"where wast thou, O good Jesus," said he, "where

wast thou? Why wast thou not here from the beginning to have relieved

my pain? It was answered him from above Antony, I was here: but I

awaited the event of thy combat: and since thou didst behave thyself

bravely and valiantly, I will be thy continual aid." But in what did

the valour and courage of this brave spiritual combatant consist? He

himself declared it another time when, being set upon by a devil who

acknowledged himself to be the spirit of fornication, this glorious

saint after many words worthy of his great courage began to sing the

7th verse of the 117th Psalm: The Lord is my helper: and I will look

over my enemies.

And Our Saviour revealed to S. Catharine of Sienna, that he was in the

midst of her heart in a cruel temptation she had, as a captain in the

midst of a fort to hold it; and that without his succour she would have

been lost in that battle. It is the same in all the great assaults

which our enemy makes against us: and we may well say with Jacob that

it is the angel that delivereth us from all evil, [145] and may sing

with the great King David: The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want

nothing. He hath set me in a place of pasture. He hath brought me up,

on the water of refreshment: he hath converted my soul. So that we

ought often to repeat this exclamation and prayer: And thy mercy will

follow me all the days of my life. [146]

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[139] In nobis sine nobis (S. Aug.)

[140] 1 Cor. xv. 10.

[141] 2 Cor. vi. 1.

[142] Gal. vi. 10.

[143] 1 Cor. ix. 24.

[144] Gen. xvii. 1.

[145] Gen. xlviii. 16.

[146] Ps. xxii.

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CHAPTER IV.

OF HOLY PERSEVERANCE IN SACRED LOVE.

Even as a tender mother, leading with her her little babe, assists and

supports him as need requires, letting him now and then venture a step

by himself in less dangerous and very smooth places, now taking him by

the hand and steadying him, now taking him up in her arms and bearing

him, so Our Lord has a continual care to conduct his children, that is

such as are in charity; making them walk before him, reaching them his

hand in difficulties, and bearing them himself in such travails, as he

sees otherwise insupportable unto them. This he declared by Isaias

saying: I am the Lord thy God, who take thee by the hand, and say to

thee: fear not, I have helped thee. [147] So that with a good heart we

must have a firm confidence in God, and his assistance, for if we fail

not to second his grace, he will accomplish in us the good work of our

salvation, which he also began working in us both to will and to

accomplish, [148] as the holy Council of Trent assures us.

In this conduct which the heavenly sweetness makes of our souls, from

their entry into charity until their final perfection, which is not

finished but in the hour of death, consists the great gift of

perseverance, to which our Saviour attaches the greatest gift of

eternal glory, according to his saying: He that shall persevere unto

the end, he shall be saved: [149] for this gift is no other thing than

the combination and sequence of the various helps, solaces and

succours, whereby we continue in the love of God to the end: as the

education, bringing up and supporting of a child is no other thing,

than the many cares, aids, succours, and other offices necessary to a

child, exercised and continued towards him till he grow to years in

which he no longer needs them.

But the continuance of succours and helps is not equal in all those

that persevere. In some it is short; as in such as were converted a

little before their death: so it happened to the Good Thief; so to that

officers who seeing the constancy of S. James made forthwith profession

of faith, and became a companion of the martyrdom of this great

Apostle; so to the blessed gaoler who guarded the forty martyrs at

Sebaste, who seeing one of them lose courage, and forsake the crown of

martyrdom, put himself in his place and became Christian, martyr and

glorious all at once; so to the notary of whom mention is made in the

life of S. Antony of Padua, who having all his life been a false

villain yet died a martyr: and so it happened to a thousand others of

whom we have seen and read that they died well, after an ill-spent

life. As for these, they stand not in need of a great variety of

succours, but unless some great temptation cross their way, they can

make this short perseverance solely by the charity given them, and by

the aids by which they were converted. For they arrive at the port

without voyaging, and finish their pilgrimage in a single leap, which

the powerful mercy of God makes them take so opportunely that their

enemies see them triumph before seeing them fight: so that their

conversion and perseverance are almost the same thing. And if we would

speak with exact propriety, the grace which they received of God

whereby they attained as soon the issue, as the beginning of their

course, cannot well be termed perseverance, though all the same,

because actually it holds the place of perseverance in giving

salvation, we comprehend it under the name of perseverance. In others,

on the contrary, perseverance is longer, as in S. Anne the prophetess,

in S. John the Evangelist, S. Paul the first hermit, S. Hilarion, S.

Romuald, S. Francis of Paula;--and they stood in need of a thousand

sorts of different assistances, according to the variety of the

adventures of their pilgrimage and the length of it.

But in any case, perseverance is the most desirable gift we can hope

for in this life, and the one which, as the Council of Trent says, we

cannot have but from the hand of God, who alone can assure him that

stands, and help him up that falls: wherefore we must incessantly

demand it, making use of the means which Our Saviour has taught us to

the obtaining of it; prayer, fasting, alms-deeds, frequenting the

sacraments, intercourse with the good, the hearing and reading of holy

words.

Now since the gift of prayer and devotion is liberally granted to all

those who sincerely will to consent to divine inspirations, it is

consequently in our power to persevere. Not of course that I mean to

say that our perseverance has its origin from our power, for on the

contrary I know it springs from God's mercy, whose most precious gift

it is, but I mean that though it does not come from our power, yet it

comes within our power, by means of our will, which we cannot deny to

be in our power: for though God's grace is necessary for us, to will to

persevere, yet is this will in our power, because heavenly grace is

never wanting to our will, and our will is not wanting to our power.

And indeed according to the great S. Bernard's opinion, we may all

truly say with the Apostle that: Neither death, nor life, nor Angels,

nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able

to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord.

[150] Yes, indeed, for no creature can take us away by force from this

holy love; we only can forsake and abandon it by our own will, except

for which there is nothing to be feared in this matter.

So, Theotimus, following the advice of the holy Council, we ought to

place our whole hope in God, who will perfect the work of our salvation

which he has begun in us, if we be not wanting to his grace: for we are

not to think that he who said to the paralytic: Go, and do not will to

sin again: [151] gave him not also power to avoid that willing which he

forbade him: and surely he would never exhort the faithful to

persevere, if he were not ready to furnish them with the power. Be thou

faithful until death, said he to the bishop of Smyrna, and I will give

thee the crown of life. [152] Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, do

manfully, and be strengthened. Let all your actions be done in charity.

[153] So run that you may obtain. [154] We must often then with the

great King demand of God the heavenly gift of perseverance, and hope

that he will grant it us. Cast me not off in the time of old age; when

my strength shall fail, do not thou forsake me. [155]

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[147] Is. xli. 13.

[148] Phil. ii. 13.

[149] Matt. x. 22.

[150] Rom. viii. 38-9

[151] John v. 14.

[152] Apoc. ii. 10.

[153] 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

[154] 1 Cor. ix. 24.

[155] Ps. lxx. 9.

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CHAPTER V.

THAT THE HAPPINESS OF DYING IN HEAVENLY CHARITY IS A SPECIAL GIFT OF

GOD.

In fine, the heavenly King having brought the soul which he loves to

the end of this life, he assists her also in her blessed departure, by

which he draws her to the marriage-bed of eternal glory, which is the

delicious fruit of holy perseverance. And then, dear Theotimus, this

soul, wholly ravished with the love of her well-beloved, putting before

her eyes the multitude of favours and succours wherewith she was

prevented and helped while she was yet in her pilgrimage, incessantly

kisses this sweet helping hand, which conducted, drew and supported her

in the way; and confesses, that it is of this divine Saviour that she

holds her felicity, seeing he has done for her all that the patriarch

Jacob wished for his journey, when he had seen the ladder to heaven. O

Lord, she then says, thou wast with me, and didst guide me in the way

by which I came. Thou didst feed me with the bread of thy sacraments,

thou didst clothe me with the wedding garment of charity, thou hast

happily conducted me to this mansion of glory, which is thy house, O my

eternal Father. Oh! what remains, O Lord, save that I should protest

that thou art my God for ever and ever! Amen.

Thou hast held me by my right hand; and by thy will thou hast conducted

me, and with thy glory thou hast received me. [156] Such then is the

order of our journey to eternal life, for the accomplishment of which

the divine providence ordained from all eternity the number,

distinction and succession of graces necessary to it, with their

dependence on one another.

He willed, first, with a true will, that even after the sin of Adam all

men should be saved, but upon terms and by means agreeable to the

condition of their nature, which is endowed with free-will; that is to

say he willed the salvation of all those who would contribute their

consent, to the graces and favours which he would prepare, offer and

distribute to this end.

Now, amongst these favours, his will was that vocation should be the

first, and that it should be so accommodated to our liberty that we

might at our pleasure accept or reject it: and such as he saw would

receive it, he would furnish with the sacred motions of penitence, and

to those who would second these motions he determined to give charity,

those again who were in charity, he purposed to supply with the helps

necessary to persevere, and to such as should make use of these divine

helps he resolved to impart final perseverance, and the glorious

felicity of his eternal love.

And thus we may give account of the order which is found in the effects

of that Providence which regards our salvation, descending from the

first to the last, that is from the fruit, which is glory, to the root

of this fair tree, which is Our Saviour's redemption. For the divine

goodness gives glory after merits, merits after charity, charity after

penitence, penitence after obedience to vocation, obedience to vocation

after vocation itself, vocation after Our Saviour's redemption, on

which rests all this mystical ladder of the great Jacob, as well at its

heavenly end, since it rests in the bosom of the eternal Father, in

which he receives and glorifies the elect, as also at its earthly end,

since it is planted upon the bosom and pierced side of Our Saviour, who

for this cause died upon Mount Calvary.

And that this order of the effects of Providence was thus ordained,

with the same dependence which they have on one another in the eternal

will of God, holy Church, in the preface of one of her solemn prayers,

witnesses in these words: "O eternal and Almighty God, who art Lord of

the living and the dead, and art merciful to all those who thou

foreknowest will be thine by faith and good works:" as though she were

declaring that glory, which is the crown and the fruit of God's mercy

towards men, has only been ordained for those, of whom the divine

wisdom has foreseen that in the future, obeying the vocation, they will

attain the living faith which works by charity.

Finally, all these effects have an absolute dependence on Our Saviour's

redemption, who merited them for us in rigour of justice by the loving

obedience which he exercised even till death and the death of the

cross, which is the root of all the graces which we receive; we who are

the spiritual grafts engrafted on his stock. If being engrafted we

remain in him, we shall certainly bear, by the life of grace which he

will communicate unto us, the fruit of glory prepared for us. But if we

prove broken sprigs and grafts upon this tree, that is, if by

resistance we interrupt the progress and break the connection of the

effects of his clemency, it will not be strange, if in the end we be

wholly cut off, and be thrown into eternal fires as fruitless branches.

God, doubtless, prepared heaven for those only who he foresaw would be

his. Let us be his then, Theotimus, by faith and works, and he will be

ours by glory. Now it is in our power to be his: for though it be a

gift of God to be God's, yet is it a gift which God denies no one, but

offers to all, to give it to such as freely consent to receive it.

But mark, I pray you, Theotimus, how ardently God desires we should be

his, since to this end he has made himself entirely ours; bestowing

upon us his death and his life; his life, to exempt us from eternal

death, his death, to possess us of eternal life. Let us remain

therefore in peace and serve God, to be his in this mortal life, and

still more his in the eternal.

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[156] Ps. lxxii. 24.

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CHAPTER VI.

THAT WE CANNOT ATTAIN TO PERFECT UNION WITH GOD IN THIS MORTAL LIFE.

All the rivers flow incessantly, and, as the wise man says: Unto the

place from whence they come they return to flow again. [157] The sea

which is the place whence they spring, is also the place of their final

repose; all their motion tends no farther than to unite themselves to

their fountain. "O God," says S. Augustine, "thou hast created my heart

for thyself, and it can never repose but in thee." For what have I in

heaven, and besides thee what do I desire upon earth? Thou art the God

of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever. [158] Still the

union which our heart aspires to cannot attain to its perfection in

this mortal life; we can commence our loves in this, but we can

consummate them only in the other.

The heavenly Spouse makes a delicate expression of this. I found him

whom my soul loveth, says she, I held him, and I will not let him go,

till I bring him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her

that bore me. [159] She finds him then, this well-beloved, for he makes

her feel his presence by a thousand consolations; she holds him, for

these feelings cause in her strong affections, by which she clasps and

embraces him, protesting that she will never let him go,--O no! for

these affections turn into eternal resolutions; yet she cannot consider

that she kisses him with the nuptial kiss till she meet with him in her

mother's house, which is the heavenly Jerusalem, as S. Paul says. But

see, Theotimus, how this spouse thinks of nothing less than of keeping

her beloved at her mercy as a slave of love; whence she imagines to

herself that it is hers to lead him at her will, and to introduce him

into her mother's happy abode; though in reality it is she who must be

conducted thither by him, as was Rebecca into Sara's chamber by her

dear Isaac. The spirit urged by amorous passion always gives itself a

little advantage over what it loves; and the spouse himself confesses:

Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast wounded my

heart with one of thy eyes, and with one hair of thy neck: [160]

acknowledging himself her prisoner by love.

This perfect conjunction then of the soul with God, shall only be in

heaven, where as the Apocalypse says, the Lamb's marriage feast shall

be made. In this mortal life the soul is truly espoused and betrothed

to the immaculate Lamb, but not as yet married to him: the troth is

plighted, and promise given, but the execution of the marriage is

deferred: so that we have always time, though never reason, to withdraw

from it; our faithful spouse never abandons us unless we oblige him to

it by our disloyalty and unfaithfulness. But in heaven the marriage of

this divine union being celebrated, the bond which ties our hearts to

their sovereign principle shall be eternally indissoluble.

It is true, Theotimus, that while we await this great kiss of

indissoluble union which we shall receive from the spouse there above

in glory, he gives us some kisses by a thousand feelings of his

delightful presence: for unless the soul were kissed she would not be

drawn, nor would she run in the odour of the beloved's perfumes.

Whence, according to the original Hebrew text and the Seventy

interpreters, she desires many kisses. Let him kiss me, says she, with

the kisses of his mouth. But because these little kisses of this

present life all refer to the eternal kiss of the life to come, the

sacred Vulgate edition has holily reduced the kisses of grace to that

of glory, expressing the desires of the spouse in this manner: Let him

kiss me with the kiss of his mouth, [161] as though she said: of all

the kisses, of all the favours that the friend of my heart, or the

heart of my soul has provided for me, ah! I only breathe after and

aspire to this great and solemn marriage-kiss which remains for ever,

and in comparison of which the other kisses deserve not the name of

kisses, being rather signs of the future union between my beloved and

me than union itself.

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[157] Eccles. i. 7.

[158] Ps. lxxii. 25-6.

[159] Cant. iii. 4.

[160] Ibid. iv. 9.

[161] Cant. i. 1.

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CHAPTER VII.

THAT THE CHARITY OF SAINTS IN THIS MORTAL LIFE EQUALS, YEA SOMETIMES

SURPASSES, THAT OF THE BLESSED.

When after the labours and dangers of this mortal life, good souls

arrive at the port of the eternal, they ascend to the highest and

utmost degree of love to which they can attain; and this final increase

being bestowed upon them in recompense of their merits, it is

distributed to them, not only in good measure, but in a measure which

is pressed down and shaken together and running over, [162] as Our

Saviour says; so that the love which is given for reward is greater in

every one than that which was given for meriting.

Now, not only shall each one in particular have a greater love in

heaven than ever he had on earth, but the exercise of the least charity

in heaven, shall be much more happy and excellent, generally speaking,

than that of the greatest which is, or has been, or shall be, in this

failing life: for there above, all the saints incessantly, without any

intermission, exercise love; while here below God's greatest servants,

drawn away and tyrannized over by the necessities of this dying life,

are forced to suffer a thousand and a thousand distractions, which

often take them off the practice of holy love.

In heaven, Theotimus, the loving attention of the blessed is firm,

constant, inviolable, and cannot perish or decrease; their intention is

pure and freed from all mixture of any inferior intention: in short,

this felicity of seeing God clearly and loving him unchangeably is

incomparable. And who would ever equal the pleasure, if there be any,

of living amidst the perils, the continual tempests, the perpetual

agitations and viscissitudes which have to be gone through on sea, with

the contentment there is of being in a royal palace, where all things

are at every wish, yea where delights incomparably surpass every wish?

There is then more content, sweetness and perfection in the exercise of

sacred love amongst the inhabitants of heaven, than amongst the

pilgrims of this miserable earth. Yet still there have been some so

happy in their pilgrimage that their charity has been greater than that

of many saints already enjoying the eternal fatherland: for certainly

it were strange if the charity of the great S. John, of the Apostles

and Apostolic men, were not greater, even while they were detained here

below, than that of little children, who, dying simply with the grace

of baptism, enjoy immortal glory.

It is not usual for shepherds to be more valiant than soldiers; and yet

David, when a little shepherd, coming to the army of Israel, while he

found every one more expert in the use of arms than himself, yet he was

more valiant than all. So it is not an ordinary thing for mortals to

have more charity than the immortals, and yet there have been some

mortals, inferior to the immortals in the exercise of love, who,

notwithstanding, have surpassed them in charity and the habit of love.

And as, when comparing hot iron and a burning lamp, we say the iron has

more fire and heat, the lamp more flame and light; so if we parallel a

child in glory with S. John while yet prisoner, or S. Paul yet captive,

we must say that the child in heaven has more brightness and light in

the understanding, more flame and exercise of love in the will, but

that S. John or S. Paul had even on earth more fire of charity, and

heat of love.

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[162] Luke vi. 38.

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CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE INCOMPARABLE LOVE WHICH THE MOTHER of GOD, OUR BLESSED LADY,

HAD.

But always and everywhere, when I make comparisons, I intend not to

speak of the most holy virgin-mother, Our Blessed Lady. O my God--no

indeed! For she is the daughter of incomparable dilection, the one only

dove, the all-perfect spouse. Of this heavenly Queen, from my heart I

pronounce this thought, amorous but true, that at least towards the end

of her mortal days, her charity surpassed that of the Seraphim, for

many daughters have gathered together riches: thou hast surpassed them

all. [163] The Saints and Angels are but compared to stars, and the

first of them to the fairest of the stars: but she is fair as the moon,

as easy to be chosen and discerned from all the Saints as the sun from

the stars. And going on further I think again that as the charity of

this Mother of love excels in perfection that of all the Saints in

heaven, so did she exercise it more perfectly, I say even in this

mortal life. She never sinned venially, as the church considers; she

had then no change nor delay in the way of love, but by a perpetual

advancement ascended from love to love. She never felt any

contradiction from the sensual appetite, and therefore her love, as a

true Solomon, reigned peaceably in her soul and made all its acts at

its pleasure. The virginity of her heart and body was more worthy and

honourable than that of the Angels. So that her spirit, not divided or

separated, as S. Paul says, was solicitous for the things that belong

to the Lord how it might please God. [164] And, in fine, maternal love,

the most pressing, the most active and the most ardent of all, what

must it not have worked in the heart of such a Mother and for the heart

of such a Son?

Ah! do not say, I pray you, that this virgin was subject to sleep; no,

say not this to me, Theotimus: for do you not see that her sleep is a

sleep of love? So that even her spouse wishes that she should sleep as

long as she pleases. Ah! take heed, I adjure you, says he, that you

stir not up nor make the beloved to awake till she please. [165] No,

Theotimus, this heavenly Queen never slept but with love, since she

never gave repose to her precious body, but to reinvigorate it, the

better afterwards to serve her God, which is certainly a most excellent

act of charity. For, as the great S. Augustine says, charity obliges us

to love our bodies properly, insomuch as they are necessary to good

works, as they make a part of our person, and as they shall be sharers

in our eternal felicity. In good truth, a Christian is to love his body

as a living image of Our Saviour incarnate, as having issued from the

same stock, and consequently belonging to him in parentage and

consanguinity; especially after we have renewed the alliance, by the

real reception of the divine body of Our Redeemer, in the most adorable

sacrament of the Eucharist, and when by Baptism, Confirmation and other

Sacraments we have dedicated and consecrated ourselves to the sovereign

goodness.

But as to the Blessed Virgin,--O God, with what devotion must she have

loved her virginal body! Not only because it was a sweet, humble, pure

body, obedient to divine love, and wholly embalmed with a thousand

sweetnesses, but also because it was the living source of Our

Saviour's, and belonged so strictly to him, by an incomparable

appurtenance. For which cause when she placed her angelic body in the

repose of sleep: Repose then now, would she say, O Tabernacle of

Alliance, Ark of Sanctity, Throne of the Divinity, ease thyself a

little of thy weariness, and repair thy forces, by this sweet

tranquillity.

Besides, dear Theotimus, do you not know that bad dreams, voluntarily

procured by the depraved thoughts of the day, are in some sort sins,

inasmuch as they are consequences and execution of the malice

preceding? Even so the dreams which proceed from the holy affections of

our waking time, are reputed virtuous and holy. O God! Theotimus, what

a consolation it is to hear S. Chrysostom recounting on a certain day

to his people the vehemence of his love towards them. "The necessity of

sleep," said he, "pressing our eyelids, the tyranny of our love towards

you excites the eyes of our mind: and many a time while I sleep

methinks I speak unto you, for the soul is wont to see in a dream by

imagination what she thinks in the daytime. Thus while we see you not

with the eyes of the flesh, we see you with the eyes of charity." O

sweet Jesus! what dreams must thy most holy Mother have had when she

slept, while her heart watched? Did she not dream that she had thee yet

in her womb, or hanging at her sacred breasts and sweetly pressing

those virginal lilies? Ah! what sweetness was in this soul. Perhaps she

often dreamed that as Our Saviour had formerly slept in her bosom, as a

tender lambkin upon the soft flank of its mother, so she slept in his

pierced side, as a white dove in the cave of an assured rock: so that

her sleep was wholly like to an ecstasy as regards the spirit, though

as regards the body it was a sweet and grateful unwearying and rest.

But if ever she dreamed, as did the ancient Joseph, of her future

greatness,--when in heaven she should be clothed with the sun, crowned

with stars and having the moon under her feet, [166] that is, wholly

environed with her Son's glory, crowned with that of the Saints, and

having the universe under her--or if ever, like Jacob, she saw the

progress and fruit of the redemption made by her Son, for the love of

the angels and of men;--Theotimus, who could ever imagine the immensity

of so great delights? O what conferences with her dear child! What

delights on every side!

But mark, I pray you, that I neither say nor mean to say that this

privileged soul of the Mother of God was deprived of the use of reason

in her sleep. Many are of opinion that Solomon in that beautiful dream,

though really a dream, in which he demanded and received the gift of

his incomparable wisdom, had the true use of his free-will, on account

of the judicious eloquence of the discourse he made, of his choice full

of discretion, and of the most excellent prayer which he used, the

whole without any mixture of inconsistency or distraction of mind. But

how much more probability is there then that the mother of the true

Solomon had the use of reason in her sleep, that is to say, as Solomon

himself makes her say, that her heart watched while she slept? Surely

it was a far greater marvel that S. John had the exercise of reason in

his mother's womb, and why then should we deny a less to her for whom,

and to whom, God did more favours, than either he did or ever will do

for all creatures besides?

To conclude, as the precious stone, asbestos, does by a peerless

propriety preserve for ever the fire which it has conceived, so the

Virgin Mother's heart remained perpetually inflamed with the holy love

which she received of her Son: yet with this difference, that the fire

of the asbestos, as it cannot be extinguished, so it cannot be

augmented, but the Virgin's sacred flames, since they could neither

perish, diminish nor remain in the same state, never ceased to take

incredible increase, even as far as heaven the place of their origin:

so true it is that this Mother is the Mother of fair love, that is, as

the most amiable, so the most loving, and as the most loving, so the

most beloved Mother of this only Son; who again is the most amiable,

most loving, and most beloved Son of this only Mother.

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[163] Prov. xxxi. 29.

[164] 1 Cor. vii. 32.

[165] Cant. ii. 7.

[166] Gen. xxxvii.; Apoc. xii. 1.

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CHAPTER IX.

A PREPARATION FOR THE DISCOURSE ON THE UNION OF THE BLESSED WITH GOD.

The triumphant love which the blessed in heaven exercise, consists in

the final, invariable and eternal union of the soul with its God. But

this union--what is it?

By how much more agreeable and excellent are the objects our senses

meet with, so much more ardently and greedily they give themselves to

the fruition of them. By how much more fair, delightful to the view,

and duly set in light they are, so much the more eagerly and

attentively does the eye regard them: and by how much more sweet and

pleasant voices or music are, so much the more is the attention of the

ear drawn to them. So that every object exercises a powerful but

grateful violence upon the sense to which it belongs, a violence more

or less strong as the excellence is greater or less; provided always

that it be proportionable to the capacity of the sense which desires to

enjoy it; for the eye which finds so much pleasure in light cannot,

however, bear an extreme light, nor fix itself upon the sun, and be

music never so sweet, if loud and too near, it importunes and offends

our ears. Truth is the object of our understanding, which consequently

has all its content in discovering and knowing the truth of things; and

according as truths are more excellent, so the understanding applies

itself with more delight and attention to the consideration of them.

How great was the pleasure, think you, Theotimus, of those ancient

philosophers who had such an excellent knowledge of so many beautiful

truths of Nature? Verily they reputed all pleasures as nothing in

comparison with their well-beloved philosophy, for which some of them

quitted honours, others great riches, others their country; and there

was such a one as deliberately plucked out his eyes, depriving himself

for ever of the enjoyment of the fair and agreeable corporal light,

that he might with more liberty apply himself to consider the truth of

things by the light of the spirit. This we read of Democritus: so sweet

is the knowledge of truth! Hence Aristotle has very often said that

human felicity and beatitude consists in wisdom, which is the knowledge

of the eminent truths.

But when our spirit, raised above natural light, begins to see the

sacred truths of faith, O God! Theotimus, what joy! The soul melts with

pleasure, hearing the voice of her heavenly spouse, whom she finds more

sweet and delicious then the honey of all human sciences.

God has imprinted upon all created things his traces, trail, or

footsteps, so that the knowledge we have of his divine Majesty by

creatures seems no other thing than the sight of the feet of God, while

in comparison of this, faith is a view of the very face of the divine

Majesty. This we do not yet see in the clear day of glory, but as it

were in the breaking of day; as it happened to Jacob near to the ford

of Jaboc; for though he saw not the angel with whom he wrestled, save

in the weak light of daybreak, yet this was enough to make him cry out,

ravished with delight: I have seen God face to face, and my soul has

been saved. [167] O! how delightful is the holy light of faith, by

which we know, with an unequalled certitude, not only the history of

the beginning of creatures, and their true use, but even that of the

eternal birth of the great and sovereign divine Word, for whom and by

whom all has been made, and who with the Father and the Holy Ghost is

one only God, most singular, most adorable, and blessed for ever and

ever! Amen. Ah! says S. Jerome to his Paulinus: "The learned Plato

never knew this, the eloquent Demosthenes was ignorant of it." How

sweet are thy words, O Lord, to my palate, said that great king, more

than honey to my mouth! [168] Was not our burning within us, whilst he

spoke in the way? [169] said those happy pilgrims of Emmaus, speaking

of the flames of love with which they were touched by the word of

faith. But if divine truths be so sweet, when proposed in the obscure

light of faith, O God, what shall they be when we shall contemplate

them in the light of the noonday of glory!

The Queen of Saba, who at the greatness of Solomon's renown had left

all to go and see him, having arrived in his presence, and having heard

the wonders of the wisdom which he poured out in his speeches, as one

astonished and lost in admiration, cried out that what she had learnt

by hearsay of this heavenly wisdom was not half the knowledge which

sight and experience gave her.

Ah! how beautiful and dear are the truths which faith discovers unto us

by hearing! But when having arrived in the heavenly Jerusalem, we shall

see the great Solomon, the King of Glory, seated upon the thrown of his

wisdom, manifesting by an incomprehensible brightness the wonders and

eternal secrets of his sovereign truth, with such light that our

understanding will actually see what it had believed here below--Ah!

then, dearest Theotimus, what raptures! what ecstasies! what

admiration! what love! what sweetness! No, never (shall we say in this

excess of sweetness) never could we have conceived that we should see

truths so delightsome. We believed indeed all the glorious things that

were said of thee, O great city of God, but we could not conceive the

infinite greatness of the abysses of thy delights.

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[167] Gen. xxxii. 30.

[168] Ps. cxviii. 103.

[169] Luke xxiv. 32.

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CHAPTER X.

THAT THE PRECEDING DESIRE WILL MUCH INCREASE THE UNION OF THE BLESSED

WITH GOD.

The desire which precedes enjoyment, sharpens and intensifies the

feeling of it, and by how much the desire was more urgent and powerful,

by so much more agreeable and delicious is the possession of the thing

desired. Oh! my dear Theotimus, what pleasure will man's heart take in

seeing the face of the Divinity, a face so much desired, yea a face the

only desire of our souls? Our hearts have a thirst which cannot be

quenched by the pleasures of this mortal life, whereof the most

esteemed and highest prized if moderate do not satisfy us, and if

extreme suffocate us. Yet we desire them always to be extreme, and they

are never such without being excessive, insupportable, hurtful. We die

of joy as well as of grief: yea, joy is more active to ruin us than

grief. Alexander, having swallowed up, in effect or in hope, all this

lower world, heard some base fellow say, that there were yet many other

worlds, and like a little child, who will cry if one refuse him an

apple, this Alexander, whom the world styles the great, more foolish

notwithstanding than a little child, began bitterly to weep, because

there was no likelihood that he should conquer the other worlds, not

having as yet got the entire possession of this. He that did more fully

enjoy the world than ever any other did, is yet so little satisfied

with it that he weeps for sorrow that he cannot have the other worlds

which the foolish persuasion of a wretched babbler made him imagine to

exist. Tell me, I pray you, Theotimus, does he not show that the thirst

of his heart cannot be slaked in this life, and that this world is not

sufficient to quench it? O wonderful yet dear unrest of man's heart!

Be, be ever, my soul, without any rest or tranquillity on this earth,

till thou shalt have met with the fresh waters of the immortal life and

the most holy Divinity, which alone can satisfy thy thirst and quiet

thy desire.

Now, Theotimus, imagine to yourself with the Psalmist, that hart which,

hard set by the hounds, has neither wind nor legs; how greedily he

plunges himself into the waters which he panted after, and with what

ardour he rolls into and buries himself in that element. One would

think he would willingly be dissolved and converted into water, more

fully to enjoy its coolness. Ah! what a union of our hearts shall there

be with God there above in heaven, where, after these infinite desires

of the true good never assuaged in this world, we shall find the living

and powerful source thereof. Then, truly, as we see a hungry child

closely fixed to his mother's breast, greedily press this dear fountain

of most desired sweetness, so that one would think that either it would

thrust itself into its mother's breast, or else suck and draw all that

breast into itself; so our soul, panting with an extreme thirst for the

true good, when she shall find that inexhaustible source in the

Divinity,--O good God! what a holy and sweet ardour to be united and

joined to the plentiful breasts of the All-goodness, either to be

altogether absorbed in it, or to have it come entirely into us!

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CHAPTER XI.

OF THE UNION OF THE BLESSED SPIRITS WITH GOD, IN THE VISION OF THE

DIVINITY.

When we look upon anything, though it is present to us, it is not

itself united to our eyes, but only sends out to them a certain

representation or picture of itself, which is called its sensible

species, by means of which we see. So also when we contemplate or

understand anything, that which we understand is not united to our

understanding otherwise than by another representation and most

delicate and spiritual image, which is called intelligible species. But

further, these species, by how many windings and changes do they get to

the understanding! They arrive at the exterior senses, thence pass to

the interior, then to the imagination, then to the active

understanding, and come at last to the passive understanding, to the

end that passing through so many strainers and under so many files they

may be purified, subtilised and perfected, and of sensible become

intelligible.

Thus, Theotimus, we see and understand all that we see and understand

in this mortal life, yea even things of faith; for, as the mirror

contains not the thing we see in it but only the representation and

species of it (which representation, stayed by the mirror, produces

another in the beholding eye), so the word of faith does not contain

the things which it announces, but only represents them, and this

representation of divine things which is in the word of faith produces

another representation of them, which our understanding, helped by

God's grace, accepts and receives as a representation of holy truth,

and our will takes delight in it, and embraces it, as an honourable,

profitable, lovely and excellent truth. Thus the truths signified in

God's word are by it represented to the understanding as things

expressed in the mirror are by the mirror represented to the eye:

whence the great Apostle said that to believe is to see as in a glass.

[170]

But in heaven, Theotimus,--Ah! my God, what a favour!--The Divinity

will unite itself to our understanding without the mediation of any

species or representation at all, but it will itself apply and join

itself to our understanding, making itself in such sort present unto

it, that that inward presence shall be instead of a representation or

species. O God! what sweetness shall it be for man's understanding to

be united for ever to its sovereign object, receiving not its

representation but its presence, not the picture or species, but the

very essence of its divine truth and majesty. We shall be there as most

happy children of the divinity, and shall have the honour to be fed

with the divine substance itself, taken into our soul by the mouth of

our understanding, and what surpasses all sweetness is, that as mothers

are not contented with feeding their babes with their milk, which is

their own substance, if they do not also put the breast into their

mouth, that these may receive their substance, not in a spoon or other

instrument, but even in, and by this same substance (so that this

maternal substance serves as well for food, as for a conduit to convey

it to the dear little suckling);--so God our Father is not contented to

make us receive his proper substance in our understanding, that is, to

make us see his divinity, but by an abyss of his sweetness, wills

himself to apply his substance to our soul, to the end that we may no

longer understand it by species or representation but in itself and by

itself; so that his fatherly and eternal substance is both species and

object to our understanding. Then these divine promises shall be

fulfilled in an excellent manner: I will lead her into the wilderness,

and I will speak to her heart, [171] and give her suck. Rejoice with

Jerusalem and be glad with her. That you may suck and be filled with

the breasts of her consolations, that you may milk out, and flow with

delights from the abundance of her glory: you shall be carried at the

breasts, and upon the knees they shall caress you. [172]

Infinite bliss, Theotimus, and one which has not been promised only,

but of which we have a pledge in the Blessed Sacrament, that perpetual

feast of Divine Grace. For in it we receive the blood of Our Saviour in

his flesh, and his flesh in his blood; his blood being applied unto us

by means of his flesh, his substance by his substance to our very

corporal mouth; that we may know that so he will apply unto us his

divine essence in the eternal feast of his glory. True it is, this

favour is done unto us here really but covertly, under Sacramental

species and appearances, whereas in heaven, the Divinity will give

himself openly, and we shall see him face to face as he is.

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[170] I Cor. xiii. 12.

[171] Osee. ii. 14.

[172] Is. lxvi. 10, 11, 12.

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CHAPTER XII.

OF THE ETERNAL UNION OF THE BLESSED SPIRITS WITH GOD, IN THE VISION OF

THE ETERNAL BIRTH OF THE SON OF GOD.

O holy and Divine Spirit, eternal Love of the Father and the Son, be

propitious to mine infancy. Our understanding then shall see God,

Theotimus; yes, it shall see God Himself face to face, contemplating

with a view of true and real presence, the divine essence Itself, and

in It, the infinite beauties thereof, all-power, all-goodness,

all-wisdom, all-justice, and the rest of this abyss of perfections.

It shall see clearly then, shall this understanding, the infinite

knowledge which God the Father had from all eternity of His own beauty,

for the expression of which in Himself, He pronounced and said

eternally the Word, the Verbum, or the most singular and most infinite

speech and diction, which, comprising and representing all the

perfection of the Father, can be but one same God, entirely one with

Him, without division or separation. We shall thus then see that

eternal and admirable generation of the Divine Word and Son, by which

He was eternally born to the image and likeness of the Father, a lively

and natural image and likeness, not representing any accidents or

external thing; since in God all is substance, nor can there be any

accident, all is interior, nor can there be any exterior; but an image

representing the proper substance of the Father so perfectly, so

naturally, so essentially and substantially, that therefore it can be

no other thing than the same God with Him, without distinction or

difference at all either in essence or substance, and with only the

distinction of Persons. For how could this Divine Son be the true,

truly perfect and truly natural image, resemblance and figure of the

infinite beauty and substance of the Father, if this image did not

represent absolutely to the life and according to nature, the infinite

perfections of the Father? And how could it infinitely represent

infinite perfections if it were not itself infinitely perfect? And how

could it be infinitely perfect if it were not God, and how could it be

God if it were not one same God with the Father?

This Son then, the infinite image and figure of His infinite Father, is

with His Father one sole, most unique, and infinite God, there being no

difference of substance between Them, but only the distinction of

persons. This distinction of persons, as it is certainly required, so

also it is absolutely sufficient, to effect that the Father pronounces,

and the Son is the Word pronounced; that the Father speaks, and the Son

is the Word, or the diction; that the Father expresses, and the Son is

the image, likeness or figure expressed, and, in short, that the Father

is Father, and the Son, Son--two distinct persons, but one only Essence

or Divinity; so that God Who is sole is not solitary, for He is sole in

His most singular and simple Deity, yet is not solitary, because He is

Father and Son in two persons. O Theotimus, what joy, what jubilee to

celebrate this eternal birth, kept in the brightness of the Saints,

[173] to celebrate it in seeing it, and to see it in celebrating it!

The most sweet S. Bernard, as yet a little boy at Chastillon-sur-Seine,

was waiting in Church on Christmas night for the divine office to

begin, and whilst waiting the poor child fell into a light slumber,

during which (O God what sweetness!) he saw in spirit, yet in a vision

very distinct and clear, how the Son of God, having espoused human

nature, and becoming a little child in His Mother's most pure womb, was

with a humble sweetness mingled with a celestial majesty, virginally

born of her:--As a bridegroom coming out of his bride-chamber: [174]

--a vision, Theotimus, which so replenished the loving heart of the

little Bernard with gladness, jubilation and spiritual delights, that

he had all his life an extreme sense of it, and therefore, though

afterwards as a sacred bee he ever culled out of all the divine

mysteries the honey of a thousand sweet and heavenly consolations, yet

had he a more particular sweetness in the solemnity of the Nativity,

and spoke with a singular relish of this birth of his Master. But Ah! I

beseech thee, Theotimus, if a mystical and imaginary vision of the

temporal and human birth of the Son of God, by which he proceeded man

from a woman, virgin from a virgin, ravishes and so highly delights a

child's heart, what shall it be when our spirits, gloriously

illuminated with the light of glory, shall see this eternal birth by

which the Son proceeds, God from God, Light from Light, true God from

true God, divinely and eternally! Then shall our spirit be joined by an

incomprehensible complacency to this object of delight, and by an

unchangeable attention remain united to it for ever.

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[173] Ps. cix. 3.

[174] Ps. xviii. 6.

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CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE UNION OF THE BLESSED WITH GOD IN THE VISION OF THE PRODUCTION OF

THE HOLY GHOST.

The eternal Father seeing the infinite goodness and beauty of His own

essence, so perfectly, essentially and substantially expressed in His

Son, and the Son seeing reciprocally that His same essence, goodness

and beauty is originally in His Father as in its source and fountain,

ah! can it possibly be that this Divine Father and His Son should not

mutually love one another with an infinite love, since Their will by

which They love, and Their goodness for which They love are infinite in

each of Them.

Love not finding us equal, equalizes us, not finding us united, unites

us. Now the Father and the Son finding Themselves not only equal and

united, but even one same God, one same goodness, one same essence and

one same unity, how much must They needs love one another. But this

love does not act like the love which intellectual creatures have

amongst themselves, or towards their Creator; for created love is

exercised by many and various movements, aspirations, unions and

joinings which immediately succeed one another, and make a continuation

of love with a grateful vicissitude of spiritual movements, but the

divine love of the eternal Father towards His Son is practised in one

only spiration (souspir) mutually from Them both, Who in this sort

remain united and joined together. Yes, Theotimus; for the goodness of

the Father and Son being but one sole most perfectly singular goodness,

common to Them both, the love of this goodness can be but one only

love; for though there be two lovers, to wit, the Father and the Son,

yet seeing it is only Their most singular goodness common to Them both

which is loved, and Their most unique will which loves, it is therefore

but one love exercised by one amorous spiration. The Father breathes

this love and so does the Son; but because the Father only breathes

this love by means of the same will and for the same goodness which is

equally and singularly in Him and His Son: the Son again only breathes

this spiration of love for this same goodness and by this same

will,--therefore this spiration of love is but one spiration, or one

only spirit breathed out by two breathers.

And because the Father and the Son Who breathe, have an infinite

essence and will by which They breathe, and because the goodness for

which They breathe is infinite, it is impossible Their breathing should

not be infinite; and forasmuch as it cannot be infinite without being

God, therefore this Spirit breathed from the Father and the Son is true

God: and since there neither is, nor can be, more than one only God, He

is one only true God with the Father and the Son. Moreover, as this

love is an act which proceeds mutually from the Father and the Son, it

can neither be the Father, nor the Son, from whom it proceeds, though

it has the same goodness and substance of the Father and the Son, but

must necessarily be a third person, Who with the Father and the Son is

one only God. And because this love is produced by manner of breathings

or spirations, it is called the Holy Spirit.

Now, Theotimus, King David, describing the sweetness of the friendship

of God's servants, cries out: Behold how good and how pleasant it is

for brethren to dwell together in unity: like the precious ointment on

the head, that ran down upon the beard, the beard of Aaron, which ran

down to the skirt of his garment: as the dew of Hermon, which

descendeth upon Mount Sion. [175]

But, O God! if human friendship be so agreeably lovely, and spread so

delicious an odour on them that contemplate it, what shall it be, my

well-beloved Theotimus, to behold the sacred exercise of mutual love

between the eternal Father and the Son. S. Gregory Nazianzen recounts

that the incomparable love which existed between him and S. Basil the

Great was famous all through Greece, and Tertullian testifies, that the

Pagans admired the more than brotherly love which reigned amongst the

primitive Christians. Oh! with what celebration and solemnity, with

what praises and benedictions, should be kept, with what admirations

should be honoured and loved, the eternal and sovereign friendship of

the Father and the Son! What is there to be loved and desired if

friendship is not? And if friendship is to be loved and desired, what

friendship can be so in comparison with that infinite friendship which

is between the Father and the Son, and Which is one same most sole God

with them? Our heart, Theotimus, will sink lost in love, through

admiration of the beauty and sweetness of the love, that this eternal

Father and this incomprehensible Son practise divinely and eternally.

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[175] Ps. cxxxii.

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CHAPTER XIV.

THAT THE HOLY LIGHT OF GLORY WILL SERVE FOR THE UNION OF THE BLESSED

SPIRITS WITH GOD.

The created understanding then shall see the divine essence, without

any medium of species or representation; yet not without a certain

excellent light which disposes, elevates, and strengthens it, to raise

its view so high, and to an object so sublime and resplendent. For as

the owl has a sight strong enough to bear the sombre light of a clear

night, but not strong enough to stand the mid-day light, which is too

brilliant to be borne by eyes so dim and weak; so our understanding,

which is strong enough to consider natural truths by its discourse, yea

even the supernatural things of grace by the light of faith, is not yet

able, by the light of either nature or faith, to attain unto the view

of the divine substance in itself. Wherefore the sweetness of the

eternal wisdom determined not to apply His essence to our understanding

till He had prepared, strengthened and fitted it to receive a sight so

eminent, and so disproportionate to its natural condition as is the

view of the Divinity. So the sun, the sovereign object of our corporal

eyes amongst natural things, does not present itself unto our view

without sending first its rays, by means whereof we may be able to see

it, so that we only see it by its light. Yet there is a difference

between the rays which the sun casts upon our corporal eyes and the

light which God will create in our understandings in heaven: for the

sun's rays do not fortify our corporal eyes when they are weak and

unable to see, but rather blind them, dazzling and confounding their

infirm vision: whereas, on the contrary, this sacred light of glory,

finding our understandings unapt and unable to behold the Divinity,

raises, strengthens and perfects them so excellently, that by an

incomprehensible marvel they behold and contemplate the abyss of the

divine brightness in itself with a fixed and direct gaze, not being

dazzled or beaten back by the infinite greatness of its splendour.

In like manner, therefore, as God has given us the light of reason, by

which we may know Him as Author of nature, and the light of faith by

which we consider Him as source of grace, so will He bestow upon us the

light of glory by which we shall contemplate Him as the fountain of

beatitude and eternal life: but a fountain, Theotimus, which we shall

not contemplate afar off as we do now by faith, but which we shall see

by the light of glory while plunged and swallowed up in it.

Divers, who, fishing for precious stones, go down into the water, take

oil, says Pliny, in their mouths, that by scattering it, they may have

more light to see in the waters where they swim. Theotimus, a blessed

soul having entered and plunged into the ocean of the divine essence,

God will pour into its understanding the sacred light of glory, which

will enlighten it in this abyss of inaccessible light, that so by the

light of glory we may see the light of the Divinity. For with Thee is

the fountain of life; and in Thy light we shall see light. [176]

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[176] Ps. xxxv. 10.

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CHAPTER XV.

THAT THERE SHALL BE DIFFERENT DEGREES OF THE UNION OF THE BLESSED WITH

GOD.

Now this light of glory, Theotimus, shall be the measure of the sight

and centemplation of the Blessed; and according as we shall have less

or more of this holy splendour, we shall see more or less clearly, and

consequently with more or less happiness, the most holy Divinity, which

as it is beholden diversely so it will make us diversely glorious. All

the spirits indeed in this heavenly Paradise see all the divine

essence, yet it is not seen and cannot be seen entirely by any one of

them or by all of them together. No, Theotimus, for God being most

singularly one, and most simply indivisible, we cannot see Him without

seeing Him all: but being infinite, without limit, without bounds or

measure at all in His perfection, there neither is, nor can be, any

capacity out of Himself which can ever totally comprehend or penetrate

the infinity of His goodness, infinitely essential and essentially

infinite.

This created light of the visible sun, which is limited and finite, is

in such sort all seen by those that behold it that it is never totally

seen by any one of them nor by all together. It is in a manner so with

all our senses. Amongst many that hear excellent music, though all of

them hear it all, yet some hear it not so well, nor with so much

delight as others, according as their ears are more or less delicate.

The manna was all tasted by each one that ate it, yet differently,

according to the different appetites of those who ate it, and was never

wholly tasted, for it had more tastes of different kinds than the

Israelites had varieties of tasting power. Theotimus, we shall see and

taste in heaven all the Divinity, but no one of the Blessed nor all

together shall ever see or taste it totally. This infinite Divinity

shall still have infinitely more excellences than we sufficiency and

capacity; and we shall have an unspeakable content to know that after

we have satiated all the desires of our heart, and fully replenished

its capacity in the fruition of the infinite good which is God,

nevertheless there will remain in this infinity, infinite perfections

to be seen, enjoyed and possessed, which His divine Majesty knows and

sees, it alone comprehending itself.

So fishes enjoy the incredible vastness of the ocean; but not any fish,

nor yet all the multitude of fishes, ever saw all the shores of the sea

or wetted their fins in all its waters. Birds sport in the open air at

their pleasure, but not any bird, nor yet all the flocks of birds

together, did ever beat with their wings all the regions of the air, or

arrive at the supreme region of the same. Ah! Theotimus, our souls

shall freely and according to the full extent of their wishes swim in

the ocean and soar in the air of the Divinity, rejoicing eternally to

see that this air is so infinite, this ocean so vast, that it cannot be

measured by their wings, and that enjoying without reserve or exception

all this infinite abyss of the Divinity, yet shall they never be able

to equalize their fruition to this infinity, which remains still

infinitely infinite beyond their capacity.

And at this the Blessed Spirits are ravished with two admirations,

first for the infinite beauty which they contemplate, secondly for the

abyss of the infinity which remains to be seen in this same beauty. O

God! how admirable is that which they see! But, O God! how much more

admirable is that which they see not! And yet, Theotimus, since the

most sacred beauty which they see is infinite, it entirely satisfies

and satiates them, and being content to enjoy it according to the rank

which they hold in heaven, because God's most amiable providence has so

determined, they convert the knowledge they have of not possessing and

of not being able totally to possess their object, into a simple

complacency of admiration, in which they have a sovereign joy to see

that the beauty they love is so infinite that it cannot be totally

known but by itself. For in this consists the Divinity of this infinite

beauty or the beauty of this infinite Divinity.

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BOOK IV.

OF THE

DECAY AND RUIN OF CHARITY.

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CHAPTER I.

THAT AS LONG AS WE ARE IN THIS MORTAL LIFE WE MAY LOSE THE LOVE OF GOD.

We do not now speak of those great elect souls whom God by a most

special favour so maintains and confirms in his love, that they run no

hazard of losing it. We speak for the rest of mortals, to whom the Holy

Ghost addresses these warnings: He that thinketh himself to stand, let

him take heed lest he fall. [177] Hold fast that which thou hast, that

no man take thy crown. [178] Labour the more that by good works you may

make sure your calling and election. [179] Whence he makes them make

this prayer: Cast me not away from thy face; and take not thy holy

spirit from me. [180] And lead us not into temptation: that they may

work out their salvation with a holy trembling, and a sacred fear,

[181] knowing that they are not more constant and strong to preserve

God's love than were the first angel with his followers and Judas, who

receiving it lost it, and losing it lost themselves for ever; nor than

Solomon, who, having once left it, holds the whole world in doubt of

his damnation; nor than Adam and Eve, David, S. Peter, who being

children of salvation, fell yet for a space from the love without which

there is no salvation. Alas! Theotimus, who shall then have assurance

of preserving sacred love in the navigation of this mortal life, since,

as well on earth as in heaven, so many persons of incomparable dignity

have suffered such cruel shipwrecks?

But, O eternal God! how is it possible, will one say, that a soul that

has the love of God can ever lose it; for where love is it resists sin,

and how comes it to pass then that sin gets entry there, since love is

strong as death, hard in fight as hell? [182] How can the forces of

death or hell, that is, of sins, vanquish love, which at least equals

them in strength, and surpasses them in helps and in right? And how can

it be that a reasonable soul which has once relished so great a

sweetness as is that of heavenly love, can ever willingly swallow the

bitter waters of offence? Children, though children, being fed with

milk, abhor the bitterness of wormwood and of aloes, and cry themselves

into convulsions when they are made to take them. Ah! then, O true God!

Theotimus, how can the soul, once joined to the goodness of the

Creator, forsake him to follow the vanity of the creature?

My dear Theotimus, the heavens themselves are astonished, their gates

become desolate with fear, [183] and the angels of peace are lost in

amazement at this prodigious misery of man's heart, abandoning a good

so worthy of love, to join itself to things so unworthy. But have you

never seen that little marvel which every one knows, though every one

does not know the reason of it? When a very full barrel is broached,

the wine will not run unless it have air given from above, which yet

happens not to barrels in which there is already a void, for they are

no sooner open but the wine runs. Truly in this mortal life though our

souls abound with heavenly love yet they are never so full of it but

that by temptation this love may depart: in heaven, however, when the

sweetness of God's beauty shall occupy all our understanding, and the

delights of his goodness shall wholly satiate our wills, so that there

shall be nothing which the fulness of his love shall not replenish, no

object, though it penetrate even to our hearts, can ever draw or make

run out one sole drop of the precious liquor of our heavenly love. And

to expect to give air above, that is, to deceive or surprise the

understanding, shall no more be possible; for it shall be immovable in

the apprehension of the sovereign truth.

So wine well purified and separated from the lees is easily kept from

turning and getting thick; that which is on its lees is in continual

danger; and we, so long as we are in this world, have our souls upon

the lees or tartar of a thousand moods and miseries, and consequently

easy to change and spoil in their love. But once in heaven, where, as

in the great feast described by Isaias, we shall have wine purified

from all lees, we shall be no longer subject to change, but be

inseparably united by love to our sovereign good. Here in the twilight

of dawning we are afraid that in lieu of the spouse we may meet some

other object, which may engage and deceive us, but when we shall find

Him above, where He feeds and reposes in the mid-day, there will be no

chance of being deceived, for His light will be too clear, and His

sweetness will bind us so closely to His goodness, that we shall no

longer have the power to will to unfasten ourselves.

We are like the coral, which in the sea, the place of its origin, is a

pale-green, weak, drooping and pliable tree, but being drawn from the

bottom of the sea, as from its mother's womb, it becomes almost a

stone, firm and unbending, while it changes its pale-green into a

lively red. For so we being as yet amidst the sea of this world the

place of our birth, are subject to extreme vicissitudes, liable to be

bent on every side; to the right, which is heavenly love, by

inspiration, to the left, which is earthly love, by temptation. But if,

being once drawn out of this mortality, we have changed the pale-green

of our trembling hopes into the bright red of assured fruition, we

shall never more be movable, but make a settled abode for ever in

eternal love.

It is impossible to see the Divinity and not love it, but here below

where we do not see it, but only have a glimpse of it through the

clouds of faith, as in a mirror, our knowledge is not yet so perfect as

not to leave an opening for the surprises of other objects and apparent

goods, which through the obscurities which are mixed with the certainty

and verity of faith, steal in unperceived, like little fox cubs, and

demolish our flourishing vineyard. To conclude, Theotimus, when we have

charity our free-will is clothed with her wedding garment, which, as

she can still keep it on if she please by well-doing, so she can put

off if she please by offending.

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[177] 1 Cor. x. 12.

[178] Apoc. iii. 11.

[179] 2 Peter i. 10.

[180] Ps. l. 13.

[181] Phil. ii. 12.

[182] Cant. viii. 6.

[183] Jer. ii. 12.

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CHAPTER II.

HOW THE SOUL GROWS COLD IN HOLY LOVE.

The soul is often grieved and troubled in the body, even so far as to

desert many of its members, which remain deprived of motion and

feeling, while it never forsakes the heart, wherein it fully remains

till the very end of life. So charity is sometimes weakened and

depressed in the affections till it seems to be scarcely in exercise at

all, and yet it remains entire in the supreme region of the soul. This

happens when, under the multitude of venial sins as under ashes, the

fire of holy love remains covered, and its flame smothered, though it

is not dead or extinguished. For as the presence of the diamond hinders

the exercise and action of that property which the adamant has of

drawing iron, and yet does not take it away, as it acts immediately

this obstacle is removed, so the presence of venial sins in no sort

deprives charity of its force and power to work, yet as it were benumbs

it and deprives it of the use of its activity, so that charity remains

without action, sterile and unfruitful. It is true that neither venial

sin, nor even the affection to it, is contrary to the essential

resolution of charity, which is to prefer God before all things;

because by this sin we love something outside reason but not against

reason, we defer a little too much, and more than is fit, to creatures,

yet we do not prefer them before the Creator, we occupy ourselves more

than we ought in earthly things, yet do we not for all that forsake

heavenly things. In fine, this kind of sin impedes us in the way of

charity, but does not put us out of it, and therefore venial sin, not

being contrary to charity, never destroys charity either wholly or

partially.

God signified to the Bishop of Ephesus that he had forsaken his first

charity, [184] where he does not say that he was without charity, but

only that it was not such as in the beginning; that is, that it was not

now prompt, fervent, growing in love, or fruitful: as we are wont to

say of him who from being bright, cheerful and blithe, becomes sad,

heavy and sullen, that he is not now the same man he was; for our

meaning is not that he is not the same in substance, but only in his

actions and exercises. And thus Our Saviour says that in the latter

days the charity of many shall grow cold, [185] that is, it shall not

be so active and courageous, by reason of fear and sadness which shall

oppress men's hearts. Certain it is that when concupiscence hath

conceived it bringeth forth sin. [186] The sin however, though sin

indeed, does not always beget the death of the soul, but then only when

it is complete in malice, and when it is consummate and accomplished,

as S. James says. And he here establishes so clearly the difference

between mortal and venial sin, that it is strange that some in our age

have had the temerity to deny it.

However, venial sin is sin, and consequently troubles charity, not as a

thing that is contrary to charity itself, but contrary to its

operations and progress, and even to its intention. For as this

intention is that we should direct all our actions to God, it is

violated by venial sin, which directs the actions by which we commit

it, not indeed against God yet outside God and his will. And as we say

of a tree rudely visited and stripped by a tempest that nothing is

left, because though the tree be entire yet it is left without fruit,

so when our charity is shaken by the affection we have to venial sin,

we say it is diminished and weakened; not because the habit of love is

not entire in our hearts, but because it is without the works which are

its fruits.

The affection to great sins did so make truth prisoner to injustice

amongst the pagan philosophers, that, as the great Apostle says:

Knowing God they honoured him not according to that knowledge; [187] so

that though this affection did not banish natural light, yet it made it

profitless. So the affection to venial sin does not abolish charity,

but it holds it as a slave, tied hand and foot, hindering its freedom

and action. This affection, attaching us too closely to the enjoyment

of creatures, deprives us of the spiritual intimacy between God and us,

to which charity, as true friendship, excites us; consequently this

affection makes us lose the interior helps and assistances which are as

it were the vital and animating spirits of the soul, in default of

which there follows a certain spiritual palsy, which in the end, if it

be not remedied, brings us to death. For, after all, charity being an

active quality cannot be long without either acting or dying: it is,

say our Ancients, of the nature of Rachel, who also represented it.

Give me, said she to her husband, children, otherwise I shall die;

[188] and charity urges the heart which she has espoused to make her

fertile of good works; otherwise she will perish.

We are rarely in this mortal life without many temptations. Now low and

slothful hearts, and such as are given to exterior pleasures, not being

accustomed to fight nor exercised in spiritual warfare, never preserve

charity long, but let themselves ordinarily be surprised by mortal sin,

which happens the more easily because the soul is more disposed by

venial sin to mortal. For as that man of old, having continued to carry

every day the same calf, bore him also when he was grown to be a great

ox, custom having by little and little made insensible the increase of

so heavy a burden; so he that accustoms himself to play for pence will

in the end play for crowns, pistoles and horses, and after his stud all

his estate. [189] He that gives the reins to little angers becomes in

the end furious and unbearable; he that addicts himself to lying in

jest, is in great peril of lying with calumny.

In fine, Theotimus, we are wont to say that such as have a very weakly

constitution have no life, that they have not an ounce, or not a

handful of it, because that which is quickly to have an end seems

indeed already not to be. And those good-for-nothing souls who are

addicted to pleasure and set upon transitory things, may well say that

they no longer have charity, for if they have it they are in the way

soon to lose it.

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[184] Apoc. ii. 4.

[185] Matt. xxiv. 12.

[186] James i. 15.

[187] Rom. i. 21.

[188] Gen. xxx. 1.

[189] Apres ses chevaux toute sa chevance.

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CHAPTER III.

HOW WE FORSAKE DIVINE LOVE FOR THAT OF CREATURES.

This misery of quitting God for the creature happens thus. We do not

love God without intermission, because in this mortal life charity is

in us as a simple habit, which, as philosophers have remarked, we use

when we like and never against our liking. When then we do not make use

of the charity which is in us, that is, when we are not applying our

spirit to the exercises of holy love, but, when (keeping it busied in

some other affair, or it being idle in itself) it remains useless and

negligent, then, Theotimus, it may be assaulted by some bad object and

surprised by temptation. And though the habit of charity be at that

instant in the bottom of our hearts and perform its office, inclining

us to reject the bad suggestion, yet it only urges us or leads us to

the action of resistance according as we second it, as is the manner of

habits; and therefore charity leaving us in our freedom, it happens

often that the bad object having cast its allurements deeply into our

hearts, we attach ourselves unto it by an excessive complacency, which

when it comes to grow, we can hardly get rid of, and like thorns,

according to the saying of Our Saviour, it in the end stifles the seed

of grace and heavenly love. So it fell out with our first mother Eve,

whose overthrow began by a certain amusement which she took in

discoursing with the serpent, receiving complacency in hearing it talk

of her advancement in knowledge, and in seeing the beauty of the

forbidden fruit, so that the complacency growing with the amusement and

the amusement feeding itself in the complacency, she found herself at

length so entangled, that giving away to consent, she committed the

accursed sin into which afterwards she drew her husband.

We see that pigeons, touched with vanity, display themselves (se

pavonnent) sometimes in the air, and sail about hither and thither,

admiring the variety of their plumage, and then the tercelets and

falcons that espy them fall upon them and seize them, which they could

never do if the pigeons had been flying their proper flight, as they

have a stronger wing than have birds of prey. Ah! Theotimus, if we did

not amuse ourselves with the vanity of fleeting pleasures, especially

in the complacency of self-love, but if having once got charity we were

careful to fly straight thither whither it would carry us, suggestion

and temptation should never catch us, but because as doves seduced and

beguiled by self-esteem we look back upon ourselves, and engage our

spirits too much with creatures, we often find ourselves seized by the

talons of our enemies, who bear away and devour us.

God does not will to hinder temptations from attacking us, to the end

that by resistance our charity may be more exercised, that by fighting

we may gain the victory, and by victory obtain the triumph. But for us

to have any kind of inclination to delight ourselves in the

temptation--this rises from the condition of our nature, which so

earnestly loves good that it is subject to be enticed by anything that

has a show of good, and temptation's hook is ever baited with this kind

of bait: for, as holy Writ teaches, there is either some good

honourable in the world's sight to move us to the pride of a worldly

life, or a good delightful to sense to carry us to concupiscence of the

flesh, or a good tending towards wealth, to incite us to the

concupiscence and avarice of the eyes. [190] But if we kept our faith,

which can discern between the true good we are to pursue and the false

which we are to reject, sharply attentive to its office, without doubt

it would be a trusty sentinel to charity, and would give intelligence

of that evil which approaches the heart under pretext of good, and

charity would immediately repulse it. But because ordinarily we keep

our faith either asleep or less attentive than is requisite for the

preservation of our charity, we are often surprised by temptation,

which, seducing our senses, while our senses incite the inferior part

of our soul to rebellion, often brings to pass that the superior part

of reason yields to the violence of this revolt, and by committing sin

loses charity.

Such was the progress of the sedition which the disloyal Absalom

stirred up against his good father David; for he put forward

propositions which were good in appearance, which being once received

by the poor Israelites whose prudence was put to sleep and smothered,

he solicited them in such sort that he wrought them to a complete

rebellion; so that David was constrained to depart from Jerusalem with

all his most faithful friends, leaving there no men of distinction save

Sadoc and Abiathar, priests of the Eternal, with their children: now

Sadoc was a seer, that is to say a prophet. [191]

For so, most dear Theotimus, self-love, finding our faith without

attention and drowsy, presents unto us vain yet apparent goods, seduces

our senses, our imagination and the faculties of our souls, and lays so

hard at our free-wills that it brings them to an entire revolt against

the holy love of God, which then, as another David, departs from our

heart with all its train, that is with the gifts of the Holy Ghost and

the other heavenly virtues, which are the inseparable companions of

charity, if not her properties and faculties. Nor does there remain in

the Jerusalem of our soul any virtue of importance saving Sadoc the

seer, that is the gift of faith which can make us see eternal truths,

with the exercise of it, and with him Abiathar, that is the gift of

hope with its action; both these remain much afflicted and sorrowful,

yet maintain in us the ark of alliance, that is the quality and title

of Christian purchased by baptism.

Alas! Theotimus, what a pitiful spectacle it is to the angels of peace

to see the Holy Ghost and his love depart in this manner out of our

sinful souls! Verily I think if they could weep they would pour out

infinite tears, and, with a mournful voice lamenting our misery, would

sing the sad canticle which Jeremias took up, when sitting upon the

threshold of the desolate temple he contemplated the ruin of Jerusalem

in the time of Sedecias: How doth the city sit solitary that was full

of people! How is the mistress of the Gentiles become as a widow: the

princess of provinces made tributary! [192]

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[190] 1 John ii. 16.

[191] 2 Kings xv.

[192] Jer. Lam. i. 1.

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CHAPTER IV.

THAT HEAVENLY LOVE IS LOST IN A MOMENT.

The love of God, which brings us as far as contempt of self, makes us

citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem; self-love, which pushes us forward

to the contempt of God, makes us slaves of the infernal Babylon. It is

true that only little by little we come to despise God, but we have no

sooner done it than instantly, in a moment, holy charity forsakes us,

or rather wholly perishes. Yes, Theotimus, for in this contempt of God

does mortal sin consist, and one only mortal sin banishes charity from

the soul, inasmuch as it breaks the connection and union with God,

which is obedience and submission to his will: and as man's heart

cannot live divided, so charity, which is the heart of the soul and the

soul of the heart, can never be wounded without being slain: as they

say of pearls, which being conceived of heavenly dew perish if any drop

of salt water get within the shell that holds them. Our soul, as you

know, does not go out of our body by little and little, but in a

moment, when the indisposition of the body is so great that it can no

longer exercise the actions of life in it: even so, the very instant

the heart is so disordered by passions that charity can no longer reign

there, she quits and abandons it: for she is so noble, that she cannot

cease to reign without ceasing to be.

Habits acquired by our human actions alone do not perish by one single

contrary act: for a man is not said to be intemperate for one single

act of intemperance, nor is a painter held an unskilful master for

having once failed in his art; but, as all such habits are acquired by

the influence of a series of acts, so we lose them by a long cessation

from their acts or by many contrary acts. But charity, Theotimus, which

in a moment the Holy Ghost pours into our hearts as soon as the

conditions requisite for this infusion are found in us, is also in an

instant taken from us, as soon as, diverting our will from the

obedience we owe to God, we complete our consent to the rebellion and

disloyalty to which temptation excites us.

It is true that charity increases by degrees and goes from perfection

to perfection according as by our works or by the frequenting of the

sacraments we make place for it, yet it does not decrease by a

lessening of its perfection, for we never lose any least part of it but

we lose it all. In which it resembles the masterpiece of Phidias so

famous amongst the ancients; for they say that this great sculptor made

at Athens an ivory statue of Minerva, twenty-six cubits high, and in

the buckler which she held, wherein he had represented the battles of

the Amazons and Giants, he carved his own face with so great art that

one could not take away one line of it, says Aristotle, without

destroying the whole statue, so that this work, though it had been

brought to perfection by adding piece to piece, yet would have perished

in an instant if one little parcel of the workman's likeness had been

removed. In like manner, Theotimus, though the Holy Ghost having

infused charity into a soul increases it by adding one degree to

another and one perfection of love to another, yet still, the

resolution of preferring God's will before all things being the

essential point of sacred love, and that wherein the image of eternal

love, that is of the Holy Ghost, is represented, one cannot withdraw

one single piece of it but presently charity wholly perishes.

This preference of God before all things is the dear child of charity.

And if Agar, who was but an Egyptian, seeing her son in danger of death

had not the heart to stay by him, but would have left him, saying: Ah!

I will not see the child die, [193] is it strange then that charity,

the daughter of heavenly sweetness and delight, cannot bear to behold

the death of her child, which is the resolution never to offend God? So

that while free-will is resolving to consent to sin and is thereby

putting to death this holy resolution, charity dies with it, saying in

its last sigh: Ah! no, never will I see this child die. In fine,

Theotimus, as the precious stone called prassius loses its lustre in

the presence of any poison, so in an instant the soul loses her

splendour, grace and beauty, which consist in holy love, upon the entry

and presence of any mortal sin;--whence it is written that the soul

that sinneth, the same shall die. [194]

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[193] Gen. xxi. 16.

[194] Ezech. xviii. 4.

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CHAPTER V.

THAT THE SOLE CAUSE OF THE DECAY AND COOLING OF CHARITY IS IN THE

CREATURE'S WILL.

As it would be an impious effrontery to attribute the works of holy

love done by the Holy Ghost in and with us to the strength of our will,

it would be a shameless impiety to lay the defect of love in ungrateful

men, on the failure of heavenly assistance and grace. For the Holy

Ghost cries everywhere, on the contrary, that our ruin is from

ourselves: Destruction is thine own, O Israel! thy help is only in me:

[195] that Our Saviour brought the fire of love, and desires nothing

but that it should be enkindled in our hearts: [196] that salvation is

prepared before the face of all peoples: a light to the revelation of

the Gentiles and the glory of Israel: [197] that the divine goodness is

not willing that any should perish, [198] but that all should come to

the knowledge of the truth: and will have all men to be saved, [199]

their Saviour being come into the world, that he might redeem them who

were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. [200]

And the wise man clearly warns us, Say not: it is through God that she

(wisdom) is not with me. [201] And the sacred Council of Trent divinely

inculcates upon all the children of holy Church, that the Grace of God

is never wanting to such as do what they can, invoking the divine

assistance; that God never abandons such as he has once justified

unless they abandon him first; so that, if they be not wanting to grace

they shall obtain glory.

In fine, Theotimus, Our Saviour is the true light which enlighteneth

every man that cometh into this world. [202] Some travellers, one

summer's day about noontide, lay down to repose under the shade of a

tree, but while their weariness and the coolness of the shadow kept

them asleep, the sun advancing on them threw just upon their eyes his

strongest light, which by its glittering brightness gave glimpses of

itself like little flashes of lightning about the pupils of these

sleepers' eyes, and by the heat which pierced their eyelids, forced

them by a gentle violence to awake. Some of them being awakened get up,

and making way get happily to their lodging, the rest not only do not

rise, but turning their backs to the sun and pressing their hats over

their eyes, spend their day there in sleeping, till surprised by night

and yet being desirous to make towards their lodging, they stray, one

here, one there, in the forest, at the mercy of wolves, wild-boars, and

other savage beasts. Now tell me, I pray, Theotimus, those that

arrived, ought they not to give all their thanks for their good success

to the sun, or to speak like a Christian, to the sun's Creator? Yes

surely; for they thought not of waking when it was time: the sun did

them this good office, and by the gentle invitation of his light and

heat came lovingly to call them up. 'Tis true they resisted not his

call, but he also helped them much even in that; for he spread his

light fairly upon them, giving them a half-sight of himself through

their eyelids, and by his heat as it were by his love he unsealed their

eyes, and urged them to see his day.

On the contrary, those poor strangers, what right had they to cry in

that wood: Alas! what have we done to the sun that he did not make us

see his light, as he did our companions, that we might have arrived at

our lodgings and not have wandered in this hideous darkness? For who

would not undertake the sun's or rather God's cause, my dear Theotimus,

to answer these wretches. What is there, miserable beings, that the sun

could really do for you and did not? His favours were equal to all ye

that slept: he approached you all with the same light, touched you with

the same rays, spread over you a like heat, but unhappy ye, although

you saw your risen companions take their pilgrim's staff to gain way,

ye turned your backs to the sun and would not make use of his light,

nor be conquered by his heat.

Now, Theotimus, see here what I would say. We are all pilgrims in this

mortal life; almost all of us have voluntarily slept in sin; God the

sun of justice darts upon us most sufficiently, yea abundantly, the

beams of his inspirations, warms our hearts with his benedictions,

touching every one with the allurements of his love. Ah! how comes it

then that these allurements allure so few and draw yet fewer? Ah!

certainly such as, first allured, afterwards drawn, follow the

inspiration, have great occasion to rejoice, but not to glorify

themselves for it. Let them rejoice because they enjoy a great good;

yet let them not glorify themselves therein, because it is by God's

pure goodness, who, leaving them the profit of their good works,

reserves to himself the glory of them. But concerning them that remain

in the sleep of sin: Oh! what good reason they have to lament, groan,

weep, and say: woe the day! for they are in the most lamentable of

cases; yet have they no reason to grieve or complain, save about

themselves, who despised, yea rebelled against, the light; who were

untractable to invitations, and obstinate against inspirations; so that

it is their own malice alone they must ever curse and reproach, since

they themselves are the sole authors of their ruin, the sole workers of

their damnation. So the Japanese, complaining to the Blessed Francis

Xavier, their Apostle, that God who had had so much care of other

nations, seemed to have forgotten their predecessors, not having given

them the knowledge of himself, for want of which they must have been

lost: the man of God answered them that the divine natural law was

engraven in the hearts of all mortals, and that if their forerunners

had observed it, the light of heaven would without doubt have

illuminated them, as, on the contrary, having violated it, they

deserved damnation. An apostolic answer of an apostolic man, and

resembling the reason given by the great Apostle of the loss of the

ancient Gentiles, whom he calls inexcusable, for that having known good

they followed evil; for it is in a word that which he inculcates in the

first chapter of his epistle to the Romans. Misery upon misery to those

who do not acknowledge that their misery comes from their malice!

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[195] Osee xiii. 9.

[196] Luke xii. 49.

[197] Luke ii. 32.

[198] 2 Peter iii. 9.

[199] 1 Tim. ii. 4.

[200] Gal. iv. 5.

[201] Eccli. xv. 11.

[202] John i. 9.

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CHAPTER VI.

THAT WE OUGHT TO ACKNOWLEDGE ALL THE LOVE WE BEAR TO GOD TO BE FROM

GOD.

The love of men towards God takes its being, progress and perfection

from the eternal love of God towards men. This is the universal sense

of the Church our mothers who with an ardent jealousy will have us to

acknowledge our salvation and the means thereof, to proceed solely from

Our Saviour's mercy, to the end that on earth as in heaven to him alone

may be honour and glory.

What hast thou that thou hast not received? says the divine Apostle,

speaking of the gifts of knowledge, eloquence, and other like qualities

of Church-pastors; and if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if

thou hadst not received. [203] It is true; we have received all from

God, but especially the supernatural goods of holy love. And if we have

received them, why should we take the glory of them?

Certainly if any one would extol himself for having made progress in

the love of God: Alas! wretched man, should we say unto him, thou wast

aswoon in thy iniquity, having neither force nor life left in thee to

rise (as it happened to the princess in our parable), [204] and God of

his infinite goodness ran to thy succour, and crying with a loud voice;

Open the mouth of thy attention and I will fill it, [205] he himself

put his fingers between thy lips and unlocked thy teeth, casting into

thy heart his holy inspiration, and thou didst receive it; and when

thou wast brought back to thy senses, he went on by divers movements

and various means to strengthen thy heart, till at length he infused

into it his charity, as thy vital and perfect health.

Well then, tell me now, miserable creature, what hast thou done in all

this of which thou canst boast? Thou didst consent, I know it well; the

motion of thy will did freely follow that of heavenly grace. But all

this, what is it more than to receive the divine operation without

resistance? And what is there in this, that thou hast not received?

Yea, poor wretch that thou art, thou didst receive the receiving in

which thou gloriest, and the consent which thou vauntest: for tell me,

I pray thee, wilt thou not grant me, that if God had not prevented

thee, thou wouldst never have perceived his goodness, and consequently

never have consented to his love? No, nor yet hadst thou thought a

single good thought of him. His movement gave being and life to thine,

and if his liberty had not animated, excited and provoked thy liberty,

by the powerful invitations of his sweetness, thy liberty had been for

ever unprofitable to thy salvation. I confess thou didst co-operate

with the inspiration by consenting, but, if thou knowest it not, I

teach thee that thy co-operation took being from the operation of grace

and thy freewill together, yet so, that if grace had not prevented and

filled thy heart with its operation, never had thy heart had either

power or will to co-operate.

But tell me again, I beseech thee, vile and abject man, is it not

ridiculous of thee to think that thou hast a share in the glory of thy

conversion because thou didst not repel the inspiration? Is not this a

frenzy of robbers and tyrants, to pretend they give life to those from

whom they do not take it? And is it not a frantic impiety to think that

thou gavest holy efficacy and living activity to the divine

inspiration, because by resistance thou didst not take it away? We can

hinder the effects of inspiration, but we cannot give it any; it takes

its force and virtue from the divine goodness which is the place of its

starting, and not from man's will the place of its arrival. Should we

not be moved to wrath, to hear the princess of our parable boast that

it was she that gave virtue and power to the cordial waters and other

medicines, or that she cured herself, because if she had not received

the remedies which the king gave her and poured into her mouth (at such

time as being half dead there remained hardly any sense in her), they

had had no operation? Yes, might one say to her: ungrateful that thou

art, thou mightest have obstinately refused to receive the remedies,

thou mightest, after thou hadst received them into thy mouth, have cast

them out again, yet for all that it is not true that thou gavest them

force and virtue. This they had as their natural property, thou didst

only consent to receive them, and let them operate; and besides, thou

wouldst never have consented, if the King had not first reinvigorated

thee, and then solicited thee to take them; never hadst thou received

them, had not he assisted thee to receive them, opening thy very mouth

with his fingers, and pouring the potion into it. Art thou not then a

monster of ingratitude to wish to attribute to thyself a benefit which

by so many titles thou owest to thy dear spouse?

The curious little fish, called echeneis, or remora, has indeed the

power to stay or not to stay a ship sailing on the high sea under full

sail: but it has not the power to make it set sail, or proceed or

arrive; it can hinder motion, but cannot give it. Our free-will can

stay and hinder the course of the inspiration and when the favourable

gale of God's grace swells the sails of our soul it is in our power to

refuse consent, and thereby to hinder the effect of the wind's favour:

but when our spirit sails along, and makes its voyage prosperously, it

is not we that make the gale of the inspiration blow for us, nor we

that make our sails swell with it, nor we that give motion to the ship

of our heart; but we simply receive the gale sent from heaven, consent

to its motion, and let our ship sail under it, not hindering it by the

remora of our resistance. It is the inspiration then which impresses on

our free-will the happy and sweet influence whereby it not only makes

it see the beauty of good, but also heats, helps, and strengthens it,

and moves it so sweetly that it thus turns and freely flows out towards

what is good.

The heavens in spring time prepare the fresh dewdrops, and shower them

down upon the face of the sea, and the mother-pearls that open their

shells receive these drops, which are converted into pearls: but, on

the contrary, the mother-pearls which keep their shells shut do not

hinder the dews from falling upon them, yet they hinder them from

falling into them. Now have not the heavens sent their dew and their

influence as much upon the one as the other mother-pearl? Why then did

the one in effect produce its pearl and the others not? The heavens

were as bountiful to that one which remained sterile as was requisite

to empearl and impregnate it with its fair unity, [206] but it hindered

the effect of the heavens' favour, by keeping itself closed and

covered. And as for that which conceived the pearl on receiving the

dew, it has nothing in that work which it did not receive from heaven,

not even its opening whereby it received the dew; for without the

touches of the morning's rays, which did gently excite it, it had not

risen up to the surface of the sea, nor yet opened its shell.

Theotimus, if we have any love for God, his be the honour and glory,

who did all in us, and without whom nothing were done; ours be the

profit and obligation. This is the division his divine goodness makes

with us; he leaves us the fruits of his benefits, and reserves to

himself the honour and praise of them; and verily since we are nothing

but by his grace, we ought to be nothing but for his glory.

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[203] 1 Cor. iv. 7.

[204] See Book iii. 3.

[205] Ps. lxxx. 11.

[206] i.e. pearl. See p. 82 [Tr.]

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CHAPTER VII.

THAT WE MUST AVOID ALL CURIOSITY, AND HUMBLY ACQUIESCE IN GOD'S MOST

WISE PROVIDENCE.

The human spirit is so weak that when it would look too curiously into

the causes and reasons of God's will it embarrasses and entangles

itself in the meshes of a thousand difficulties, out of which it has

much to do to deliver itself; it resembles smoke, for as smoke ascends

it gets more subtle, and as it grows more subtle it vanishes. In

striving to raise our reasonings too high in divine things by curiosity

we grow vain or empty in our thoughts, and instead of arriving at the

knowledge of truth, we fall into the folly of our vanity.

But above all we are unreasonable towards Divine providence in regard

to the diversity of the means which he bestows upon us to draw us to

his holy love, and by his holy love to glory. For our temerity urges us

ever to inquire why God gives more means to one than to another; why he

did not amongst the Tyrians and Sidonians the miracles which he did in

Corozain and Bethsaida, seeing they would have made as good use of

them; and, in fine, why he draws one rather than another to his love.

O Theotimus! my friend, never, no never, must we permit our minds to be

carried away by this mad whirlwind, nor expect to find a better reason

of God's will than his will itself, which is sovereignly reasonable,

yea, the reason of all reasons, the rule of all goodness, the law of

all equity. And although the Holy Ghost, speaking in the Holy

Scripture, gives reason in divers places of almost all we can wish to

know of what this divine providence does in conducting men to holy love

and eternal salvation, yet on various occasions he shows that we must

in no wise depart from the respect which is due to his will, whose

purpose, decree, good-pleasure, and sentence we are to adore; and he

being sovereign judge and sovereignly equitable, it is not reasonable

that at the end he manifest his motives, but it is sufficient that he

say simply--for reasons. And if charity obliges us to bear so much

respect to the decrees of sovereign courts, composed of corruptible

judges, of the earth and earthly, as to believe that they were not made

without motives, though we know these not--ah! Lord God, with what a

loving reverence ought we to adore the equity of thy supreme providence

which is infinite in justice and goodness!

So in a thousand places of the holy Word we find the reason why God has

reprobated the Jews. Because, say S. Paul and S. Barnabas, you reject

the word of God, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold

we turn to the Gentiles. [207] And he that shall consider in

tranquillity of heart Chapters IX. X. and XI. of the Epistle to the

Romans, shall clearly see that God's will did not without reason reject

the Jews; nevertheless, this reason must not be sought out by man's

spirit, which, on the contrary, is obliged to be satisfied with purely

and simply reverencing the divine decree, admiring it with love as

infinitely just and upright, and loving it with admiration as

impenetrable and incomprehensible. So that the divine Apostle thus

concludes the long discourse which he had made concerning it: O the

depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How

incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways! For

who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?

[208] By which exclamation he testifies that God does all things with

great wisdom, knowledge and reason; yet so, that, as man has not

entered into the divine counsels, whose judgments and designs are

placed infinitely above our reach, we ought devoutly to adore his

decrees as most just, without searching out their motives. These he

keeps in secret to himself, in order to keep our understanding in

respect and humility to ourself.

S. Augustine in a hundred places teaches us this practice. "No one

cometh to Our Saviour," says he, "if not drawn;--whom he draws, and

whom he draws not, why he draws this one and not that,--do not wish to

judge if you do not wish to err. Listen once for all and understand.

Art thou not drawn, pray that thou mayst be drawn." "Verily it is

sufficient for a Christian living as yet by faith, and not seeing that

which is perfect, but only knowing in part, to know and believe that

God delivers none from damnation, but by his free mercy, through our

Lord Jesus Christ; and that he condemns none but by his most just

truth, through the same Lord Jesus Christ. But to know why he delivers

this one rather than the other--let that man sound so great a depth of

God's judgments who is able, but let him beware of the precipice."

"These judgments are not therefore unjust because they are hidden."

"But why then does he deliver this man rather than that? We say again,

O man, who art thou that repliest against God? [209] His judgments are

incomprehensible, and his ways unknown, and let us add this: Seek not

the things that are too high for thee, and search not into things above

thy ability:" [210] "Now he granteth not them mercy, to whom, by a

truth most secret and furthest removed from men's thoughts, he judges

it not fit to communicate his favours and mercy."

We see sometimes twins, of whom one is born alive and receives Baptism,

the other in his birth loses his temporal life, before being

regenerated to the eternal, and consequently the one is heir of heaven,

the other is deprived of the inheritance. Now why does divine

providence give such different fates to one equal birth? Truly it might

be answered that ordinarily God's providence does not violate the laws

of nature, so that one of these twins being strong, and the other too

feeble to support the labour of his delivery, the latter died before he

could be baptized, the other lived; divine providence not willing to

stop the course of natural causes, which on this occasion were the

reason why the one was deprived of Baptism. And truly this is a

perfectly solid answer. But, following the advice of the divine S.

Paul, and of S. Augustine, we ought not to busy our thoughts in this

consideration, which, though it be good, yet in no respect enters into

comparison with many others which God has reserved to himself, and will

show us in heaven. "Then," says S. Augustine, "the secret shall end why

rather the one than the other was received, the causes being equal as

to both, and why miracles were not done amongst those who in case they

had been done would have been brought to repentance, and were done

amongst such as would will not to believe them." And in another place

the same saint, speaking of sinners, some of whom God leaves in their

iniquity while others he raises, says: "Now why he retains the one and

not the other, it is not possible to comprehend, nor lawful to inquire,

since it is enough to know that it is by him we stand and that it is

not by him we fall." And again: "This is hidden and far removed from

man's understanding, at least from mine."

Behold, Theotimus, the most holy way of philosophising on this subject.

Wherefore I have always considered that the learned modesty and most

wise humility of the seraphic Doctor S. Bonaventure were greatly to be

admired and loved, in the discourse which he makes of the reason why

divine providence ordains the elect to eternal life. "Perhaps," says

he, "it is by a foresight of the good works which will be done by him

that is drawn, insomuch as they proceed in some sort from the will: but

distinctly to declare which good works being foreseen move God's will,

I am not able, nor will I make inquiry thereupon: and there is no other

reason than some sort of congruity, so that we might assign one while

it might be another. Wherefore we cannot with assurance point out the

true reason nor the true motive of God's will in this: for as S.

Augustine says: 'Although the truth of it is most certain, yet is it

far removed from our thoughts.' So that we can say nothing assuredly of

it unless by the revelation of him who knows all things. And whereas it

was not expedient for our salvation that we should have knowledge of

these secrets, but on the contrary, it was more profitable that we

should be ignorant of them, to keep us in humility, God would not

reveal them, yea the holy Apostle did not dare to inquire about them,

but testified the insufficiency of our understanding in this matter

when he cried out: O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the

knowledge of God!" Could one speak more holily Theotimus of so holy a

mystery? Indeed these are the words of a most saintly and prudent

Doctor of the Church.

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[207] Acts xiii. 46.

[208] Rom. xi. 33, 34.

[209] Rom. ix. 20.

[210] Eccli. iii. 22.

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CHAPTER VIII.

AN EXHORTATION TO THE AMOROUS SUBMISSION WHICH WE OWE TO THE DECREES OF

DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

Let us love then, Theotimus, and adore in humility of spirit this depth

of God's judgments, which, as S. Augustine says, the holy Apostle

discovers not, but admires, when he cries out: O the depth of God's,

judgments! "Who can count the sands of the sea, and the drops of rain,

or measure the depths of the abyss," says that excellent understanding

S. Gregory Nazianzen: [211] "and who can sound the depth of the Divine

Wisdom by which it has created all things, and governs them as it

pleases and judges fit. For indeed it suffices that, after the example

of the Apostle, we admire it without stopping at the difficulty and

obscurity of it. O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the

knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how

unsearchable his ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who

hath been his counsellor? Theotimus, the reasons of God's will cannot

be penetrated by our intelligence till we see the face of him who

reacheth from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly;

[212] doing all that he doth in measure, and number, and weight; [213]

and to whom the Psalmist says, Lord, thou hast made all things in

wisdom." [214]

How often does it happen that we are ignorant why and how even the

works of men are done? And therefore, says the same holy Bishop of

Nazianzus, "as the artist is not ignorant of his art, so the things of

this world are not carelessly and unskilfully made, though we know not

the reasons of them." Entering into a clockmaker's shop, we shall

sometimes find a clock no greater than an orange, which yet has in it a

hundred or two hundred pieces, of which some serve to show the time,

others to strike the hour or give the morning alarm; we shall see in it

little wheels, some turning to the right, others to the left, one by

the top, another by the bottom; and the balance which with measured

beats keeps rising and falling on either side. We wonder how art could

join together such a number of pieces, with so just a correspondence,

not knowing what each little piece serves for, nor why it is made so,

unless the master tell us; knowing only in general that all serve

either to point out or to strike the hour. It is reported that the good

Indians will stand whole days musing upon a clock, to hear it strike at

the times fixed, and not being able to guess how it is done, they do

not therefore say that it is without art or reason, but are taken with

love and respect towards those who regulate the clocks, admiring them

as more than men. Theotimus, we see in this manner the universe, but

specially human nature, to be a sort of clock, composed with so great a

variety of actions and movements that we cannot but be astonished at

it. And we know in general that these so diversely ordered pieces serve

all, either to point out, as on a dial-plate, God's most holy justice

or as by a bell of praise, to sound the triumphant mercy of his

goodness. But to know the particular use of every piece, how it is

ordered to the general end, or why it is so, we cannot conceive, unless

the sovereign Workman instruct us. Now he conceals his art from us, to

the end that with more reverence we may admire it, till in heaven he

shall ravish us with the sweetness of his wisdom, where in the

abundance of his love he will discover unto us the reasons, means and

motives of all that shall have passed in the world towards our eternal

salvation.

"We resemble," says yet again the great Nazianzen, "those, who are

troubled with giddiness or turning of the head. They think that all

about them is turning upside down, though it be but their brain and

imagination which turn, and not the things; so we, when we meet with

any events of which the causes are unknown to us, fancy that the world

is governed without reason, because we are ignorant of it. Let us

believe then that as God is the maker and father of all things, so he

takes care of all things by his providence, which embraces and sustains

all the machine of creatures. But especially let us believe that he

rules our affairs, (ours who know him) though our life be tossed about

in so great contrariety of accidents. Of these we know not the reasons,

to the end, perhaps, that not being able to attain this knowledge we

may admire the sovereign reason of God which surpasses all things: for

with us things easily known are easily despised; but that which

surpasses the highest powers of our spirit, by how much it is harder to

be known, by so much it excites a greater admiration in us. Truly the

reasons of divine providence were low placed if our small capacities

could reach unto them; they would be less lovable in their sweetness

and less admirable in their majesty if they were set at a less distance

from our capacity!"

Let us cry out then, Theotimus, on all occurrences, but let it be with

an entirely amorous heart towards the most wise, most prudent, and most

sweet providence of our eternal Father: O the depth of the riches of

the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! O Saviour Jesus, Theotimus, how

excessive are the riches of the Divine goodness! His love towards us is

an incomprehensible abyss, whence he has provided for us a rich

sufficiency, or rather a rich abundance of means proper for our

salvation; and sweetly to apply them he makes use of a sovereign

wisdom, having by his infinite knowledge foreseen and known all that

was requisite to that effect. Ah! what can we fear, nay rather, what

ought not we to hope for, being the children of a Father so rich in

goodness to love and to will to save us; who knows so well how to

prepare the means suitable for this and is so wise to apply them; so

good to will, so clear-sighted to ordain, and so prudent to execute?

Let us never permit our minds to flutter with curiosity about God's

judgments, for, like little butterflies, we shall burn our wings, and

perish in this sacred flame. These judgments are incomprehensible, or,

as S. Gregory Nazianzen says, inscrutable, that is, one cannot search

out and sound their motives: the means and ways by which he executes

and brings them to perfection cannot be discerned and recognized: and,

clever as we may be, yet we shall find ourselves thrown out at every

turn and lose the scent. For who hath known the mind, the meaning and

the intention of God? Who hath been his counsellor, to know his

purposes and their motives? Or who hath first given to him? Is it not

he, on the contrary, who presents us with the benedictions of his grace

to crown us with the felicity of his glory ? Ah! Theotimus, all things

are from him, as being their Creator; all things are by him, as being

their Governor; all things are in him, as being their Protector; to him

be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen! [215] Let us walk in

peace, Theotimus, in the way of holy love, for he that shall have

divine love in dying, after death shall enjoy love eternally.

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[211] Orat. xiv.: On Love of the Poor.

[212] Wis. viii. 1.

[213] Ibid. xi. 21.

[214] Ps. ciii. 24.

[215] Rom. xi.

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CHAPTER IX.

OF A CERTAIN REMAINDER OF LOVE THAT OFTENTIMES RESTS IN THE SOUL THAT

HAS LOST HOLY CHARITY.

The life of a man who, spent out, lies dying little by little on his

bed, hardly deserves to be termed life, since, though it be life, it is

so mingled with death that it is hard to say whether it is a death yet

living or a life dying. Alas! how pitiful a spectacle it is, Theotimus!

But far more lamentable is the state of a soul ungrateful to her

Saviour, who goes backward step by step, withdrawing herself from God's

love by certain degrees of indevotion and disloyalty, till at length,

having quite forsaken it, she is left in the horrible obscurity of

perdition. This love which is in its decline, and which is fading and

perishing, is called imperfect love, because, though it be entire in

the soul, yet seems it not to be there entirely; that is, it hardly

stays in the soul any longer, but is upon the point of forsaking it.

Now, charity being separated from the soul by sin, there frequently

remains a certain resemblance of charity which may deceive us and

vainly occupy our minds, and I will tell you what it is. Charity while

it is in us produces many actions of love towards God, by the frequent

exercise of which our soul gets a habit and custom of loving God, which

is not charity, but only a bent and inclination which the multitude of

the actions has given to our hearts.

After a long habit of preaching or saying Mass with deliberation, it

happens often that in dreaming we utter and speak the same things which

we should say in preaching or celebrating; in the same manner the

custom and habit acquired by election and virtue is, in some sort,

afterwards practised without election or virtues since the actions of

those who are asleep have, generally speaking, nothing of virtue save

only an apparent image, and are only the similitudes or representations

thereof. So charity, by the multitude of acts which it produces,

imprints in us a certain facility in loving which it leaves in us even

after we are deprived of its presence. When I was a young scholar, I

found that in a village near Paris, in a certain well, there was an

echo, which would repeat several times the words that we pronounced in

it: and if some simpleton without experience had heard these

repetitions of words, he would have thought there was some one at the

bottom of the well who did it. But we knew beforehand by philosophy

that it was not any one in the well who repeated our words, but simply

that there were cavities, in one of which our voices were collected,

and not finding a passage through, they, lest they might altogether

perish and not employ the force that was left to them, produced second

voices, and these gathering together in another concavity produced a

third, the third a fourth, and so consecutively up to eleven, so that

those voices in the well were no longer our voices, but resemblances

and images of them. And indeed there was a great difference between our

voices and those: for when we made a long continuance of words, they

only repeated some, they shortened the pronunciation of the syllables,

which they uttered very rapidly; and with tones and accents quite

different from ours; nor did they begin to form these words until we

had quite finished pronouncing them. In fine, they were not the words

of a living man, but, so to say, of a hollow and empty rock, which

notwithstanding so well counterfeited man's voice whence they sprang,

that an ignorant person would have been misled and beguiled by them.

Now this is what I would say. When holy charity meets a pliable soul in

which she long resides, she produces a second love, which is not a love

of charity, though it issues from charity; it is a human love which is

yet so like charity, that though afterwards charity perish in the soul

it seems to be still there, inasmuch as it leaves behind it this its

picture and likeness, which so represents charity that one who was

ignorant would be deceived therein, as were the birds by the painting

of the grapes of Zeuxis, which they deemed to be true grapes, so

exactly had art imitated nature. And yet there is a great difference

between charity and the human love it produces in us: for the voice of

charity declares, impresses, and effects all the commandments of God in

our hearts; the human love which remains after it does indeed sometimes

declare and impress all the commandments, yet it never effects them

all, but some few only. Charity pronounces and puts together all the

syllables, that is, all the circumstances of God's commandments; human

love always leaves out some of them, especially that of the right and

pure intention; and as for the tone, charity keeps it always steady,

sweet, and full of grace, human love takes it always too high in

earthly things, or too low in heavenly, and never sets upon its work

until charity has ended hers. For so long as charity is in the soul,

she uses this human love which is her creature and employs it to

facilitate her operations; so that during that time the works of this

love, as of a servant, belong to charity its mistress: but when charity

is gone, then the actions of this love are entirely its own, and have

no longer the price and value of charity. For as the staff of Eliseus,

in his absence, though in the hand of Giezi who received it from him,

wrought no miracle, so actions done in the absence of charity, by the

simple habit of human love, are of no value or merit to eternal life,

though this human love learned from charity to do them, and is but

charity's servant. And this so comes about because this human love, in

the absence of charity, has no supernatural strength to raise the soul

to the excellent action of the love of God above all things.

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CHAPTER X.

HOW DANGEROUS THIS IMPERFECT LOVE IS.

Alas! my Theotimus, behold, I pray you, the poor Judas after he had

betrayed his Master, how he goes to return the money to the Jews, how

he acknowledges his sin, how honourably he speaks of the blood of this

immaculate Lamb. These were effects of imperfect love, which former

charity, now past, had left in his heart. We descend to impiety by

certain degrees, and hardly any one arrives in an instant at the

extremity of malice.

Perfumers, though out of their shops, bear about with them for a long

time the scent of the perfumes which they have handled. In like manner,

those who have been in the cabinet of heavenly ointments, that is in

holy charity, keep for some time afterwards the scent of it.

Where the hart has lodged by night, there, the morning after, is a

fresh scent or vent of him; towards night it is harder to perceive; and

as his strain grows older and harder, the hounds lose it more and more.

When charity has reigned for a time in the soul, one may find there its

path, marks, strain or scent for a time after it has departed, but

little by little all this quite vanishes, and a man loses all knowledge

that charity was ever there.

I have seen certain young people, well brought up in the love of God,

who, putting themselves out of that path, remained for some time during

their miserable decay still giving great signs of their past virtue,

and, the habit acquired in time of charity resisting present vice,

scarcely could one for some months discern whether they were out of

charity or not, and whether they were virtuous or vicious, till such

time as the course of things made it clear that these virtuous

exercises proceeded not from present charity but from past, not from

perfect but from imperfect love, which charity had left behind her, as

a sign that she had lodged in those souls.

Now this imperfect love, Theotimus, is good in itself, for being a

creature of holy charity, and as it were one of her retinue, it cannot

but be good; and indeed it did faithfully serve charity, while she

sojourned in the soul, as it is still ready to serve upon her return.

Nor is it to be contemned because it cannot do actions of perfect love,

the condition of its nature being such; as stars, which in comparison

with the sun are very imperfect, are yet extremely beautiful beheld

alone, and, having no worth in the presence of the sun, have some in

his absence.

At the same time though this imperfect love be good in itself, yet it

is perilous for us; for oftentimes we are contented with it alone,

because having many exterior and interior marks of charity, we,

thinking we have charity, deceive ourselves and think we are holy,

while, in this vain persuasion, the sins which deprived us of charity

increase, grow great, and multiply so fast that in the end they make

themselves masters of our heart.

Self-love deceives us, as Laban did Jacob between Rachel and Lia. We

leave charity for a moment, and this imperfect habit of human love is

thrust on us, and we content ourselves with it as if it were true

charity, till some clear light shows us that we have been deceived.

Ah! my God! is it not a great pity to see a soul flattering herself in

the imagination of being holy, and remaining in repose as though she

were possessed of charity, only to find in the end that her holiness is

a fiction, her rest a lethargy, and her joy a madness.

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CHAPTER XI.

A MEANS TO DISCERN THIS IMPERFECT LOVE.

But, you will ask me, what means is there to discern whether it be

Rachel or Lia, charity or imperfect love, which gives me the feelings

of devotion wherewith I am touched? If when you examine in particular

the objects of the desires, affections and designs which you have at

the time, you find any one for which you would go against the will and

good-pleasure of God by sinning mortally, it is then beyond doubt that

all the feeling, all the facility and promptitude which you have in

God's service, issue from no other source than human and imperfect

love: for if perfect love reigned in us--Ah! it would break every

affection, every desire, every design, the object of which was so

pernicious, and it would not endure that your heart should behold it.

But note that I said this examination must be made upon the affections

you have at the time, for it is not requisite that you should imagine

to yourself such as may arise hereafter, since it is sufficient that we

be faithful in present occurrences, according to the diversity of

times, and since each season has quite enough labour and pain of its

own.

Yet if you were desirous to exercise your heart in spiritual valour, by

the representation of divers encounters and assaults, you might

profitably do so, provided that after the acts of this imaginary valour

which your heart may have made, you esteem not yourself more valiant:

for the children of Ephraim, who did wonders with their bows and arrows

in their warlike games at home, when it came indeed to the push upon

the day of battle, turned their backs, and had not so much as the

courage to lay their arrows on the string, or to face the points of

those of their enemies. They have turned back in the day of battle.

[216]

When therefore we practise this valour about future occurrences, or

such as are only possible, if we find a good and faithful feeling we

are to thank God for it, for this feeling is good as far as it goes:

still we are to keep ourselves with humility between confidence and

diffidence, hoping that by God's grace we should do, on occasion, that

which we imagined, and still fearing that according to our ordinary

misery we should perhaps do nothing and lose heart. But if the

diffidence should become so excessive, that we should seem to ourselves

to have neither force nor courage, and therefore feel a despair with

regard to imaginary temptations, as though we were not in God's charity

and grace, then in despite of our feeling of discouragement we must

make a resolution of great fidelity in all that may occur up to the

temptation which troubles us, hoping that when it comes, God will

multiply his grace, redouble his succours, and afford us all necessary

assistance; and while he gives us not the force for an imaginary and

unnecessary war, he will give it us when it comes to the need. For as

many in the assault have lost courage, so many have also lost fear, and

have taken heart and resolution in the presence of danger and

difficulty which without this they could never have done. And so, many

of God's servants, representing to themselves absent temptations, have

been affrighted at them even almost to the losing of courage, while

when they saw them present, they behaved themselves courageously.

Finally in those fears which arise from the representation of future

assaults, when our heart seems to fail us, it is sufficient that we

desire courage, and trust that God will bestow it upon us at the

necessary time. Samson had not his strength always but we are told in

the Scripture that the lion of the vines of Thamnatha, coming towards

him, raging and roaring, the spirit of the Lord came upon him: that is,

God gave him the movement of a new force and a new courage, and he tore

the lion as he would have torn a kid in pieces. [217] And the same

happened when he defeated the thousand Philistines, who thought they

would have overthrown him in the field of Lechi. So, my dear Theotimus,

it is not necessary for us to have always the feeling and movement of

courage requisite to overcome the roaring lion which goeth about

seeking whom he may devour: this might cause us vanity and presumption.

It is sufficient that we have a good desire to fight valiantly, and a

perfect confidence that the Holy Ghost will assist us with his helping

hand, when occasion shall present itself.

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[216] Ps. lxxvii. 9.

[217] Judges xiv.

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BOOK V.

OF THE

TWO PRINCIPAL EXERCISES OF HOLY LOVE WHICH CONSIST IN COMPLACENCY AND

BENEVOLENCE.

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CHAPTER I.

OF THE SACRED COMPLACENCY OF LOVE; AND FIRST OF WHAT IT CONSISTS.

Love, as we have said, is no other thing than the movement and

outflowing of the heart towards good by means of the complacency which

we take in it; so that complacency is the great motive of love, as love

is the great movement of complacency.

Now this movement is practised towards God in this manner. We know by

faith that the Divinity is an incomprehensible abyss of all perfection,

sovereignly infinite in excellence and infinitely sovereign in

goodness. This truth which faith teaches us we attentively consider by

meditation, beholding that immensity of goods which are in God, either

all together by assembling all the perfections, or in particular by

considering his excellences one after another; for example, his

all-power, his all-wisdom his all-goodness, his eternity, his infinity.

Now when we have brought our understanding to be very attentive to the

greatness of the goods that are in this Divine object, it is impossible

that our will should not be touched with complacency in this good, and

then we use the liberty and power which we have over ourselves,

provoking our own heart to redouble and strengthen its first

complacency by acts of approbation and rejoicing. "Oh!" says the devout

soul then, "how beautiful art thou, my beloved, how beautiful art thou!

Thou art all desirable, yea, thou art desire itself! Such is my beloved

and he is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem. [218] O blessed be my

God for ever because he is so good! Ah! whether I die or whether I

live, too happy am I in knowing that my God is so rich in all goodness,

his goodness so infinite, and his infinity so good!"

Thus approving the good which we see in God, and rejoicing in it, we

make the act of love which is called complacency; for we please

ourselves in the divine pleasure infinitely more than in our own, and

it is this love which gave so much content to the Saints when they

could recount the perfections of their well-beloved, and which caused

them to declare with so much delight that God was God. Know ye, said

they, that the Lord he is God. O God, my God, my God, thou art my God.

I have said to the Lord: Thou art my God. Thou art the God of my heart,

and my God is my portion for ever. [219] He is the God of our heart by

this complacency, since by it our heart embraces him and makes him its

own: he is our inheritance, because by this act, we enjoy the goods

which are in God, and, as from an inheritance, we draw from it all

pleasure and content: by means of this complacency we spiritually drink

and eat the perfections of the Divinity, for we make them our own and

draw them into our hearts.

Jacob's ewes drew into themselves the variety of colours which they

observed. So a soul, captivated by the loving complacency which she

takes in considering the Divinity, and in it an infinity of

excellences, draws into her heart the colours thereof, that is to say,

the multitude of wonders and perfections which she contemplates, and

makes them her own by the pleasure which she takes in them.

O God! what joy shall we have in heaven, Theotimus, when we shall see

the well-beloved of our hearts as an infinite sea, whose waters are

perfection and goodness! Then as stags, long and sorely chased, putting

their mouths to a clear and cool stream draw into themselves the

coolness of its fair waters, so our hearts, after so many languors and

desires meeting with the mighty and living spring of the Divinity,

shall draw by their complacency all the perfections of the

well-beloved, and shall have the perfect fruition of them by the joy

which they shall take in them, replenishing themselves with his

immortal delights; and in this way the dear spouse will enter into us

as into his nuptial bed, to communicate his eternal joy unto our souls,

according as he himself says, that if we keep the holy law of his love

he will come and dwell within us. Such is the sweet and noble robbery

of love, which, without uncolouring the well-beloved colours itself

with his colours; without disrobing him invests itself with his robes,

without taking from him takes all that he has, and without

impoverishing him is enriched with all his wealth; as the air takes

light, not lessening the original brightness of the sun, and the mirror

takes the grace of the countenance, not diminishing that of him who

looks in it.

They became abominable, as those things were which they loved, [220]

said the Prophet, speaking of the wicked; so might one say of the good,

that they are become lovely as the things they have loved. Behold, I

beseech you, the heart of S. Clare of Montefalco: it so delighted in

our Saviour's passion and in meditating on the most holy Trinity, that

it drew into itself all the marks of the passion, and an admirable

representation of the Trinity, being made such as the things it loved.

The love which the great Apostle S. Paul bore to the life, death and

passion of our divine Saviour was so great that it drew the very life,

death, and passion of this divine Saviour into his loving servant's

heart; whose will was filled with it by dilection, his memory by

meditation, and his understanding by contemplation. But by what channel

or conduit did the sweet Jesus come into the heart of S. Paul? By the

channel of complacency, as he himself declares, saying: God forbid that

I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. [221] For

if you mark well, there is no difference between glorying in a person

and taking complacency in him, between glorying and delighting in, save

that he who glories in a thing, to pleasure adds honour; honour not

being without pleasure, though pleasure can be without honour. This

soul, then, had such complacency, and esteemed himself so much honoured

in the divine goodness which appears in the life, death and passion of

our Saviour, that he took no pleasure but in this honour. And it is

this that made him say, God forbid that I should glory save in the

cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; as he also said that he lived not

himself but Jesus Christ lived in him.

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[218] Cant. v. 16.

[219] Ps. xcix. xv. lxxii.

[220] Osee ix. 10.

[221] Gal. vi. 14.

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CHAPTER II.

HOW BY HOLY COMPLACENCY WE ARE MADE AS LITTLE INFANTS AT OUR SAVIOUR'S

BREASTS.

O God! how happy the soul is who takes pleasure in knowing and fully

knowing that God is God, and that his goodness is an infinite goodness!

For this heavenly spouse, by this gate of complacency, enters into us

and sups with us and we with him. We feed ourselves with his sweetness

by the pleasure which we take therein, and satiate our heart in the

divine perfections by the delight we take in them: and this repast is a

supper by reason of the repose which follows it, complacency making us

sweetly rest in the sweetness of the good which delights us, and with

which we feed our heart; for as you know, Theotimus, the heart is fed

with that which delights it, whence in our French tongue we say that

such a one is fed with honour, another with riches, as the wise man

said that the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness, [222] and the

sovereign wisdom protests that his meat, that is his pleasure, is to do

the will of him that sent him. [223] In conclusion the physician's

aphorism is true--what is relished, nourishes: and the

philosophers--what pleases, feeds.

Let my beloved come into his garden, said the sacred spouse, and eat

the fruit of his apple-trees. [224] Now the heavenly spouse comes into

his garden when he comes into the devout soul, for seeing his delight

is to be with the children of men, where can he better lodge than in

the country of the spirit, which he made to his image and likeness. He

himself plants in this garden the loving complacency which we have in

his goodness, and which we feed on; as, likewise, his goodness takes

his pleasure and repast in our complacency; so that, again, our

complacency is augmented in perceiving that God is pleased to see us

pleased in him. So that these reciprocal pleasures cause the love of an

incomparable complacency, by which our soul, being made the garden of

her spouse, and having from his goodness the apple trees of his

delights, renders him the fruit thereof, since she is pleased that he

is pleased in the complacency she takes in him. Thus do we draw God's

heart into ours, and he spreads in it his precious balm, and thus is

that practised which the holy bride spoke with such joy. The king hath

brought me into his store-rooms: we will be glad and rejoice in thee,

remembering thy breasts more than wine; the righteous love thee. [225]

For I pray you, Theotimus, what are the store-rooms of this king of

love but his breasts, which abound in the variety of sweetness and

delights. The bosom and breasts of the mother are the storeroom of the

little infant's treasures: he has no other riches than those, which are

more precious unto him than gold or the topaz, more beloved than all

the rest of the world.

The soul then which contemplates the infinite treasures of divine

perfections in her well-beloved, holds herself too happy and rich in

this that love makes her mistress by complacency of all the perfections

and contentments of this dear spouse. And even as a baby makes little

movements towards his mother's breasts, and dances with joy to see them

discovered, and as the mother again on her part presents them unto him

with a love always a little forward, even so the devout soul feels the

thrillings and movements of an incomparable joy, through the content

which she has in beholding the treasures of the perfections of the king

of her holy love; but especially when she sees that he himself

discovers them by love, and that amongst them that perfection of his

infinite love excellently shines. Has not this fair soul reason to cry:

O my king how lovable are thy riches and how rich thy loves! Oh! which

of us has more joy, thou that enjoyest it, or I who rejoice thereat! We

will be glad and rejoice in thee remembering thy breasts [226] so

abounding in all excellence of sweetness! I because my well-beloved

enjoys it, thou because thy well-beloved rejoices in it; we both enjoy

it, since thy goodness makes thee enjoy my rejoicing, and my love makes

me rejoice in thy enjoying. Ah! the righteous and the good love thee,

and how can one be good and not love so great a goodness! Worldly

princes keep their treasures in the cabinets of their palaces, their

arms in their arsenals, but the heavenly Prince keeps his treasures in

his bosom, his weapons within his breast, and because his treasure is

his goodness, as his weapons are his loves, his breast and bosom

resemble those of a tender mother, who has her breasts like two

cabinets rich in the treasures of sweet milk, armed with as many

weapons to conquer the dear little baby as it makes its attacks in

sucking.

Nature surely lodges the breasts in the bosom to the end that, since

the heat of the heart there concocts the milk, as the mother is the

child's nurse, so her heart may be his foster-father, and the milk may

be a food of love, better a hundred times than wine. Note, meantime,

Theotimus, that the comparison of milk and wine seems so proper to the

holy spouse that she is not content to have said once that the breasts

of her beloved are better than wine, [227] but she repeats it thrice.

Wine, Theotimus, is the milk of grapes, and milk is the wine of the

breasts, and the sacred spouse says that her well-beloved is to her a

cluster of grapes, but of Cyprian grapes, [228] that is, of an

excellent odour. Moses said that the Israelites might drink the most

pure and excellent blood of the grape, and Jacob describing to his son

Juda the fertility of the portion which he should have in the land of

promise, prophesied under this figure the true felicity of Christians,

saying that the Saviour would wash his robe, that is, his holy Church,

in the blood of the grape, [229] that is in his own blood. Now blood

and milk are no more different than verjuice and wine, for as verjuice

ripening by the sun's heat changes its colour, becomes a grateful wine,

and is made good for food, so blood tempered by the heat of the heart

takes a fair white colour, and becomes a food most suited for infants.

Milk, which is a food provided by the heart and all of love, represents

mystical science and theology, that is, the sweet relish which proceeds

from the loving complacency taken by the spirit when it meditates on

the perfections of the divine goodness. But wine signifies ordinary and

acquired science, which is squeezed out by force of speculation under

the press of divers arguments and discussions. Now the milk which our

souls draw from the breasts of our Saviour's charity is incomparably

better than the wine which we press out from human reasoning; for this

milk flows from heavenly love, who prepares it for her children even

before they have thought of it; it has a sweet and agreeable taste, and

the odour thereof surpasses all perfumes; it makes the breath fresh and

sweet as that of a sucking child; it gives joy without immoderation, it

inebriates without stupefying, it does not excite the senses but

elevates them (ne leve pas mais releve).

When the holy Isaac embraced and kissed his dear child Jacob, he smelt

the good odour of his garments, and at once, filled with an extreme

pleasure, he said: Behold the smell of my son is as the smell of a

plentiful field which the Lord hath blessed. [230] The garment and

perfumes were Jacob's, but Isaac had the complacency and enjoyment of

them. Ah! the soul which by love holds her Saviour in the arms of her

affections, how deliciously does she smell the perfumes of the infinite

perfections which are found in him, with what complacency does she say

in herself: behold how the scent of my God is as the sweet smell of a

flowery garden, ah! how precious are his breasts, spreading sovereign

perfumes.

So the soul of the great S. Augustine, stayed in suspense between the

sacred contentment which he had in considering on the one side the

mystery of his Master's birth, on the other the mystery of his passion,

cried out, ravished in this complacency "I know not whither to turn my

heart. On the one side the Mother's breast offers me its milk, on the

other the life-giving wound of the Son gives me to drink of his blood."

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[222] Prov. xv. 14.

[223] John iv. 34.

[224] Cant. v. 1.

[225] Cant. i. 3.

[226] Cant. i. 3.

[227] Cant. i. 1.

[228] Botrus Cypri. Our version wrongly translates this as a cluster of

Cypress [Tr.]

[229] Gen. xlix. 11.

[230] Gen. xxvii. 27.

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CHAPTER III.

THAT HOLY COMPLACENCY GIVES OUR HEART TO GOD, AND MAKES US FEEL A

PERPETUAL DESIRE IN FRUITION.

The love which we bear to God starts from the first complacency which

our heart feels on first perceiving the divine goodness, when it begins

to tend towards it. Now when by the exercise of love we augment and

strengthen this first complacency, as we have explained in the

preceding chapters, we then draw into our hearts the divine perfections

and enjoy the divine goodness by rejoicing in it, practising the first

part of the amorous contentment of love expressed by the sacred spouse,

saying: My beloved to me. [231] But because this amorous complacency

being in us who have it, ceases not to be in God in whom we have it, it

gives us reciprocally to his divine goodness; so that by this holy love

of complacency we enjoy the goods which are in God as though they were

our own; but because the divine perfections are stronger than our

spirit, entering into it they possess it reciprocally, insomuch that we

not only say God is ours by this complacency but also that we are to

Him. [232]

The herb aproxis (as we have said elsewhere) has so great a

correspondence with fire, that though at a distance from it, as soon as

it sees it, it draws the flame and begins to burn, conceiving fire not

so much from the heat as from the light of the fire presented to it.

When then by this attraction it is united to the fire, if it could

speak, might it not well say: my well-beloved fire is mine since I draw

it to me and enjoy its flames, but I am also its, for though I drew it

to me it reduced me into it as more strong and noble; it is my fire and

I am its herb: I draw it and it sets me on fire. So our heart being

brought into the presence of the divine goodness, and having drawn the

perfections thereof by the complacency it takes in them, may truly say:

God's goodness is all mine since I enjoy his excellences, and I again

am wholly his, seeing that his delights possess me.

By complacency our soul, like Gideon's fleece, is wholly filled with

heavenly dew, and this dew belongs to the fleece because it falls upon

it, and again the fleece is the dew's because it is steeped in it and

receives virtue from it. Which belongs more to the other, the pearl to

the oyster or the oyster to the pearl? The pearl is the oyster's

because she drew it to her, but the oyster is the pearl's because it

gives her worth and value. Complacency makes us possessors of God,

drawing into us his perfections, but it makes us also possessed of God,

applying and fastening us to his perfections.

Now in this complacency we satiate our soul with delights in such a

manner that we do not yet cease to desire to be satiated, and relishing

the divine goodness we desire yet to relish it; while satiating

ourselves we would still eat, as whilst eating we feel ourselves

satisfied. The chief of the Apostles, having said in his first epistle

that the ancient prophets had manifested the graces which were to

abound amongst Christians, and amongst other things our Saviour's

passion, and the glory which was to follow it (as well by the

resurrection of his body as also by the exaltation of his name), in the

end concludes that the very angels desire to behold the mysteries of

the redemption in this divine Saviour: On whom, says he, the angels

desire to look. [233] But how can this be understood, that the angels

who see the Redeemer and in him all the mysteries of our salvation, do

yet desire to see him? Theotimus, verily they see him continually, but

with a view so agreeable and delightsome that the complacency they take

in it satiates them without taking away their desire, and makes them

desire without removing their satiety; the fruition is not lessened by

desire, but perfected, as their desire is not cloyed but intensified by

fruition.

The fruition of a thing which always contents never lessens, but is

renewed and flourishes incessantly; it is ever agreeable, ever

desirable. The perpetual contentment of heavenly lovers produces a

desire perpetually content, as their continual desire begets in them a

contentment perpetually desired. Good which is finite in giving the

possession ends the desire, and in giving the desire takes away the

possession, being unable to be at once possessed and desired. But the

infinite good makes desire reign in possession and possession in

desire, finding a way to satiate desire by a holy presence, and yet to

make it live by the greatness of its excellence, which nourishes in all

those that possess it a desire always content and a content always full

of desire.

Consider, Theotimus, such as hold in their mouth the herb sciticum;

according to report they are never hungry nor thirsty, it is so

satisfying, and yet never lose their appetite, it nourishes them so

deliciously. When our will meets God it reposes in him, taking in him a

sovereign complacency, yet without staying the movement of her desire,

for as she desires to love so she loves to desire, she has the desire

of love and the love of desire. The repose of the heart consists not in

immobility but in needing nothing, not in having no movement but in

having no need to move.

The damned are in eternal movement without any mixture of rest; we

mortals who are yet in this pilgrimage have, now movement, now rest, in

our affections; the Blessed ever have repose in their movements and

movement in their repose; only God has repose without movement, because

he is sovereignly a pure and substantial act. Now although according to

the ordinary condition of this mortal life we have not repose in

movement, yet still, when we practise the acts of holy love, we find

repose in the movement of our affections, and movement in the repose of

the complacency which we take in our well-beloved, receiving hereby a

foretaste of the future felicity to which we aspire.

If it be true that the chameleon lives on air, wheresoever he goes in

the air he finds food, and though he move from one place to another, it

is not to find wherewith to be filled, but to exercise himself within

that element which is also his food, as fishes do in the sea. He who

desires God while possessing him, does not desire him in order to seek

him, but in order to exercise this affection within the very good which

he enjoys; for the heart does not make this movement of desire as

aiming at the enjoyment of a thing not had, since it is already had,

but as dilating itself in the enjoyment which it has; not to obtain the

good, but to recreate and please itself therein; not to gain the

enjoyment of it but to take enjoyment in it. So we walk and move to go

to some delicious garden, where, being arrived, we cease not to walk

and exercise ourselves, not now to get there, but being there to walk

and pass our time therein: we walk in order to go and enjoy the

pleasantness of the garden, being there we walk to take our pleasure in

the enjoyment of it. Seek ye the Lord and be strengthened, seek his

face evermore. [234] We always seek him whom we always love, says the

great S. Augustine: love seeks that which it has found, not to have it

but to have it always.

Finally, Theotimus, the soul which is in the exercise of the love of

complacency cries continually in her sacred silence: It suffices me

that God is God, that his goodness is infinite, that his perfection is

immense; whether I die or whether I live matters little to me since my

dear well-beloved lives eternally an all-triumphant life. Death itself

cannot trouble a heart which knows that its sovereign love lives. It is

sufficient for a heart that loves that he whom it loves more than

itself is replenished with eternal happiness, seeing that it lives more

in him whom it loves than in him whom it animates; yea, that it lives

not itself, but its well-beloved lives in it.

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[231] Cant. ii. 2.

[232] Cant. ii. 2.

[233] 1 Pet. i. 12.

[234] Ps. civ. 4.

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CHAPTER IV.

OF THE LOVING CONDOLENCE BY WHICH THE COMPLACENCY OF LOVE IS STILL

BETTER DECLARED.

Compassion, condolence, commiseration, or pity, is no other thing than

an affection which makes us share in the suffering and sorrow of him

whom we love, drawing the misery which he endures into our heart;

whence it is called misericorde, or, as it were, misere de coeur: as

complacency draws into the lover's heart the pleasures and contentments

of the thing beloved. It is love that works both effects, by the virtue

it has of uniting the heart which loves to the thing loved, thus making

the goods and the evils of friends common; and what happens in

compassion much illustrates what regards complacency.

Compassion takes its greatness from the love which produces it. Thus

the condolence of mothers in the afflictions of their only children is

great, as the Scripture often testifies. How great was the sorrow of

Agar's heart upon the pains of her Ismael, whom she saw well-nigh

perish with thirst in the desert! How much did David's soul commiserate

the misery of his Absalom! Ah! do you not mark the motherly heart of

the great Apostle, sick with the sick, burning with zeal for such as

were scandalized, having a continual sorrow for the ruin of the Jews,

and daily dying for his dear spiritual children. But especially

consider how love draws all the pains, all the torments, travails,

sufferings, griefs, wounds, passion, cross and very death of our

Redeemer into his most sacred mother's heart. Alas! the same nails that

crucified the body of this divine child, also crucified the soul of

this all-sweet mother; she endured the same miseries with her son by

commiseration, the same dolours by condolence, the same passions by

compassion, and, in a word, the sword of death which transpierced the

body of this best beloved Son, struck through the heart of this most

loving mother, [235] whence she might well have said that he was to her

as a bundle of myrrh between her breasts, [236] that is, in her bosom

and in the midst of her heart. You see how Jacob, hearing the sad

though false news of the death of his dear Joseph, is afflicted with

it. Ah! said he, I will go down mourning into hell, that is to say, to

Limbo into Abraham's bosom, to my son. [237]

Condolence is also great according to the greatness of the sorrows

which we see those we love suffering; for how little soever the

friendship be, if the evils which we see endured be extreme, they cause

in us great pity. This made C�sar weep over Pompey, and the daughters

of Jerusalem could not refrain from weeping over our Saviour, though

the greater number of them were not greatly attached to him; as also

the friends of Job, though wicked friends, made great lamentation in

beholding the dreadful spectacle of his incomparable misery. And what a

stroke of grief was it in the heart of Jacob to think that his dear

child had died by a death so cruel as that of being devoured by a

savage beast. But, besides all this, commiseration is much strengthened

by the presence of the object which is in misery; this caused poor Agar

to go away from her dying son, to disburden herself in some sort of the

compassionate grief which she felt, saying: I will not see the boy die;

[238] as on the contrary our Saviour weeps seeing the sepulchre of his

well-beloved Lazarus and regarding his dear Jerusalem; and our good

Jacob is beside himself with grief when he sees the bloody coat of his

poor little Joseph.

Now the same causes increase complacency. In proportion as a friend is

more dear to us we take more pleasure in his contentment, and his good

enters more deeply into our heart. If the good is excellent, our joy is

also greater. But if we see our friend enjoying it, our rejoicing

becomes extreme. When the good Jacob knew that his son lived,--O God!

What joy! His spirit returned to him, he lived once more, he, so to

speak, rose again from death. But what does this mean,--he revived or

returned to life? Theotimus, spirits die not their own death but by

sin, which separates them from God, their true supernatural life, yet

they sometimes die another's death; and this happened to the good Jacob

of whom we speak, for love, which draws into the heart of the lover the

good and evil of the thing beloved, the one by complacency, the other

by commiseration, drew the death of the beloved Joseph into the loving

Jacob's heart, and, by a miracle impossible to any other power than

love, the spirit of this good father was full of the death of him that

was living and reigning, for affection having been deceived ran before

the effect.

But, on the contrary, as soon as he knew that his son was alive, love

which had so long kept the supposed death of the son in the spirit of

the good father, seeing that it had been deceived, speedily rejected

this imaginary death, and made enter in its place the true life of the

same son. Thus then he returned to a new life, because the life of his

son entered into his heart by complacency, and animated him with an

incomparable contentment: with which finding himself satisfied, and not

esteeming any other pleasure in comparison of this: It is enough for

me, said he, if Joseph my son be yet living. [239] But when with his

own eyes he saw by experience the truth of the grandeur of this dear

child in Gessen, falling upon his neck and embracing him, he wept

saying: Now shall I die with joy because I have seen thy face and leave

thee alive. [240] Ah! what a joy, Theotimus, and how excellently

expressed by this old man! For what would he say by these words, now

shall I die with joy because I have seen thy face, but that his content

was so great, that it was able to render death itself joyful and

agreeable, even death, which is the most grievous and horrible thing in

the world. Tell me, I pray you, Theotimus, who has more sense of

Joseph's good, he who enjoys it or Jacob who rejoices in it. Certainly,

if good be not good but in respect of the content which it affords us,

the father has as much as the son, yea more, for the son, together with

the viceroy's dignity of which he is possessed, has consequently much

care and many affairs, but the father enjoys by complacency, and purely

possesses all that is good in this greatness and dignity of his son,

without charge, care or trouble. Now shall I die with joy, says he. Ah!

who does not see his contentment? If even death cannot trouble his joy,

who can ever change it? If his content can live amidst the distresses

of death, who can ever bereave him of it? Love is strong as death, and

the joys of love surmount the sorrows of death, for death cannot kill

but enlivens them; so that, as there is a fire which is marvellously

kept alive in a fountain near Grenoble (as we know for certain and the

great S. Augustine attests), so holy charity has strength to nourish

her flames and consolations in the most grievous anguishes of death,

and the waters of tribulations cannot quench her fire.

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[235] Luke ii. 35.

[236] Cant. i. 12.

[237] Gen. xxxvii. 35.

[238] Gen. xxi. 16.

[239] Gen. xlv. 28.

[240] Gen. xlvi. 30.

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CHAPTER V.

OF THE CONDOLENCE AND COMPLACENCY OF LOVE IN THE PASSION OF OUR LORD.

When I see my Saviour on the Mount of Olives with his soul sorrowful

even unto death:--Ah! Lord Jesus, say I, what can have brought the

sorrows of death into the soul of life except love, which, exciting

commiseration, drew thereby our miseries into thy sovereign heart? Now

a devout soul, seeing this abyss of heaviness and distress in this

divine lover, how can she be without a holily loving sorrow? But

considering, on the other hand, that all the afflictions of her

well-beloved proceed from no imperfection or want of strength, but from

the greatness of his dearest love, she cannot but melt away with a holy

sorrowful love. So that she cries: I am black with sorrow by

compassion, but beautiful with love by complacency; the anguish of my

well-beloved has changed my colour: for how could a faithful lover

behold such torments in him whom she loves more than her life, without

swooning away and becoming all wan and wasted with grief. The tents of

nomads, perpetually exposed to the injuries of weather and war, are

almost always ragged and covered with dust; and I, ever exposed to the

griefs which by condolence I receive from the immeasurable travails of

my divine Saviour, I am all covered with distress, and rent with

sorrow. But because the pains of him I love come from his love, in what

measure they afflict me by compassion, they delight me by complacency;

for how could a faithful lover not take an extreme content to see

herself so loved by her heavenly spouse? Wherefore the beauty of love

is in the ill-favour of sorrow. And if I wear mourning for the passion

and death of my King, all swarthy and black with grief, I cease not to

have an incomparable sweetness in seeing the excess of his love amid

his travails and his sorrows; and the tents of Solomon, all embroidered

and worked in an admirable variety of decorations, were never so lovely

as I am content, and, consequently, sweet, amiable and agreeable, in

the variety of the sentiments of love which I have amid those griefs.

Love equalizes lovers; Ah! I see him, this dear lover--he is a fire of

love burning in a thorny bush of sorrow, and I am the same: I am all

inflamed with love amid the thorny bushes of my griefs, I am a lily

among thorns. Ah! do not even look at the horrors of my poignant

sorrows, but see the beauty of my agreeable love. Alas! he suffers

insupportable pains, this well-beloved divine lover: it is this which

grieves me and makes me faint with anguish; but he takes pleasure in

suffering, he loves his torments, and dies with joy at dying with pain

for me: wherefore as I am sorrowing over his pains, so I am all

ravished with joy at his love; not only do I grieve with him, but I

glorify myself in him.

It was this love, Theotimus, which brought upon the seraphic S. Francis

the stigmata, and upon the loving angelic S. Catharine of Siena the

burning wounds of the Saviour, amorous complacency having sharpened the

points of dolorous compassion; as honey makes more penetrating and

sensible the bitterness of wormwood, whilst on the contrary the sweet

smell of roses is intensified by the neighbourhood of garlic planted

near the trees. For, in the same way, the loving complacency we have

taken in the love of our Saviour makes the compassion we feel for his

pains infinitely stronger: as reciprocally, passing back from the

compassion for his pains to complacency in love, the pleasure of this

is far more ardent and exalted. Then are practised pain in love and

love in pain; then amorous condolence and dolorous complacency, as

another Esau and another Jacob, struggling as to which shall make the

greater effort, put the soul in incredible convulsions and agonies, and

there takes place an ecstasy lovingly sorrowful and sorrowfully loving.

So those great souls of S. Francis and S. Catharine felt matchless love

in their pains, and incomparable pains in their love, when they were

stigmatized, relishing that joyous love of suffering for a beloved one,

which their Saviour exercised in the supreme degree on the tree of the

cross. Thus is born the precious union of our heart with its God,

which, like a mystical Benjamin, is the child of pain and joy both

together.

It cannot be declared, Theotimus, how strongly the Saviour desires to

enter into our souls by this love of sorrowing complacency. Ah! says

he, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head

is full of dew, and my locks of the drops of the night. [241] What is

this dew, and what are the drops of the night but the afflictions and

pains of his passion? Pearls, in sooth (as we have said often enough),

are nothing but drops of dew, which the freshness of night rains over

the face of the sea, received into the shells of oysters or

pearl-mothers. Ah! this divine lover of the soul would say, I am laden

with the pains and sweats of my passion, almost all of which passed

either in the darkness of the night, or in the night of the darkness

which the obscured sun made in the very brightness of its noon. Open

then thy heart towards me as the pearl-mothers open their shells

towards the sky, and I will shed upon thee the dew of my passion, which

will be changed into pearls of consolation.

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[241] Cant. v. 2.

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CHAPTER VI.

OF THE LOVE OF BENEVOLENCE WHICH WE EXERCISE TOWARDS OUR SAVIOUR BY WAY

OF DESIRE.

In the love which God exercises towards us he always begins by

benevolence, willing and effecting all the good that is in us, in which

afterwards he takes complacency. He made David according to his heart

by benevolence, then he found him according to his heart by

complacency. He first created the universe for man, and man in the

universe, giving to each thing such a measure of goodness as was

proportionable to it, out of his pure benevolence, then he approved all

that he had done, finding that all was very good, and by complacency

rested in his work.

But, on the contrary, our love towards God begins from the complacency

which we have in the sovereign goodness and infinite perfection which

we know is in the Divinity, then we come to the exercise of

benevolence; and as the complacency which God takes in his creatures is

no other thing than a continuation of his benevolence towards them, so

the benevolence which we bear towards God is nothing else but an

approbation of and perseverance in the complacency we have in him.

Now this love of benevolence towards God is practised in this sort. We

cannot, with a true desire, wish any good to God, because his goodness

is infinitely more perfect than we can either wish or think: desire is

only of a future good, and no good is future to God, since all good is

so present to him that the presence of good in his divine Majesty is

nothing else but the Divinity itself. Not being able then to make any

absolute desire for God, we make imaginary and conditional ones, in

this manner: I have said to the Lord, thou art my God, who being full

of thine own infinite goodness, hast no need of my goods, [242] nor of

anything whatever, but if, by imagination of a thing impossible, I

could think thou hadst need of anything, I would never cease to wish it

thee, even with the loss of my life, of my being, and of all that is in

the world. And if, being what thou art, and what thou canst not but

still be, it were possible that thou couldst receive any increase of

good,--O God! what a desire would I have that thou shouldst have it! I

would desire, O eternal Lord! to see my heart converted into a wish,

and my life into a sigh, to desire thee such a good! Ah! yet would I

not for all this, O thou sacred well-beloved of my soul, desire to be

able to wish any good to thy Majesty, yea I delight with all my heart

in this supreme degree of goodness which thou hast, to which nothing

can be added, either by desire or yet by thought. But if such a desire

were possible, O infinite Divinity, O divine Infinity! my soul would be

that desire and nothing else, so intensely would she be desirous to

desire for thee that which she is infinitely pleased that she cannot

desire; seeing that her powerlessness to make this desire proceeds from

the infinite infinity of thy perfection, which outstrips all desire and

all thought. Ah! O my God! how dearly I love the impossibility of being

able to desire thee any good, since this comes from the

incomprehensible immensity of thy abundance. That is so sovereignly

infinite, that if there were an infinite desire it would be infinitely

satiated by the infinity of thy goodness, which would convert it into

an infinite complacency. This desire then, by imagination of

impossibilities, may be sometimes profitably practised amidst great and

extraordinary feelings and fervours. We are told that the great S.

Augustine often made such, pouring out in an excess of love these

words: "Ah! Lord, I am Augustine and thou art God, but still, if that,

which neither is nor can be, were, that I were God and thou Augustine,

I would, changing my condition with thee, become Augustine to the end

that thou mightest be God!"

It is yet another kind of benevolence towards God, when feeling we

cannot exalt him in himself, we strive to do it in ourselves, that is,

still more and more to increase the complacency we take in his

goodness. And then, Theotimus, we desire not the complacency for the

pleasure it yields us, but purely because this pleasure is in God. For

as we desire not the compassion for the pain it brings to our heart,

but because this sorrow unites and associates us to our well-beloved,

who is in pain; so we do not love the complacency because it brings us

pleasure, but because this pleasure is taken in union with the pleasure

and good which is in God, to be more united to which, we would desire

to exercise a complacency infinitely greater, in imitation of the most

holy Queen and Mother of love, whose sacred soul continually magnified

and exalted God. And that it might be known that this magnifying was

made by the complacency which she took in the divine goodness, she

declares; My spirit hath exultingly rejoiced in God my Saviour. [243]

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[242] Ps. xv. 2.

[243] Luke i. 47.

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CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE DESIRE TO EXALT AND MAGNIFY GOD SEPARATES US FROM INFERIOR

PLEASURES, AND MAKES US ATTENTIVE TO THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS.

The love of benevolence, then, causes in us a desire, more and more to

increase the complacency which we take in the divine goodness; and to

effect this increase, the soul sedulously deprives herself of all other

pleasure that she may give herself more entirely to taking pleasure in

God. A religious man asked the devout Brother Giles, one of the first

and most holy companions of S. Francis, in what work he could be most

agreeable to God: he answered by singing: "One to one," which he

afterwards explained, saying, "Give ever your whole soul which is one,

to God who is one." The soul pours itself out by pleasures, and the

diversity of these dissipates and hinders her from being able to apply

herself attentively to the pleasure which she ought to take in God. The

glorious S. Paul reputed all things as dung and dirt in comparison of

his Saviour. And the sacred spouse is wholly for her well-beloved only:

My beloved to me and I to him. And if the soul that stands thus holily

affected meet with creatures never so excellent, yea though they were

angels, she makes no delay with them, save only what she needs for the

help and furtherance of her desire. Tell me then, says she to them,

tell me, I conjure you, have you seen him whom my soul loveth? [244]

The glorious lover Magdalen met the angels at the sepulchre, who

doubtless spoke to her angelically, that is most sweetly, but she, on

the contrary, wholly ruthful, could take no content, either in their

sweet words or in the glory of their garments, or in the all-heavenly

grace of their deportment, or in the most delightsome beauty of their

faces, but all steeped in tears: They have taken away my Lord, says

she, and I know not where they have laid him: [245] and, turning about,

she saw her sweet Saviour, but in form of a gardener, with whom her

heart cannot be satisfied, for full of the love of the death of her

Master, flowers she will have none, nor consequently gardeners; she has

within her heart the cross, the nails, the thorns; she seeks her

crucified. Ah! my dear sir gardener, says she, if perchance you have

planted my well-beloved deceased Lord amongst your flowers, as a

crushed and withered lily, tell me quickly and I, I will carry him

away. But no sooner had he called her by her name, than, wholly melting

with delight, O God! says she, my Master! Nothing can content her, nor

angels' company delight her, no nor yet her very Saviour's, unless he

appear in that form in which he had stolen her heart. The kings could

not content themselves either in the beauty of Jerusalem or in the

magnificence of Herod's court, or in the brightness of the star; their

heart seeks the little cave and the little child of Bethlehem. The

mother of fair loving and the spouse of most holy love cannot stay

among their kinsfolks and acquaintance; they still walk on in grief,

seeking after the only object of their delight. The desire to increase

holy complacency cuts off all other pleasure, to the end that it may

more actively practise that to which the divine benevolence excites it.

Now still more to magnify this sovereign well-beloved, the soul goes

ever seeking his face: that is, with an attention more and more careful

and fervent, she keeps noting every particular of the beauties and

perfections which are in him, making a continual progress in this sweet

searching out of motives, which may perpetually urge her to a greater

complacency in the incomprehensible goodness which she loves. So David

in many of his heavenly psalms recites one by one the works and wonders

of God, and the sacred spouse ranges, in her divine canticles, as a

well-ranked army, all the perfections of her beloved, one after

another, to provoke her soul to most holy complacency, thereby more

highly to magnify his excellence, and also to subject all other spirits

to the love of her beloved so dear.

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[244] Cant. iii. 3.

[245] John xx. 13.

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CHAPTER VIII.

HOW HOLY BENEVOLENCE PRODUCES THE PRAISE OF THE DIVINE WELL-BELOVED.

Honour, my dear Theotimus, is not in him who is honoured, but in him

who honours: for how often it happens that he whom we honour knows

nothing of it, nor has so much as thought about it. How often we praise

such as know us not, or who are sleeping; and yet according to the

common estimation of men, and their ordinary manner of conceiving, it

seems that we do one some good when we do him honour, and that we give

him much when we give him titles and praises, and we find no difficulty

in saying that a man is rich in honour, glory, reputation, praise,

though indeed we know that all this is outside the person who is

honoured. He oftentimes receives no manner of profit therefrom,

according to a saying ascribed to the great S. Augustine: O poor

Aristotle, thou art being praised where thou art not, and where thou

art, thou art being burned. What fruit, I pray you, do C�sar and

Alexander the Great reap from so many vain words which some vain souls

employ in their praise?

God being replenished with a goodness which surpasses all praise and

honour, receives no advantage nor increase by all the benedictions

which we give him. He is neither richer nor greater, nor more content

or happy by them, for his happiness, his content, his greatness, and

his riches neither are nor can be any other thing than the divine

infinity of his goodness. At the same time, since, according to our

ordinary estimation, honour is held one of the greatest effects of our

benevolence towards others, and since by it we not only do not imply

any indigence in those we honour, but rather protest that they abound

in excellence, we therefore make use of this kind of benevolence

towards God, who not only approves it, but exacts it, as suitable to

our condition, and so proper to testify the respectful love we bear

him, that he has ordained we should render and refer all honour and

glory unto him.

Thus then the soul who has taken a great complacency in God's infinite

perfection, seeing that she cannot wish him any increase of goodness,

because he has infinitely more than she can either wish or conceive,

desires at least that his name may be blessed, exalted, praised,

honoured and adored ever more and more. And beginning with her own

heart, she ceases not to provoke it to this holy exercise, and, as a

sacred bee, flies hither and thither amongst the flowers of the divine

works and excellences, gathering from them a sweet variety of

complacencies, from which she works up and composes the heavenly honey

of benedictions, praises, and confessions of honour, by which, as far

as she is able, she magnifies and glorifies the name of her

well-beloved: in imitation of the great Psalmist, who having gone

round, and as it were in spirit run over the wonders of the divine

goodness, immolated on the altar of his heart the mystic victim of the

utterances of his voice, by canticles and psalms of admiration and

benediction: I have gone round, and have offered up in his tabernacle a

sacrifice of jubilation: I will sing, and recite a psalm to the Lord.

[246] But, Theotimus, this desire of praising God which holy

benevolence excites in our hearts is insatiable, for the soul that is

touched with it would wish to have infinite praises to bestow upon her

well-beloved, because she finds his perfections more than infinite: so

that, finding herself to fall far short of being able to satisfy her

desire, she makes extreme efforts of affection to praise at least in

some measure this goodness all worthy of praise, and these efforts of

benevolence are marvellously augmented by complacency: for in

proportion as the soul finds God good, relishing more and more his

sweetness, and taking complacency in his infinite goodness, she would

also raise higher the benedictions and praises she gives him. And

again, as the soul grows warm in praising the incomprehensible

sweetness of God, she enlarges and dilates the complacency she takes in

him, and by this enlargement she more strongly excites herself to his

praise. So that the affection of complacency and that of praise, by

these reciprocal movements and mutual inclinations, advance one another

with great and continual increase.

So nightingales, according to Pliny, take such complacency in their

songs, that, by reason of this complacency, for fifteen days and

fifteen nights they never cease warbling, forcing themselves to sing

better in emulous striving with one another; so that when they sing the

best, they take a greater complacency, and this increase of complacency

makes them force themselves to greater efforts of trilling, augmenting

in such sort their complacency by their song and their song by their

complacency, that it is often found that they die and their throats

burst with their singing. Birds worthy the fair name of philomel, since

they die thus, of and for the love of melody!

O God! my Theotimus, how the soul ardently pressed with affection to

praise her God, is touched with a dolour most delicious and a delight

most dolorous, when after a thousand efforts of praise she comes so

short. Alas! she would wish, this poor nightingale, to raise her

accents ever higher, and perfect her melody, the better to sing the

praises of her well-beloved. By how much more she praises, by so much

more is she delighted in praising: and by how much greater her delight

in praising is, by so much her pain is greater that she cannot yet more

praise him; still, to find what content she can in this passion, she

makes all sorts of efforts, and in the midst of them faints and fails,

as it happened to the most glorious S. Francis, who amidst the pleasure

he had in praising God and singing his canticles of love, shed a great

abundance of tears, and often let fall through feeblessness, what he

might be holding in his hands: being like a sacred nightingale all

outspent, and often losing respiration through the effort of aspiration

after the praises of him whom he could never praise sufficiently.

But hear an agreeable similitude upon this subject, drawn from the name

which this loving Saint gave his religious; for he called them Cicalas,

by reason of the nightly praises they sang to God. Cicalas, Theotimus,

as though they were nature's organs, have their breasts set with pipes;

and to sing the better they live only on dew, which they take not by

the mouth, for they have none, but suck it by a certain little tongue

they have on the breast, by which they utter their cries with so much

noise that they seem to be nothing but voice. Now this is the state of

the sacred lover; for all the faculties of her soul are as so many

pipes which she has in her breast, to repeat the canticles and praises

of the well-beloved. Her devotion in the midst of all these is the

tongue of her heart, according to S. Bernard, by which she receives the

dew of the divine perfections, sucking and drawing them to her, as her

food, by the most holy complacency which she takes in them; and by the

same tongue of devotion she utters all her voices of prayer, praise,

canticles, psalms, benedictions, according to the testimony of one of

the most glorious spiritual cicalas that was ever heard, who sang thus:

Bless the Lord, O my soul: and let all that is within me bless his holy

name. [247] For is it not as though he had said, I am a mystical

cicala, my soul, my spirit, my thoughts, all the faculties that are

collected within me, are organ pipes. Let all these for ever bless the

name and sound the praises of my God. I will bless the Lord at all

times, his praise shall be always in my mouth. In the Lord shall my

soul be praised; let the meek hear and rejoice. [248]

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[246] Ps. xxvi. 6

[247] Ps. cii. 1.

[248] Ps. xxxiii. 1, 2.

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CHAPTER IX.

HOW BENEVOLENCE MAKES US CALL ALL CREATURES TO THE PRAISE OF GOD.

The heart that is taken and pressed with a desire of praising the

divine goodness more than it is able, after many endeavours goes

oftentimes out of itself, to invite all creatures to help it in its

design. As did the three children in the furnace, in that admirable

canticle of benedictions, by which they excite all that is in heaven,

on earth and under the earth, to render thanks to the eternal God, by

blessing and praising him sovereignly. So the glorious Psalmist, quite

mastered by holily disordered passion moving him to praise God, goes

without order, leaping from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven

again, invoking angels, fishes, mountains, waters, dragons, birds,

serpents, fire, hail, mists, assembling by his desires all

creatures,--to the end that they all may conspire to lovingly magnify

their Creator, some in their own persons celebrating the divine praise,

others affording matter of praise by the wonders of their different

properties, which manifest their Maker's power; so that this divine

royal Psalmist, having composed a great number of psalms with this

inscription: Praise God: after he had run through all creatures, holily

inviting them to bless the divine Majesty, and gone over a great

variety of means and instruments proper for the celebration of the

praises of this eternal goodness, in the end, as falling down through

lack of breath, closes his sacred song with this ejaculation: Let every

spirit praise the Lord; [249] that is, let all that has life, neither

live nor breathe but to bless its Creator, according to the invitation

he had elsewhere given: O magnify the Lord with me; and let us extol

his name together. [250]

So the great S. Francis sang the canticle of the sun, and a hundred

other excellent benedictions, to invoke creatures to help his heart,

all fainting because he could not satisfy himself in the praises of the

dear Saviour of his soul. So the heavenly spouse perceiving herself

almost to faint away amid the violent efforts she made to bless and

magnify the well-beloved king of her heart, Ah! she cried out to her

companions, this divine spouse has led me by contemplation into his

wine-cellar, making me taste the incomparable delights of the

perfections of his excellence, and I have so steeped and holily

inebriated myself in the holy complacency which I have taken in this

abyss of beauty, that my soul languishes, wounded with a lovingly

mortal desire, which urges me everlastingly to praise so exalted a

goodness. Ah! come, I beseech you, to the assistance of my poor heart,

which is upon the point of falling down dead. For pity sustain it, and

stay me up with flowers; strengthen me and compass me about with

apples, or I fall lifeless. Complacency draws the divine sweetnesses

into her heart, which so ardently fills itself therewith that it is

overcharged. But the love of benevolence makes our heart pass out of

itself, and exhale itself in vapours of delicious perfumes, that is, in

all kinds of holy praises. And yet not being able to produce as many as

it would wish: Oh! it says, let all creatures come and contribute the

flowers of their benedictions, the apples of their thanksgivings,

honours and adorations, so that on every side we may smell odours

poured out to the glory of him whose infinite sweetness surpasses all

honour, and whom we can never right worthily magnify.

It is this divine passion that brings forth so many discourses, sends

through all hazards a Xavier, a Berz�e, an Anthony, that multitude of

Jesuits, Capuchins, and religious and ecclesiastics of all kinds, to

the Indies, Japan, Mara�on, that the holy name of Jesus may be known,

acknowledged, and adored throughout those immense nations. It is this

holy passion which causes so many books of piety to be written, so many

churches, altars, pious houses to be erected, and in a word which makes

many of God's servants watch, labour, and die amid the flames of zeal

which consume and spend them.

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[249] Ps. cl. 6.

[250] Ps. xxxiii. 4.

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CHAPTER X.

HOW THE DESIRE TO PRAISE GOD MAKES US ASPIRE TO HEAVEN.

The amorous soul, perceiving that she cannot satiate the desire she has

to praise her well-beloved while she lives in this world, and knowing

that the praises which are given in heaven to the divine goodness are

sung to an incomparably more delightful air,--O God! says she, how much

to be praised are the praises which are poured forth by those blessed

spirits before the throne of my heavenly king; how blessed are their

blessings! O what a happiness is it to hear this melody of the most

holy eternity, in which by the sweetest concurrence of dissimilar and

varied tones, are made those admirable accords--all the parts mingling

together with a continued sequence and marvellous linking of

progressive movements--by which perpetual Alleluias do resound on every

side.

Voices which for their loudness are compared to thunders, to trumpets,

to the noise of the waves of a troubled sea; yet voices which, for

their incomparable softness and sweetness, are compared to the melody

of harps, delicately and delightfully touched by hands of the most

skilful players; and voices all of which unite to sing the joyous

Paschal canticle: Alleluia, praise God, Amen, praise God. For know,

Theotimus, that a voice goes out from the divine throne which ceases

not to cry to the happy inhabitants of the glorious heavenly Jerusalem:

Praise God, O you that are his servants, and you that fear him great

and little: [251] at which all the innumerable multitude of

saints,--the choirs of angels and the choirs of assembled men,--answer,

singing with all their force: Alleluia, praise God. But what is this

admirable voice, which issuing out from the divine throne entones the

Alleluias of the elect, except most holy complacency, which being

received into the heart, makes them feel the sweetness of the divine

perfections, whereupon a loving benevolence, the source of heavenly

praises, is bred in them? So that complacency coming from the throne,

declares to the blessed the grandeurs of God, and benevolence excites

them to pour out in their turn the perfumes of praise before the

throne. Wherefore by way of answer they eternally sing: Alleluia, that

is, praise God. The complacency comes from the throne into the heart,

and benevolence goes from the heart to the throne.

O how worthy of love is this temple, wholly resounding with praise! O

what content have such as live in this sacred dwelling, where so many

heavenly philomels and nightingales sing with this holy strife of love,

the canticles of eternal delight!

The heart, then, that in this world can neither sing nor hear the

divine praises to its liking, enters into unutterable desires of being

delivered from the bonds of this life to pass to the other, where the

heavenly well-beloved is so perfectly praised: and these desires having

taken possession of the heart, often become so strong and urgent in the

breast of sacred lovers, that banishing all other desires they cause

disgust of all earthly things, and render the soul languishing and

lovesick: yea, sometimes the holy passion goes so far, that, God

permitting, one dies of it.

So that glorious and seraphical lover S. Francis, having been long torn

with this strong affection for praising God, in the end, in his last

years, after he had had assurance, by a special revelation, of his

eternal salvation, could not contain his joy, but wasted daily, as if

his life and soul had burnt away like incense, upon the fire of the

ardent desires which he had to see his Master, incessantly to praise

him: so that these ardours taking every day a fresh increase, his soul

left his body by a passionate movement which he made towards heaven;

for the divine Providence thought good that he should die pronouncing

these sacred words: Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy

name: the just wait for me, until thou reward me. [252] Behold,

Theotimus, I beseech you, this soul, who, as a heavenly nightingale

shut up in the cage of his body, in which he cannot at will sing the

benedictions of his eternal love, knows that he could better trill and

practise his delicious song if he could gain the air, to enjoy his

liberty and the society of other philomels, amongst the gay and flowery

hills of the land of the blessed; wherefore he cries: Alas! O Lord of

my life, ah! by thy sweet goodness, deliver poor me from the cage of my

body, free me from this little prison, to the end that released from

this bondage I may fly to my dear companions, who expect me there above

in heaven, to make me one of their choirs, and environ me with their

joy. There, Lord, according my voice to theirs, I with them will make

up a sweet harmony of delicious airs and words, singing, praising, and

blessing thy mercy. This admirable Saint, as an orator who would end

and conclude all he had said in some short sentence, put this happy

ending to all his wishes and desires, whereof these last words were an

abridgment; words to which he so firmly attached his soul, that in

breathing them he breathed his last. My God, Theotimus, what a sweet

and dear death was this! a happily loving death, a holily mortal love.

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[251] Apoc. xix.

[252] Ps. cxli. 8.

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CHAPTER XI.

HOW WE PRACTISE THE LOVE OF BENEVOLENCE IN THE PRAISES WHICH OUR

SAVIOUR AND HIS MOTHER GIVE TO GOD.

We mount then in this holy exercise from step to step, by the creatures

which we invite to praise God, passing from the insensible to the

reasonable and intellectual, and from the Church militant to the

triumphant, in which we rise through the angels and the saints, till

above them all we have found the most sacred virgin, who in a matchless

air praises and magnifies the divinity more highly, holily and

delightfully than all other creatures together can ever do.

Being two years ago at Milan, whither the veneration of the recent

memory of the great Archbishop S. Charles had drawn me, with some of

our clergy, we heard in different churches many sorts of music: but in

a monastery of women we heard a religious whose voice was so admirably

delightful that she alone created an impression more agreeable, beyond

comparison, than all the rest together, which though otherwise

excellent, yet seemed to serve only to bring out and raise the

perfection and grace of this unique voice. So, Theotimus, amongst all

the choirs of men and all the choirs of angels, the most sacred

virgin's clear voice is heard above all the rest, giving more praise to

God, than do all the other creatures. And indeed the heavenly King in a

particular manner invites her to sing: Show me thy face, says he, my

well-beloved, let thy voice sound in my ears: for thy voice is sweet,

and thy face comely. [253]

But these praises which this mother of honour and fair love, together

with all creatures, gives to the divinity, though excellent and

admirable, come so infinitely short of the infinite merit of God's

goodness, that they bear no proportion to it: and therefore, although

they greatly please the sacred benevolence which the loving heart has

for its well-beloved, yet do they not satiate it. Wherefore it goes

forward and invites our Saviour to praise and glorify his eternal

Father with all the benedictions which a Son's love can furnish him

with. And then, Theotimus, the spirit comes unto a place of silence,

for we can no longer do aught but wonder and admire. O what a canticle

is this of the Son to his Father! O how fair this dear well-beloved is

amongst all the children of men! O how sweet is his voice, as issuing

from the lips upon which the fulness of grace was poured! All the

others are perfumed, but he is perfume itself; the others are embalmed,

but he is balm poured out; the Eternal receives others' praises, as

scents of particular flowers, but perceiving the odour of the praises

which our Saviour gives him, doubtless he cries out: Behold the smell

of the praises of my Son is as the smell of a plentiful field, which I

have blessed! [254] Yes, my dear Theotimus, all the benedictions which

the Church militant and triumphant offers to God are angelic and human

benedictions; for, although they are addressed to the Creator, yet they

proceed from the creature; but those of the Son are divine, for they

not only tend to God, as the others, but they flow from God: the

Redeemer being true God, they are not only divine in respect of their

end but also of their origin; divine, because they tend to God; divine,

because they issue from God. To others God gives his inspiration and

sufficient grace, for the utterance of praise; but that of the

Redeemer, he, who is God, himself produces, and therefore it is

infinite.

He who, on a morning, having heard for some good space of time in the

neighbouring woods the sweet chanting of finches, linnets, goldfinches,

and such like little birds, should in the end hear a

master-nightingale, which in perfect melody filled the air and ear with

its admirable voice, doubtless would prefer this one woodland singer

before the whole flock of the others. So, having heard all the praises

which so many different sorts of creatures, in emulation of one

another, render unanimously to their Creator, when at length we listen

to the praise our Saviour gives, we find in it a certain infinity of

merit, of worth, of sweetness, which surpasses all the hope and

expectation of the heart: and the soul, as if awakened out of a deep

sleep, is then instantly ravished with the extreme sweetness of such

melody. Ah! I hear it: Oh! the voice, the voice of my well-beloved! the

king-voice of all voices, a voice, in comparison with which all other

voices are but a dumb and gloomy silence! See how this dear love

springs forward, see how he comes leaping upon the highest mountains,

transcending the hills: his voice is heard above the Seraphim, and all

other creatures; he has the eyes of a roe to penetrate deeper than any

other into the beauty of the sacred object which he desires to praise.

He loves the melody of the glory and praise of his Father more than all

others do, and therefore he takes his Father's praises and benedictions

in a strain above them all. Ah! behold him, this divine love of the

beloved, how he stands behind the wall of his humanity, making himself

to be seen through the wounds of his body and the opening of his side,

as by windows, and as by a lattice through which he looks out on us.

[255]

Yea, truly, Theotimus, divine love being seated upon our Saviour's

Heart as upon his royal throne, beholds by the cleft of his pierced

side all the hearts of the sons of men: for this Heart being the King

of hearts keeps his eyes ever fixed upon hearts. But as those that look

through a lattice see others clearly, and are but half-seen themselves,

so the divine love of this Heart, or rather this Heart of divine love,

continually sees our hearts clearly and regards them with the eyes of

his love, but we do not see him, we only half-see him. For, O God! if

we could see him as he is, we should die of love for him, so long as we

are mortal; as he himself died for us while he was mortal, and as he

would yet die, if he were not immortal. O when we hear this divine

Heart, as it sings with a voice of infinite sweetness the canticle of

praise to the divinity, what joy, Theotimus, what efforts of our hearts

to spring up to heaven that we may ever hear it! And verily this dear

friend of our hearts invites us to this. Arise, make haste, leave

thyself and take thy flight towards me, my dove, my beautiful, unto

this heavenly abode, where all is joy and nought is heard but praises

and benedictions. All is flowers, all is sweetness and perfume; the

turtles, the most silent of all birds, yet there take up their songs.

Come, my well-beloved and all-dear; and to see me more clearly, come to

the same windows by which I see thee: come and behold my heart in the

clefts of the opening in my side, which was made when my body, like a

house in ruins, was so pitifully broken down on the tree of the cross:

come, show me thy face. Ah! I see it now without thy showing it, but

then I shall see it, and thou shalt show it me, for thou shalt see that

I see thee: let thy voice sound in my ears, for I would join it with

mine: thus shall thy voice be sweet and thy face comely. O what a

delight will it be to our hearts, when, our voices being tuned and

accorded to our Saviour's, we shall take part in the infinite sweetness

of the praises which the well-beloved Son gives to his eternal Father!

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[253] Cant. ii. 14.

[254] Gen. xxvii. 27.

[255] Cant. ii.

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CHAPTER XII.

OF THE SOVEREIGN PRAISE WHICH GOD GIVES UNTO HIMSELF, AND HOW WE

EXERCISE BENEVOLENCE IN IT.

All our Saviour's human actions are of an infinite merit and value, by

reason of the person who produces them, who is the same God with the

Father and the Holy Ghost, yet they are not infinite by nature and

essence. For as, being in a chamber, we receive not light according to

the greatness of the brightness of the sun which sends it out, but

according to the greatness of the window, by which it is

communicated,--so our Saviour's human actions are not infinite, though

indeed they are of infinite value; for although they are the actions of

a divine person, yet they are not done according to the extent of his

infinity, but according to the finite greatness of his humanity by

which he does them. So that, as the human actions of our sweet Saviour

are infinite compared to ours, so are they only finite in comparison

with the essential infinity of the divinity. They are infinite in

value, estimation and dignity, as proceeding from a person who is God;

yet are they finite by nature and essence, as being done by God

according to his human nature and substance, which is finite; and

therefore the praises which are given by our Saviour, as he is man, not

being in all respects infinite, cannot fully correspond to the infinite

greatness of the divinity, to which they are directed.

Wherefore after the first ravishment of admiration which seizes us,

when we meet with a praise so glorious as is that which our Saviour

renders to his Father, we fail not to recognise that the divinity is

yet infinitely more deserving of praise than it can be praised, either

by all creatures, or by the very humanity of the eternal Son.

If a man were praising the sun for its light, the more he lifted

himself towards it in praising it, the more praiseworthy he would find

it, because he would still discover more and more brightness in it. And

if, as is very probable, it be the beauty of this light which provokes

larks to sing, it is no marvel that, as they fly more loftily, they

sing more clearly, equally raising their voice and their flight, till

such time as hardly being able to sing any more, they begin to fall in

voice and body, bringing down by little and little their flight and

their voice. So, Theotimus, while by benevolence we are rising towards

the divinity to intone and hear his praises, we see ever that he is

above all praise. And finally, we learn that he cannot be praised

according to his worth save only by himself, who alone can worthily

match his sovereign goodness with sovereign praise. Hereupon we cry

out: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost:"

and that every one may know that it is not the glory of created praises

which we wish God by this ejaculation, but the essential and eternal

glory that is in himself, by himself, of himself, and which is himself,

we add: "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world

without end. Amen." As though we expressed a wish that God should be

glorified for ever with the glory which he had before all creatures, in

his infinite eternity and eternal infinity. For this we add the verse

Gloria to every psalm and canticle, according to the ancient custom of

the Eastern Church, which the great S. Jerome begged Pope S. Damasus to

institute here in the Western; to protest, that all the praises of men

and angels are too low to praise worthily the divine goodness, and

that, to be worthily praised, itself must be its own glory, praise and

benediction.

O God! what complacency, what a joy to the soul who loves, when she has

her desire satisfied, in seeing her beloved infinitely praise, bless

and magnify himself! But from this complacency there springs a new

desire of praise: for the soul would gladly praise this so worthy a

praise given to God by himself, thanking him profoundly for it, and

calling again all things to her assistance, to come and glorify the

glory of God with her, to bless his infinite benedictions, and praise

his eternal praises; so that by this return and repetition of praises

upon praises, she engages herself, between complacency and benevolence,

in a most happy labyrinth of love, being wholly lost in this immense

sweetness, sovereignly praising the divinity in that it cannot be

sufficiently praised but by itself. And though in the beginning, the

amorous soul had conceived a certain desire of being able to praise God

sufficiently; yet reflecting upon herself again, she protests that she

would not wish to have power to praise him sufficiently, but remains in

a most humble complacency, to perceive that the divine goodness is so

infinitely praiseworthy, that it cannot be sufficiently praised save by

its own infinity alone.

And here the soul, ravished with admiration, sings the song of sacred

silence: A hymn becometh thee, O Lord, in Sion, and a vow shall be paid

to thee in Jerusalem. [256]

For so the seraphim of Isaias, adoring and praising God, veiled their

faces and feet, confessing therein their want of ability to contemplate

or serve him properly; for our feet, by which we go, signify service:

but still they fly with two wings in the sweet unrest of complacency

and benevolence, their love reposing in that delightful unrest.

Man's heart is never so much disquieted as when the motion by which it

continually opens and shuts itself is hindered, never so quiet as when

its motions are free; so that the heart's quiet consists in its motion.

Now it is the same with the love of the Seraphim and seraphical men;

for this has its repose in its continual movement of complacency, by

which it draws God into itself, as if shutting itself, and of

benevolence, by which it opens itself and throws itself entirely into

God. This love then desires to behold the infinite wonders of God's

goodness, yet it spreads its wings over its face, confessing that it

cannot succeed in this: it would also present some worthy service, but

it folds this desire over its feet, confessing that it has not power to

perform it, nor does anything remain save the two wings of complacency

and benevolence, by which it flies and darts towards God.

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[256] Ps. lxiv. 1.

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BOOK VI.

OF THE

EXERCISES OF HOLY LOVE IN PRAYER.

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CHAPTER I.

A DESCRIPTION OF MYSTICAL THEOLOGY, WHICH IS NO OTHER THING THAN

PRAYER.

We have two principal exercises of our love towards God, the one

affective, the other effective, or, as S. Bernard calls it, active; by

that we affect or love God and what he loves, by this we serve God and

do what he ordains; that joins us to God's goodness, this makes us

execute his will: the one fills us with complacency, benevolence,

yearnings, desires, aspirations and spiritual ardours, causing us to

practise the sacred infusions and minglings of our spirit with God's;

the other establishes in us the solid resolution, the constancy of

heart, and the inviolable obedience requisite to effect the ordinances

of the divine will, and to suffer, accept, approve and embrace, all

that comes from his good-pleasure; the one makes us pleased in God, the

other makes us please God: by the one we conceive, by the other we

bring forth: by the one we place God upon our heart, as a standard of

love, around which all our affections are ranged, by the other we place

him upon our arm, as a sword of love whereby we effect all the exploits

of virtue.

Now the first exercise consists principally in prayer; in which so many

different interior movements take place that to express them all is

impossible, not only by reason of their number, but also for their

nature and quality, which being spiritual, they cannot but be very

rarefied, and almost imperceptible to our understanding. The cleverest

and best trained hounds are often at fault; they lose the strain and

scent by the variety of sleights which the stag uses, who makes

doubles, puts them on a wrong scent, and practises a thousand arts to

escape the cry; and we oftentimes lose the scent and knowledge of our

own heart in the infinite diversity of motions by which it turns

itself, in so many ways and with such promptitude, that one cannot

discern its track.

God alone is he, who, by his infinite wisdom, sees, knows and

penetrates all the turnings and windings of our hearts: he understands

our thoughts from afar, he finds out our traces, doubles and turnings;

his knowledge therein is admirable, surpassing our capacity and reach.

Certainly if our spirits would turn back upon themselves by

reflections, and by reconsiderations of their acts, we should enter

into labyrinths from which we should find no outgate; and it would

require an attention quite beyond our power, to think what our thoughts

are, to consider our considerations, to observe all our spiritual

observations, to discern that we discern, to remember that we

remember,--these acts would be mazes from which we could not deliver

ourselves. This treatise, then, is difficult, especially to one who is

not a man of great prayer.

We take not here the word prayer (oraison) only for the petition

(priere) or demand for some good, poured out by the faithful before

God, as S. Basil calls it, but as S. Bonaventure does, when he says

that prayer, generally speaking; comprehends all the acts of

contemplation; or as S. Gregory Nazianzen, who teaches that prayer is a

conference or conversation of the soul with God; or again as S.

Chrysostom, when he says that prayer is a discoursing with the divine

Majesty; or finally as S. Augustine and S. Damascene, who term prayer

an ascent or raising of the soul to God. And if prayer be a colloquy, a

discourse or a conversation of the soul with God, by it then we speak

to God, and he again speaks to us; we aspire to him and breathe in him,

and he reciprocally inspires us and breathes upon us.

But of what do we discourse in prayer? What is the subject of our

conference? Theotimus, in it we speak of God only: for of what can love

discourse and talk but of the well-beloved? And therefore prayer, and

mystical theology, are one same thing. It is called theology, because,

as speculative theology has God for its object, so this also treats

only of God, yet with three differences: for, 1. The former treats of

God as God, but the latter treats of him as sovereignly amiable; that

is, the former regards the Divinity of the supreme goodness, and the

latter the supreme goodness of the Divinity. 2. The speculative treats

of God with men and amongst men, the mystical speaks of God with God,

and in God himself. 3. The speculative tends to the knowledge of God,

and the mystical to the love of God; that, therefore, makes its

scholars wise, and learned, and theologians, but this makes its

scholars fervent, and affectionate, lovers of God, a Philotheus or a

Theophilus.

Now it is called mystical, because its conversation is altogether

secret, and there is nothing said in it between God and the soul save

only from heart to heart, by a communication incommunicable to all but

those who make it. Lovers' language is so peculiar to themselves that

none but themselves understand it. I sleep, said the holy spouse, and

my heart watcheth. Ah! hark! The voice of my beloved knocking. [257]

Who would have guessed that this spouse being asleep could yet talk

with her beloved? But where love reigns, the sound of exterior words is

not necessary, nor the help of sense to entertain and to hear one

another. In fine, prayer and mystical theology is nothing else but a

conversation in which the soul amorously entertains herself with God

concerning his most amiable goodness, to unite and join herself

thereto.

Prayer is a manna, for the infinity of delicious tastes and precious

sweetnesses which it gives to such as use it, but it is hidden, [258]

because it falls before the light of any science, in the mental

solitude where the soul alone treats with her God alone. Who is she,

might one say of her, that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke

of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense, and of all the

powders of the perfumer? [259] And it was the desire of secrecy that

moved her to make this petition to her love: Come, my beloved, let us

go forth into the field, let us abide in the villages. [260] For this

reason the heavenly spouse is styled a turtle, a bird which is

delighted in shady and solitary places, where she makes no other use of

her song but for her only mate, either in life wooing him or after his

death plaining him. For this reason, in the Canticles, the divine lover

and the heavenly spouse describe their loves by a continual conversing

together; and if their friends sometimes speak during their conference,

it is but casually, and without interrupting their colloquy. Hence the

Blessed Mother (S.) Teresa of Jesus found at first more profit in the

mysteries where our Saviour was most alone; as in the Garden of Olives,

and where he was awaiting the Samaritan woman, for she fancied that he

being alone would more readily admit her into his company.

Love desires secrecy; yea, though lovers may have nothing secret to

say, yet they love to say it secretly: and this is partly, if I am not

mistaken, because they would speak only for themselves, whereas when

they speak out loud it seems no longer to be for themselves alone;

partly because they do not say common things in a common manner, but

with touches which are particular, and which manifest the special

affection with which they speak. The language of love is common, as to

the words, but in manner and pronunciation it is so special that none

but lovers understand it. The name of a friend uttered in public is no

great thing, but spoken apart, secretly in the ear, it imports wonders,

and the more secretly it is spoken the more delightful is its

signification. O God! what a difference there is between the language

of the ancient lovers of the Divinity,--Ignatius, Cyprian, Chrysostom,

Augustine, Hilary, Ephrem, Gregory, Bernard,--and that of less

affectionate theologians! We use their very words, but with them the

words were full of fire and of sweets of amorous perfumes; with us they

are cold and have no scent at all.

Love speaks not only by the tongue, but by the eyes, by sighs, and play

of features; yea, silence and dumbness are words for it. My heart hath

said to thee, my face hath sought thee: thy face, O Lord, will I still

seek. [261] My eyes have failed for thy word, saying: When wilt thou

comfort me? [262] Hear my prayer, O Lord, and my supplication: give ear

to my tears. [263] Let not the apple of thy eye cease, [264] said the

desolate heart of the inhabitants of Jerusalem to their own city. Do

you mark, Theotimus, how the silence of afflicted lovers speaks by the

apple of their eye, and by tears? Truly the chief exercise in mystical

theology is to speak to God and to hear God speak in the bottom of the

heart; and because this discourse passes in most secret aspirations and

inspirations, we term it a silent conversing. Eyes speak to eyes, and

heart to heart, and none understand what passes save the sacred lovers

who speak.

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[257] Cant. v. 2.

[258] Apoc. ii. 17.

[259] Cant. iii. 6.

[260] Cant. vii. 11.

[261] Ps. xxvi. 8.

[262] Ps. cxviii. 82.

[263] Ps. xxxviii. 13.

[264] Jer. Lam. ii. 18.

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CHAPTER II.

OF MEDITATION--THE FIRST DEGREE OF PRAYER OR MYSTICAL THEOLOGY.

This word is much used in the holy Scriptures, and means simply an

attentive and reiterated thought, proper to produce good or evil

affections. In the first Psalm, the man is said to be blessed: Whose

will is in the way of the Lord, and who in his law shall meditate day

and night. But in the second Psalm: Why did the Gentiles rage, and the

people meditate vain things? Meditation therefore is made as well for

evil as for good. Yet whereas in the holy Scripture, the word

meditation is ordinarily applied to the attention which we have to

divine things to stir us up to love them, it has, as one might say,

been canonized by the common consent of theologians, like the name,

angel, and, zeal; as on the contrary the words, craft (dol), and,

demons have been stigmatized: so that now when we say, meditation, we

mean that which is holy, and that by which we begin mystical theology.

Every meditation is a thought, but every thought is not meditation. For

we have thoughts to which our mind is carried without any design or

aim, by way of simple musing, as we see common flies flying from from

one flower to another, without drawing anything from them. And be this

kind of thought as attentive as it may, it can never bear the name of

meditation, but should simply be called thought. Sometimes we consider

a thing attentively to learn its causes, its effects, its qualities,

and this thought is named study; in which the mind acts as locusts do,

which promiscuously fly upon flowers and leaves, to eat them and

nourish themselves therewith. But when we think of divine things, not

to learn, but to make ourselves love them, this is called meditating,

and this exercise, Meditation; in which our spirit, not as a fly for

simple amusement, nor as a locust to eat and be filled, but as a sacred

bee, moves over the flowers of holy mysteries, to extract from them the

honey of divine love.

Thus many persons are always dreaming, and engaged in unprofitable

thoughts, almost without knowing what they are thinking about; and,

which is noteworthy, they are only attentive to these thoughts

inadvertently, and would wish not to have them; witness him who said:

My thoughts are dissipated, tormenting my heart: [265] many also study,

and by a most laborious occupation fill themselves with vanity, not

being able to resist curiosity: but there are few who meditate to

inflame their heart with holy heavenly love. In fine, thoughts and

study may be upon any subject, but meditation, in our present sense,

has reference only to those objects whose consideration tends to make

us good and devout. So that meditation is no other thing than an

attentive thought, voluntarily reiterated or entertained in the mind,

to excite the will to holy and salutary affections and resolutions.

The holy Word explains in a truly admirable manner, and by an excellent

similitude, in what holy meditation consists. Ezechias wishing to

express in his canticle the attentive consideration which he makes of

his evil: I will cry, says he, like a young swallow, I will meditate

like a dove. [266] For, my dear Theotimus, if ever you took notice of

it, the young swallows open their beaks very wide in their chirping,

and, on the contrary, doves, above all birds, make their murmuring with

their beaks close shut up, keeping their voices in their throat and

breast, nothing passing outward but a certain resonant, echo-like

sound; and this little murmuring equally serves them to express their

griefs and to declare their loves. Ezechias, then, to show that in his

calamity he made many vocal prayers, says: I will cry like a young

swallow, opening my mouth, to utter before God many lamentable cries;

and to testify also that he made use of holy mental prayer, he adds: I

will meditate like a dove, turning and doubling my thoughts within my

heart by an attentive consideration, to excite myself to bless and

praise the sovereign mercy of my God, who has brought me back from

death's gate, taking compassion on my misery. So Isaias says: We shall

roar all of us like bears, and shall lament, meditating like doves,

[267] where the roaring of bears refers to the exclamations which we

utter in vocal prayer, and the mourning of doves to holy meditation.

But to make it appear that doves use their cooing on occasions not only

of grief but also of love and joy, the sacred lover, describing the

natural spring-time in order to express the beauties of the spiritual

springtime, says: The voice of the turtle is heard in our land, [268]

because in the spring the turtle begins to glow with love, which she

testifies by her more frequent song; and presently after: My dove, shew

me thy face, let thy voice sound in my ears: for thy voice is sweet,

and thy face comely. [269] He means, Theotimus, that the devout soul is

very agreeable unto him when she presents herself before him, and

meditates to inflame herself with holy spiritual love. So he who had

said, I will meditate like a dove: putting his conception into other

words: I will think over again for thee, said he, all my years in the

bitterness of my soul. [270] For to meditate, and to think over again

in order to move the affections, is the same thing. Hence Moses,

exhorting the people to recall to mind the benefits received of God,

adds this reason: That thou shouldst keep the commandments of the Lord

thy God, and walk in his ways, and fear him. [271] And Our Lord himself

gave this command to Josue: Let not the book of this law depart from

thy mouth: but thou shalt meditate on it day and night, that thou

mayest observe and do all things that are written in it. [272] What in

one of the passages is expressed by the word, meditate, is declared in

the other by, think over again, and to show that reiterated thought and

meditation tend to move us to affections, resolutions and actions, it

is said, as well in the one as the other passage, that we must think

over again, and meditate in, the law, to observe and practise it. In

this sense the apostle exhorts us thus: Think diligently upon him that

endured such opposition from sinners against himself; that you be not

wearied, fainting in your minds. [273] When he says think diligently,

it is as though he said meditate. But why would he have us to meditate

the holy passion? Not that we should become learned, but that we should

become patient and constant in the way of heaven. O how have I loved

thy law, O Lord! says David: It is my meditation all the day. [274] He

meditates on the law because he loves it, and he loves it because he

meditates on it.

Meditation is the mystical rumination [275] required for not being

unclean, to which one of the devout shepherdesses who followed the

sacred Sulamitess invites us: for she assures us that holy writ is as a

precious wine, worthy not only to be drunk, by pastors and doctors, but

also to be diligently relished, and, so to speak, ruminated and turned

over and over. Thy throat, says she (in which the holy words are

formed) is like the best wine, worthy for my beloved to drink, and for

his lips and his teeth to ruminate. [276] So the blessed Isaac, as a

chaste and pure lamb, went forth into the field, the day being now well

spent, to make his retirement, his conference, and his exercise of

spirit with God, that is, to pray and to meditate. [277]

The bee flies from flower to flower in the spring-time, not at hazard

but of set purpose, not only to be recreated in the verdant diapering

of the meadows, but to gather honey; which having found, she sucks it

up, and loads herself with it; then carrying it to her hive, she treats

it skilfully, separating from it the wax, of which she makes comb, to

store the honey for the ensuing winter. Such is the devout soul in

meditation. She passes from mystery to mystery, not at random, or only

to solace herself in viewing the admirable beauty of those divine

objects, but deliberately and of set purpose, to find out motives of

love or of some heavenly affection; and having found them she draws

them to her, she relishes them, she loads herself with them, and having

brought them back and put them within her heart, she lays up what she

sees most useful for her advancement, by finally making resolutions

suitable for the time of temptation. Thus in the Canticle of Canticles

the heavenly spouse, as a mystical bee, settles, now on the eyes, now

on the lips, on the cheeks, on the hair of her beloved, to draw thence

the sweetness of a thousand passions of love, noting in particular

whatever she finds best for this. So that, inflamed with holy love, she

speaks with him, she questions him, she listens to him, sighs, aspires,

admires him, as he on his part fills her with delight, inspiring her,

touching and opening her heart, and pouring into it brightness, lights

and sweetnesses without end, but in so secret a manner that one may

rightly say of this holy conversation of the soul with God, what the

holy text says of God's with Moses: that Moses being alone upon the top

of the mountain spoke to God, and God answered him. [278]

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[265] Job xvii. 11.

[266] Is. xxxviii. 14.

[267] Is. lix. 11.

[268] Cant. ii. 12.

[269] Cant. ii. 14.

[270] Is. xxxviii. 15.

[271] Deut. viii. 6.

[272] Josue i. 8.

[273] Heb. xii. 3.

[274] Ps. cxviii. 97.

[275] Lev. xi. 3.

[276] Cant. vii. 9.

[277] Gen. xxiv. 63.

[278] Ex. xix. 19.

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CHAPTER III.

A DESCRIPTION OF CONTEMPLATION, AND OF THE FIRST DIFFERENCE THAT THERE

IS BETWEEN IT AND MEDITATION.

Theotimus, contemplation is no other thing than a loving, simple and

permanent attention of the spirit to divine things; which you may

easily understand by comparing meditation with it.

Little bees are called nymphs or schadons until they make honey, and

then they are called bees: so prayer is named Meditation until it has

produced the honey of devotion, and then it is converted into

Contemplation. For as the bees fly through their meadows, settling here

and there and gathering honey, which having heaped together, they work

in it for the pleasure they take in its sweetness, so we meditate to

gather the love of God, but having gathered it we contemplate God, and

are attentive to his goodness, by reason of the sweetness which love

makes us find in it. The desire we have to obtain divine love makes us

meditate, but love obtained makes us contemplate; for by love we find

so agreeable a sweetness in the thing beloved, that we can never

satiate our spirits in seeing and considering it.

Behold, Theotimus, how the queen of Saba,--regarding the proofs of

Solomon's wisdom in his answers, in the beauty of his house, in the

magnificence of his table, in his servants' lodgings, in the order that

his courtiers kept while executing their charges, in their apparel and

behaviour, in the multitude of holocausts which were offered in the

Temple,--was taken with an ardent love, which changed her meditation

into contemplation, in which, being rapt out of herself, she uttered

divers words of extreme satisfaction. The sight of so many wonders

begot in her heart an exceeding love, and that love enkindled a new

desire, to see still more and enjoy the presence of him whose they

were; whence she cried: Blessed are thy servants who stand before thee

always, and hear thy wisdom. [279] In like manner we sometimes begin to

eat to get an appetite, but our appetite being excited, we continue

eating to content it. And in the beginning we consider the goodness of

God to excite our will to love him, but love being formed in our

hearts, we consider the same goodness to content our love, which cannot

be satiated in seeing continually what it loves. In conclusion,

Meditation is the mother, and Contemplation the daughter of love, and

for this reason I called Contemplation a loving attention, for children

are named after their fathers, and not fathers after their children.

It is true, Theotimus, that as Joseph of old was the crown and glory of

his father, greatly increased his honours and contentment, and made him

young in his old age, so contemplation crowns its father which is love,

perfects him, and gives him the crown of excellence; for love having

excited in us contemplative attention, that attention breeds

reciprocally a greater and more fervent love, which at last is crowned

with perfection when it enjoys what it loves. Love makes us take

pleasure in the sight of our well-beloved, and the sight of our

well-beloved makes us take pleasure in his divine love, so that by this

mutual movement, from love to sight, and from sight to love, as love

renders the beauty of the thing beloved more beautiful, so the sight of

it makes love more loving and delightful. Love by an imperceptible

power makes the beauty which we love appear more fair, and sight

likewise refines love, to make it find beauty more amiable. Love urges

the eyes continually to behold the beloved beauty more attentively, and

sight forces the heart to love it ever more ardently.

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[279] 3 Kings x. 8.

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CHAPTER IV.

THAT LOVE IN THIS LIFE TAKES ITS ORIGIN BUT NOT ITS EXCELLENCE FROM THE

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

But which has the more force, I pray you; love, to make us look upon

the well-beloved, or the sight to make us love him? Knowledge,

Theotimus, is required for the production of love, for we can never

love what we do not know; and according as the attentive knowledge of

good is augmented, love is also augmented, provided there is nothing to

hinder its activity. Yet it happens often, that knowledge having

produced holy love, love does not stay within the limits of the

knowledge which is in the understanding, but goes forward and passes

very far beyond it; so that in this life we are able to have more love

than knowledge of God: whence the great S. Thomas assures us, that

oftentimes the most simple women abound in devotion, and are ordinarily

more capable of heavenly love than clever and learned men.

The famous Abbot of S. Andrew's at Vercelli, master of S. Antony of

Padua, in his commentaries upon S. Denis, often repeats that love

penetrates where exterior knowledge cannot reach, and says that many

bishops of old, though not very learned, have penetrated the mystery of

the Trinity; admiring in this point his scholar S. Antony of Padua,

who, without earthly knowledge, had so profound a grasp of mystical

theology, that, like another S. John Baptist, one might have called him

a burning and a shining light. The Blessed Brother Giles, one of the

first companions of S. Francis, said one day to S. Bonaventure: "O how

happy you learned men are, for you understand many things whereby you

praise God, but what can we idiots do?" And S. Bonaventure replied:

"The grace to be able to love God is sufficient." "Nay, but Father,"

replied Brother Giles, "can an ignorant man love God as well as a

learned?" "Yes," said S. Bonaventure, "and further, a poor simple woman

may love God as much as a doctor of divinity." Then Brother Giles cried

out in fervour: "O poor simple woman, love thy Saviour, and thou shall

be as great as Brother Bonaventure." And upon this he remained for the

space of three hours in a rapture.

The will only perceives good by means of the understanding, but having

once perceived it she has no more need of the understanding to practise

love, for the force of pleasure which she feels, or expects to feel,

from union with her object, draws her powerfully to the love and to the

desire of enjoying it; so that the knowledge of good gives birth, but

not measure, to love; as we see the knowledge of an injury starts

anger, which, if not suppressed, almost always becomes greater than the

subject deserves. The passions do not follow the knowledge which moves

them, but very often, leaving this quite in the rear, they make towards

their object without any measure or limit.

Now this happens still more strongly in holy love, inasmuch as our will

is not applied to it by a natural knowledge, but by the light of faith,

which assuring us of the infinite goodness that is in God, gives us

sufficient cause to love him with all our force. We dig the earth to

find gold and silver, employing a present labour for a good which as

yet is only hoped for; so that an uncertain knowledge sets us upon a

present and certain labour, and as we more discover the vein of the

mineral, we search and search more earnestly. Even a cold scent serves

to move the hound to the game, so, dear Theotimus, a knowledge obscure

and involved in clouds, like that of faith, most powerfully stirs our

affection to love the goodness which it makes us perceive. O how true

it is, according to S. Augustine's exclamation, that the unlearned bear

away heaven, while many of the wise are swallowed up in hell!

In your opinion, Theotimus, which of the two would love the light

more--the one born blind, who might know all the discourses that

philosophers make of it and the praises they give it, or the ploughman,

who by a clear sight feels and realizes the agreeable splendour of the

fair rising sun? The first has more knowledge of it, but the second

more fruition, and that fruition produces a love far more lively and

affective than a simple knowledge by reasons; for the experience of

good makes it infinitely more agreeable than all the science which can

be had of it. We begin our love by the knowledge which faith gives us

of God's goodness, which afterwards we relish and taste by love; love

whets our taste and our taste heightens our love, so that, as we see

the waves, under the stress of winds, roll against one another and

swell up, as if contact forced each to strive to outdo the rest, so the

taste of good strengthens our love of it, and increases our relish for

it, according to that oracle of the divine Wisdom: They that eat me,

shall yet hunger: and they that drink me shall yet thirst. [280] Which

of the two I pray you loved God more, the theologian Occam, held by

some to be the most subtle of mortals, or S. Catharine of Genoa, an

unlearned woman? He knew God better by science, she by experience; and

her experience conducted her deep into seraphic love, while he with his

knowledge remained far remote from this excellent perfection.

We extremely love the sciences, even before we fully know them, says S.

Thomas, from such confused and general knowledge as we may have of

them: in the same way, it is the knowledge of God's goodness which

makes our will begin to love, but as soon as it is set going, love

increases of itself, by the pleasure which the will takes in being

united to this sovereign good. Before children have tasted honey and

sugar it is difficult to make them receive them into their mouth; but

after they have tasted their sweetness, they love them much more than

we wish, and eagerly seek to get them always.

We must admit, however, that the will, attracted by the delectation

which it takes in its object, is much more forcibly drawn to unite

itself therewith, when the understanding on its side excellently

proposes the goodness thereof; for it is then at once both drawn and

pushed; pushed by knowledge, drawn by delight: so that knowledge is not

of itself contrary, but very useful to devotion, and meeting together

they marvellously assist one another; though it often happens through

our misery that knowledge hinders the birth of devotion, because

knowledge puffeth up and makes us proud, and pride, which is contrary

to all virtue, is the total ruin of devotion. Without doubt, the

eminent science of a Cyprian, an Augustine, a Hilary, a Chrysostom, a

Basil, a Gregory, a Bonaventure, a Thomas,--has not only much

recommended but greatly improved their devotion, as again their

devotion has not only raised but eminently perfected their science.

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[280] Ecclus. xxiv. 29.

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CHAPTER V.

THE SECOND DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEDITATION AND CONTEMPLATION.

Meditation considers in detail, and as it were piece by piece, the

objects calculated to move us, but contemplation takes a very simple

and collected view of the object which it loves, and the consideration

thus brought to a point causes a more lively and strong movement. One

may behold the beauty of a rich crown two ways; either by looking upon

all its ornaments, and all the precious stones of which it is composed,

one after the other; or again, having considered all the particular

parts, by beholding all the work of it together in one single and

simple view. The first kind resembles meditation, in which, for

example, we consider the effects of God's mercy to excite us to his

love; but the second is like to contemplation, in which we consider

with one single steady regard of our mind, all the variety of the same

effects as a single beauty, composed of all these pieces, making up a

single splendid brilliant. In meditating, we as it were count the

divine perfections which we find in a mystery, but in contemplating we

sum up their total. The companions of the sacred spouse had asked her

what manner of one was her well-beloved, and she makes answer in an

admirable description of all the parts of his perfect beauty: My

beloved is white and ruddy, his head is as the finest gold, his locks

as branches of palm trees, black as a raven, his eyes as doves, his

cheeks are as beds of aromatical spices, set by the perfumers, his lips

are as lilies dropping choice myrrh, his hands are turned and as of

gold full of hyacinths, his legs as pillars of marble. Thus she goes

on, meditating this sovereign beauty in detail, till at length she

concludes by way of contemplation, putting all the beauties into one:

His throat is most sweet, and he is all lovely: such is my beloved, and

he is my friend. [281]

Meditation reminds of one who smells a pink, a rose, rosemary, thyme,

jessamine, orange-flower, separately one after the other; but

contemplation is like to one smelling the perfumed water distilled from

all those flowers: for the latter in one smell receives all the scents

together, which the other had smelt divided and separated; and there is

no doubt that this one scent alone, arising from the mingling together

of all these scents, is more sweet and precious by itself than the

scents of which it is composed, smelt separately one after another.

Hence it is that the heavenly lover so prizes the being seen by his

well-beloved with one of her eyes, and that her hair is so well plaited

that it seems to be but one hair; for what is this beholding the spouse

with one eye only, except the beholding him with a single attentive

view without multiplying looks? And what is it to have her hair thus

plaited together, except the not scattering her thoughts in the

multiplicity of considerations. Oh! how happy are they who, having run

over the multitude of motives which they have to love God, reducing all

their looks to one only look, and all their thoughts to one conclusion,

stay their mind in the unity of contemplation; after the example of S.

Augustine or S. Bruno, pronouncing secretly in their soul in a

permanent admiration: "O Goodness! Goodness! Goodness, ever old and

ever new!" or after the example of the great S. Francis, who, kneeling

in prayer passed the whole night in these words: "O God, thou art my

God and my All!" repeating the same continually, as the Blessed Brother

Bernard of Quintaval relates who had heard it with his own ears.

Look at S. Bernard, Theotimus: he had meditated all the passion point

by point; then of all the principal points put together he made a

nosegay of loving grief, and putting it upon his breast to change his

meditation into contemplation, he cried out: A bundle of myrrh is my

beloved to me. [282]

But again look with still greater devotion at the Creator of the world,

how in the creation he first meditated the goodness of his works

severally, one by one, as he saw them produced. He saw, says the

Scripture, that the light was good, that the heavens and the earth were

good, and so the herbs and plants, the sun, moon and stars, the living

beasts, and in fine all the rest of creatures as he created them one

after another: till at length, all the universe being accomplished, the

divine meditation is changed as it were into contemplation: for viewing

all the goodness that was in his works with one only look--He saw, says

Moses, all the things that he had made, and they were very good. [283]

The different parts considered severally by manner of meditation were

good, but beheld in one only regard all together in form of

contemplation, they were found very good: as many little brooks running

together make a river, which carries greater freights than the

multitude of the same brooks separately could do.

After we have excited a great many different pious affections by the

multitude of considerations of which meditation is composed, we in the

end gather together the virtue of all these affections, from which, by

the pouring together and mixture of their forces, springs a certain

quintessence of affection, and of affection more active and powerful

than all the affections whence it proceeds, because, though it be but

one, yet it contains the virtue and property of all the others, and is

called contemplative affection.

So it is an opinion amongst divines that the angels who are higher in

glory have a knowledge of God and creatures much more simple than the

inferior have, and that the species or ideas by which they see are more

universal, so that what the less perfect angels see by various species

and various regards, the more perfect see by fewer species and fewer

acts of regard. And the great S. Augustine, followed by S. Thomas, says

that in heaven we shall not have these vicissitudes, varieties, changes

and returns of thoughts and cogitations, which come and go, from object

to object and from one thing to another, but with one sole thought we

shall be able to attend to the diversity of many things, and receive

the knowledge of them. The further water runs from its source, the more

does it divide itself, and waste its waters, unless it is kept in with

a great care; and perfections separate and divide themselves according

as they are more remote from God their source; but approaching near him

they are united, until they are lost in the abyss of that sole

sovereign perfection, which is the necessary unity and the better part,

which Magdalen chose and which shall not be taken away from her.

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[281] Cant. v.

[282] Cant. i. 12.

[283] Gen. i. 31.

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CHAPTER VI.

THAT CONTEMPLATION IS MADE WITHOUT LABOUR, WHICH IS THE THIRD

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IT AND MEDITATION.

Now the simple view of contemplation is performed in one of these three

ways. Sometimes we regard only some one of God's perfections, as for

example his infinite goodness, not thinking of his other attributes or

virtues; like a bridegroom, who simply stays his eye upon the beautiful

complexion of his bride, and by this means truly sees all her

countenance, forasmuch as her colour is spread over almost all the

parts of it, and who yet at the same time would not be attending to the

features, expression, and other points of beauty: for, in like manner,

sometimes the mind, considering the sovereign goodness of the divinity,

although withal it sees in it justice, wisdom, power, yet is only

attentive to its goodness, to which the simple view of its

contemplation is addressed. Sometimes also we attentively behold in God

several of his infinite perfections, yet with a simple view and without

distinction, as he who with one glance, passing his eyes from the head

to the feet of his richly dressed spouse, would attentively have seen

all in general, and nothing in particular, not well discerning what

neck-jewels, or gown, she wore, nor what countenance she bore, nor what

expression she had, nor what her eyes were saying, but only that all

was fair and agreeable: for so in contemplation we often cast one

single regard of simple contemplation over several divine greatnesses

and perfections together, and we could not describe anything in

particular, but only say that all is perfectly good and lovely. And

finally we at other times consider neither many nor only one of the

divine perfections, but only some divine action or work, to which we

are attentive; as for example to the act of mercy by which God pardons

sins, or the act of creation, or the resurrection of Lazarus, or the

conversion of S. Paul: as a bridegroom who might not regard the eyes,

but only the sweetness of the looks which his spouse casts upon him,

nor take notice of her mouth, but only of the sweetness of the words

uttered by it. And here, Theotimus, the soul makes a certain outburst

of love, not only upon the actions she considers, but upon him from

whom they proceed: Thou art good; and in thy goodness teach me thy

justifications. [284] His throat (that is, the word which comes from

it) is most sweet, and he is all lovely. [285] Ah! How sweet are thy

words to my palate, more than honey to my mouth; [286] or with S.

Thomas: My Lord and my God; and with S. Magdalen: "Rabboni, Ah! my

master!"

But take which of these three ways you will, contemplation has still

this excellency that it is made with delight, for it supposes that we

have found God and his holy love, that we enjoy it and delight in it,

saying: I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him: and I will not let

him go. [287] In which it differs from meditation, which almost always

is performed with difficulty, labour and reasoning; our mind passing in

it from consideration to consideration, searching in many places either

the well-beloved of her love, or the love of her well-beloved. Jacob

labours in meditation to obtain Rachel, but in contemplation he

rejoices with her, forgetting all his labour. The divine lover like a

shepherd, and indeed he is one, prepared a sumptuous banquet according

to the country fashion for his sacred spouse, which he so described

that mystically it represented all the mysteries of man's redemption. I

am come into my garden, said he, O my sister, my spouse, I have

gathered my myrrh, with aromatical spices; I have eaten the honey-comb

with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk; eat, O friends, and

drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved! [288] Theotimus, Ah! when

was it, I pray you, that our Saviour came into his garden, if not when

he came into his mother's purest, humblest and sweetest womb,

replenished with all the flourishing plants of holy virtues? And what

is meant by our Saviour's gathering his myrrh with his perfumes, except

that he joined suffering to suffering until death, even the death of

the cross, heaping by that means merit upon merit and treasures upon

treasures, to enrich his spiritual children? And how did he eat his

honey-comb with his honey, but when he lived a new life, reuniting his

soul, more sweet than honey, to his pierced and wounded body, with more

holes than a honeycomb? And when ascending into heaven he took

possession of all the surroundings and dependencies of his divine

glory, what other thing did he if not mix the exhilarating wine of the

essential glory of his soul, with the delightful milk of the perfect

felicity of his body, in a more excellent manner than hitherto he had

done?

Now in all these divine mysteries, which contain all others, there is

food provided for dear friends to eat and drink well, and for dearest

friends to be inebriated. Some eat and drink, but they eat more than

they drink and so are not inebriated: the others eat and drink, but

drink more than they eat, and those are they who are inebriated. Now to

eat is to meditate, for in meditating a man doth chew, turning his

spiritual meat hither and thither between the teeth of consideration,

to bruise, break and digest it, which is not done without some labour.

To drink is to contemplate, which we do without labour or difficulty,

yea with pleasure and tranquillity. But to be inebriated is to

contemplate so frequently and so ardently as to be quite out of self to

be wholly in God. O holy and sacred inebriation, which, contrarily to

corporal inebriation, does not alienate us from the spiritual sense,

but from the corporal senses; does not dull or besot us, but

angelicizes and in a sort deifies us; putting us out of ourselves, not

to abase us and rank us with beasts, as terrestrial drunkenness does,

but to raise us above ourselves and range us with angels, so that we

may live more in God than in ourselves, being attentive to and occupied

in seeing his beauty and being united to his goodness by love!

Now whereas to attain unto contemplation we stand ordinarily in need of

hearing the word of God, of having spiritual discourse and conference

with others, like the ancient anchorites, of reading, praying,

meditating, singing canticles, conceiving good thoughts,--for this

reason, holy contemplation being the end and aim of all these

exercises, they are all reduced to it, and those who practise them are

called contemplatives, as also the occupation itself is called a

contemplative life. This is on account of the action of our

understanding, by which we regard the truth of the divine beauty and

goodness with an amorous attention, that is, with a love which makes us

attentive, or, with an attention which proceeds from love, and augments

the love which we have for the infinite sweetness of our Lord.

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[284] Ps. cxviii. 68.

[285] Cant. v. 16.

[286] Ps. cxviii. 103.

[287] Cant. iii. 4.

[288] Cant. v. 1.

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CHAPTER VII.

OF THE LOVING RECOLLECTION OF THE SOUL IN CONTEMPLATION.

I speak not here, Theotimus, of the recollection by which such as are

about to pray, place themselves in God's presence, entering into

themselves, and as one would say bringing their soul into their hearts,

there to speak with God; for this recollection is made by love's

command, which, provoking us to prayer, moves us to take this means of

doing it well, so that we ourselves make this withdrawing of our

spirit. But the recollection of which I mean to speak is not made by

love's command but by love itself, that is, we do not make it by free

choice, for it is not in our power to have it when we please, and does

not depend on our care, but God at his pleasure works it in us by his

most holy grace. The Blessed Mother (S.) Teresa of Jesus says: "He who

has written that the prayer of recollection is made as when a hedgehog

or tortoise draws itself within itself, said well, saying that these

beasts draw themselves in when they please, whereas recollection is not

in our will, but comes to us only when it pleases God to do us this

grace."

Now it comes thus. Nothing is so natural to good as to draw and unite

unto itself such things as are sensible of it; as our souls do, which

continually draw towards them and give themselves to their treasure,

that is, what they love. It happens then sometimes that our Lord

imperceptibly infuses into the depths of our hearts a certain agreeable

sweetness, which testifies his presence, and then the powers, yea the

very exterior senses of the soul, by a certain secret contentment, turn

in towards that most interior part where is the most amiable and

dearest spouse. For as a new swarm of bees when it would take flight

and change country, is recalled by a sound softly made on metal basins,

by the smell of honied wine, or by the scent of some odoriferous herbs,

being stayed by the attraction of these agreeable things, and entering

into the hive prepared for it:--so our Saviour,--pronouncing some

secret word of his love, or pouring out the odour of the wine of his

dilection, more delicious than honey, or letting stream the perfumes of

his garments, that is, feelings of his heavenly consolations in our

hearts, and thereby making them perceive his most welcome

presence,--draws unto him all the faculties of our soul, which gather

about him and stay themselves in him as in their most desired object.

And as he who should cast a piece of loadstone amongst a number of

needles would instantly see them turn all their points towards their

well-beloved adamant, and join themselves to it, so when our Saviour

makes his most delicious presence to be felt in the midst of our

hearts, all our faculties turn their points in that direction, to be

united to this incomparable sweetness.

O God! says then the soul in imitation of S. Augustine, whither was I

wandering to seek thee! O most infinite beauty! I sought thee without,

and thou wast in the midst of my heart. All Magdalen's affections, and

all her thoughts, were scattered about the sepulchre of her Saviour,

whom she went seeking hither and thither, and though she had found him,

and he spoke to her, yet leaves she them dispersed, because she does

not perceive his presence; but as soon as he had called her by her

name, see how she gathers herself together and entirely attaches

herself to his feet: one only word puts her into recollection.

Propose to yourself, Theotimus, the most holy Virgin, our Lady, when

she had conceived the Son of God, her only love. The soul of that

well-beloved mother did wholly collect itself about that well-beloved

child, and because this heavenly dear one was harboured in her sacred

womb, all the faculties of her soul gathered themselves within her, as

holy bees into their hive, wherein their honey is; and by how much the

divine greatness was, so to speak, straitened and contracted within her

virginal womb, by so much her soul did more increase and magnify the

praises of that infinite loving-kindness, and her spirit within her

body leapt with joy (as S. John in his mother's womb) in presence of

her God, whom she felt. She launched not her affections out of herself,

since her treasure, her loves and her delights were in the midst of her

sacred womb. Now the same contentment may be practised by imitation,

among those who, having communicated, feel by the certainty of faith

that which, not flesh and blood, but the Heavenly Father has revealed,

that their Saviour is body and soul present, with a most real presence,

to their body and to their soul, by this most adorable sacrament. For

as the pearl-mother, having received the drops of the fresh dew of the

morning, closes up, not only to keep them pure from all possible

mixture with the water of the sea, but also for the pleasure she feels

in relishing the agreeable freshness of this heaven-sent germ:--so does

it happen to many holy and devout of the faithful, that having received

the Divine Sacrament which contains the dew of all heavenly

benedictions, their heart closes over It, and all their faculties

collect themselves together, not only to adore this sovereign King, but

for the spiritual consolation and refreshment, beyond belief, which

they receive in feeling by faith this divine germ of immortality within

them. Where you will carefully note, Theotimus, that to say all in a

word this recollection is wholly made by love, which perceiving the

presence of the well-beloved by the attractions he spreads in the midst

of the heart, gathers and carries all the soul towards it, by a most

agreeable inclination, a most sweet turning, and a delicious bending of

all the faculties towards this well-beloved, who attracts them unto him

by the force of his sweetness, with which he ties and draws hearts, as

bodies are drawn by material ropes and bands.

But this sweet recollection of our soul in itself is not only made by

the sentiment of God's presence in the midst of our heart, but also by

any means which puts us in this sacred presence. It happens sometimes

that all our interior powers close and withdraw themselves into

themselves by the extreme reverence and sweet fear which seizes upon us

in the consideration of his sovereign Majesty who is present with us

and beholds us; just as, however distracted we may be, if the Pope or

some great prince should appear we return to ourselves, and bring back

our thoughts upon ourselves, to keep ourselves in good behaviour and

respect. The blue lily, otherwise called the flag, is said to draw its

flowers together at the sight of the sun, because they close and unite

while the sun shines, but in its absence they spread out and keep open

all the night. The like happens in this kind of recollection which we

speak of; for at the simple presence of God, or the simple feeling that

he sees us, either from heaven or from any other place outside us (even

if we are not remembering the other sort of presence by which he is in

us), our powers and faculties assemble and gather together within us,

out of respect to his divine Majesty, which love makes us fear with a

fear of honour and respect.

Indeed I know a soul who, as soon as she heard mention of some mystery

or sentence which put her a little more expressly in mind of the

presence of God than usual, whether in confession or private

conference, would so deeply enter into herself that she could hardly

recover herself to speak and make answer, so that outwardly she

remained as one deprived of life, and with all her senses benumbed,

till her spouse permitted her to quit that state: which was sometimes

pretty soon, and other times more slowly.

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CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE REPOSE OF A SOUL RECOLLECTED IN HER WELL-BELOVED.

The soul, then, being thus inwardly recollected in God or before God,

now and then becomes so sweetly attentive to the goodness of her

well-beloved, that her attention seems not to her to be attention, so

purely and delicately is it exercised: as it happens to certain rivers,

which glide so calmly and smoothly that beholders, and such as float

upon them, seem neither to see nor feel any motion, because the waters

are not seen to ripple or flow at all. And it is this admirable repose

of the soul which the Blessed Virgin (S.) Teresa of Jesus names prayer

of quiet, not far different from that which she also calls the sleep of

the powers, at least if I understand her right.

Even human lovers are content, sometimes, with being near or within

sight of the person they love without speaking to her, and without even

distinctly thinking of her or her perfections, satiated, as it were,

and satisfied to relish this dear presence, not by any reflection they

make upon it, but by a certain gratification and repose which their

spirit takes in it. A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, he shall

abide between my breasts. My beloved to me, and I to him, who feedeth

among the lilies, till the day break, and the shadows retire. Shew me,

O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou liest in the

mid-day. [289] Do you see, Theotimus, how the holy Sulamitess is

contented with knowing that her well-beloved is with her, whether in

her bosom, or in her gardens, or elsewhere, so she know where he is.

And indeed she is the Sulamitess, wholly peaceable, calm, and at rest.

Now this repose sometimes goes so deep in its tranquillity, that the

whole soul and all its powers fall as it were asleep, and make no

movement nor action whatever, except the will alone, and even this does

no more than receive the delight and satisfaction which the presence of

the well-beloved affords. And what is yet more admirable is, that the

will does not even perceive the delight and contentment which she

receives, enjoying it insensibly, being not mindful of herself but of

him whose presence gives her this pleasure, as happens frequently when,

surprised by a light slumber, we only hear indistinctly what our

friends are saying around us, or feel their caresses almost

imperceptibly, not feeling that we feel.

However, the soul who in this sweet repose enjoys this delicate sense

of the divine presence, though she is not conscious of the enjoyment,

yet clearly shows how dear and precious this happiness is unto her, if

one offer to deprive her of it or divert her from it; for then the poor

soul complains, cries out, yea sometimes weeps, as a little child

awakened before it has taken its full sleep, who, by the sorrow it

feels in being awakened, clearly shows the content it had in sleeping.

Hereupon the heavenly shepherd adjures the daughters of Jerusalem, by

the roes and harts of the fields, not to make the beloved awake until

she please, [290] that is, to let her awake of herself. No, Theotimus,

a soul thus recollected in her God would not change her repose for the

greatest goods in the world.

Such, or little different from it, was the quiet of most holy Magdalen,

when sitting at her Master's feet she heard his holy word. Behold her,

I beseech you, Theotimus; she is in a profound tranquillity, she says

not a word, she weeps not, she sobs not, she sighs not, she stirs not,

she prays not. Martha, full of business passes and repasses through the

hall: Mary notices her not. And what then is she doing? She is doing

nothing, but only hearkening. And what does this mean--she hearkens? It

means that she is there as a vessel of honour, to receive drop by drop

the myrrh of sweetness which the lips of her well-beloved distilled

into her heart; and this divine lover, jealous of this love-sleep and

repose of this well-beloved, chid Martha for wanting to awaken her:

Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things.

But one thing is necessary, Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall

not be taken away from her. [291] But what was Mary's portion or part?

To remain in peace, repose, and quiet, near unto her sweet Jesus.

The well-beloved S. John is ordinarily painted, in the Last Supper, not

only lying but even sleeping in his Master's bosom, because he was

seated after the fashion of the Easterns (Levantins), so that his head

was towards his dear lover's breast; and as he slept no corporal sleep

there,--what likelihood of that?--so I make no question but that,

finding himself so near the breasts of the eternal sweetness, he took a

profound mystical sleep, like a child of love which locked to its

mother's breast sucks while sleeping. Oh! what a delight it was to this

Benjamin, child of his Saviour's joy, to sleep in the arms of that

father, who the day after, recommended him, as the Benoni, child of

pain, to his mother's sweet breasts. Nothing is more desirable to the

little child, whether he wake or sleep, than his father's bosom and

mother's breast.

Wherefore, when you shall find yourself in this simple and pure filial

confidence with our Lord, stay there, my dear Theotimus, without moving

yourself to make sensible acts, either of the understanding or of the

will; for this simple love of confidence, and this love-sleep of your

spirit in the arms of the Saviour, contains by excellence all that you

go seeking hither and thither to satisfy your taste: it is better to

sleep upon this sacred breast than to watch elsewhere, wherever it be.

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[289] Cant. i.

[290] Cant. ii. 7.

[291] Luke x. 41, 42.

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CHAPTER IX.

HOW THIS SACRED REPOSE IS PRACTISED.

Have you never noted, Theotimus, with what ardour little children

sometimes cleave to their mother's breast when hungry? You will see

them, with a deep soft murmur, hold and squeeze it with their mouths,

sucking so eagerly that they even put their mother to pain; but after

the freshness of the milk has in some sort allayed the urgent heat of

their little frame, and the agreeable vapours which it sends to the

brain begin to lull them to sleep, Theotimus, you will see them softly

shut their little eyes, and little by little give way to sleep; yet

without letting go the breast, upon which they make no action saving a

slow and almost insensible movement of the lips, whereby they

continually draw the milk which they swallow imperceptibly. This they

do without thinking of it, yet not without pleasure; for if one draw

the teat from them before they fall sound asleep, they awake and weep

bitterly, testifying by the sorrow which they show in the privation

that their content was great in the possession. Now it fares in like

manner with the soul who is in rest and quiet before God: for she sucks

in a manner insensibly the delights of his presence, without any

discourse, operation or motion of any of her faculties, save only the

highest part of the will, which she moves softly and almost

imperceptibly, as the mouth by which enter the delight and insensible

satiety she finds in the fruition of the divine presence. But if one

trouble this poor little babe, or offer to take from it its treasure

because it seems to sleep, it will plainly show then that though it

sleep to all other things yet not to that; for it perceives the trouble

of this separation and grieves over it, showing thereby the pleasure

which it took, though without thinking of it, in the good which it

possessed. The Blessed Mother (S.) Teresa having written that she found

this a fit similitude, I have thought good to make use of it.

And tell me, Theotimus, why should the soul recollected in its God be

disquieted? Has she not reason to be at peace and to remain in repose?

For indeed what should she seek? She has found him whom she sought,

what remains now for her but to say: I found him whom my soul loveth: I

held him and I will not let him go. [292] She has no need to trouble

herself with the discourse of the understanding, for she sees her

spouse present with so sweet a view that reasonings would be to her

unprofitable and superfluous. And even if she do not see him by the

understanding she cares not, being content to feel his presence by the

delight and satisfaction which the will receives from it. Ah! the

mother of God, our Blessed Lady and Mistress, while she did not see her

divine child but felt him within her,--Ah! my God! what content had she

therein! And did not S. Elizabeth admirably enjoy the fruits of our

Saviour's divine presence without seeing him, upon the day of the most

holy Visitation? Nor does the soul in this repose stand in need of the

memory, for she has her lover present. Nor has she need of the

imagination, for why should we represent in an exterior or interior

image him whose presence we are possessed of? So that, to conclude, it

is the will alone that softly, and as it were tenderly sucking, draws

the milk of this sweet presence; all the rest of the soul quietly

reposing with her by the sweetness of the pleasure which she takes.

Honied wine is used not only to withdraw and recall bees to their

hives, but also to pacify them. For when they stir up sedition and

mutiny amongst themselves with mutual slaughter and destruction, their

keeper has no better remedy than to throw honied wine amidst this

enraged little people; because, when they perceive this sweet and

agreeable odour, they are pacified, and giving themselves up to the

fruition of this sweetness, they remain quieted and tranquil. O Eternal

God! When by thy sweet presence thou dost cast odoriferous perfumes

into our hearts, perfumes more pleasing than delicious wine and honey,

all the powers of our soul enter into so delightful a repose and so

absolute a rest, that there is no movement save of the will, which, as

the spiritual sense of smell, remains delightfully engaged in enjoying,

without adverting to it, the incomparable good of having its God

present.

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[292] Cant. iii. 4.

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CHAPTER X.

OF VARIOUS DEGREES OF THIS REPOSE, AND HOW IT IS TO BE PRESERVED.

There are souls active, fertile and abounding in considerations. There

are souls who readily double and bend back on themselves, who love to

feel what they are doing, who wish to see and scrutinize what passes in

them, turning their view ever on themselves to discover the progress

they make. And there are yet others who are not content to be content

unless they feel, see, and relish their contentment; these are like to

persons who being well protected against the cold would not believe it

if they knew not how many garments they had on, or who, seeing their

cabinets full of money, would not esteem themselves rich unless they

knew the number of their coins.

Now all these spirits are ordinarily subject to be troubled in prayer,

for if God deign them the sacred repose of his presence, they

voluntarily forsake it to note their own behaviour therein, and to

examine whether they are really in content, disquieting themselves to

discern whether their tranquillity is really tranquil, and their

quietude quiet: so that instead of sweetly occupying their will in

tasting the sweets of the divine presence, they employ their

understanding in reasoning upon the feelings they have; as a bride who

should keep her attention on her wedding-ring without looking upon the

bridegroom who gave it her. There is a great difference, Theotimus,

between being occupied with God who gives us the contentment, and being

busied with the contentment which God gives us.

The soul, then, to whom God gives holy, loving quiet in prayer, must

abstain as far as she is able from looking upon herself or her repose,

which to be preserved must not be curiously observed; for he who loves

it too much loses it, and the right rule of loving it properly is not

to love it too anxiously. [293] And as a child who, to see where his

feet are, has taken his head from his mother's breast, immediately

returns to it, because he dearly loves it; so if we perceive ourselves

distracted, through a curiosity to know what we are doing in prayer, we

must replace our hearts in the sweet and peaceable attention to God's

presence from whence we strayed. Yet we are not to apprehend any danger

of losing this sacred repose by actions of body or mind which are not

done from lightness or indiscretion. For, as the Blessed Mother (S.)

Teresa says, it were a superstition to be so jealous of this repose as

not to cough, spit or breathe, for fear of losing it, since God who

gives this peace does not withdraw it for such necessary movements, nor

yet for those distractions and wanderings of the mind which are not

voluntary: and the will having once tasted the divine presence does not

cease to relish the sweetness thereof, though the understanding or

memory should make an escape and slip away after foreign and useless

thoughts.

It is true the repose of the soul is not then so great as when the

understanding and memory conspire with the will, yet is it a true

spiritual tranquillity, since it continues to reign in the will, which

is the mistress of all the other faculties. Indeed we have seen a soul

most strongly fixed and united to her God, who yet had her

understanding and memory so free from all interior occupation, that she

understood very distinctly all that was said around her, and perfectly

remembered it, though she could not answer, or loose herself from God,

to whom she was fastened by the application of her will. And so

attached, I tell you, that she could not be withdrawn from this sweet

entertainment without experiencing a great grief, which provoked her to

sighs: these indeed she gave in the very deepest of her consolation and

quiet; as we see young children murmur and make little plaints when

they have ardently desired the milk, and begin to suck; or as Jacob

did, who, in kissing the fair and chaste Rachel, lifting up his voice

wept, [294] through the vehemence of the consolation and tenderness

which he felt. This soul, then, whom I speak of, having only her will

engaged, but her understanding, memory, hearing and imagination free,

resembled, I think, the little child who, while sucking, might see and

hear and even move his arms, without quitting the dear breast.

However, the peace of the soul would be much greater and sweeter if

there were no noise around her, nor occasion given of stirring herself

either in body or mind, for she would greatly wish to be solely

occupied in the sweetness of this divine presence; however, being

sometimes unable to hinder distractions in her other faculties, she

preserves peace in the will at least, which is the faculty whereby she

receives the enjoyment of good. And note, that then the will being

retained in quiet by the pleasure which it takes in the divine

presence, does not move itself to bring back the other powers which are

straying; because by undertaking this she would lose her repose,

separating herself from her dearly beloved; and she would lose her

labour if she ran hither and thither to catch these volatile powers,

which also can never be better brought to their duty than by the

perseverance of the will in holy quiet: for little by little all the

faculties are attracted by the pleasure which the will receives, and of

which she gives them a certain perception like perfumes which excite

them to draw near her, to participate in the good which she enjoys.

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[293] La juste reigle de le bien affectionner, c'est de ne point

l'affecter.

[294] Gen. xxix. 11.

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CHAPTER XI.

A CONTINUATION OF THE DISCOURSE TOUCHING THE VARIOUS DEGREES OF HOLY

QUIET, AND OF AN EXCELLENT ABNEGATION OF SELF WHICH IS SOMETIMES

PRACTISED THEREIN.

According then to what we have said, holy quiet has divers degrees. For

sometimes it is in all the powers of the soul joined and united to the

will; sometimes it is in the will only, and there sometimes sensibly at

other times imperceptibly: because it happens sometimes that the soul

takes an incomparable delight in feeling by certain interior

sweetnesses that God is present with her (as happened to S. Elizabeth

when our Blessed Lady visited her): and at other times the soul has a

certain ardent sweetness in being in God's presence, which for the

moment is imperceptible to her, as happened to the pilgrim-disciples,

who walking with our Saviour did not fully perceive the agreeable

pleasure with which they were thrilled, till such time as they had

arrived and had known him in the divine breaking of the bread. [295]

Sometimes the soul not only perceives God's presence, but hears him

speak, by certain inward illuminations and interior persuasions which

stand in place of words. Sometimes she perceives him, and in her turn

speaks to him, but so secretly, sweetly and delicately, that it does

not make her lose her holy peace and quiet, so that without awaking she

watches with him; that is, she wakes and speaks to her well-beloved's

heart, with as sweet tranquillity and grateful repose as though she

sweetly slumbered. At other times she hears the beloved speak, but she

cannot speak to him, because the delight she has to hear him, or the

reverence she bears him, keeps her in silence, or, perhaps, because she

is in dryness, and is so languid in spirit that she has only strength

to hear and not to speak; as is sometimes the case in corporeal matters

with those who are going to sleep, or who are greatly weakened by some

malady.

But, finally, sometimes she neither hears nor speaks to her

well-beloved, nor yet feels any sign of his presence, but simply knows

that she is in the presence of her God, to whom it is pleasing that she

should be there. Suppose, Theotimus, that the glorious Apostle S. John

had slept with a bodily sleep in the bosom of his dear Master at the

Last Supper, and that he had slept by his commandment; verily in that

case he would have been in his Master's presence without in any way

feeling it. And mark, I pray you, that there is more care required to

place oneself in God's presence, than to remain there when placed: for,

to place oneself there it is requisite to apply the mind and render it

actually attentive to this presence (as I explain in the Introduction.

[296] ) But being placed in this presence, we keep ourself there by

many other means, so long as, whether by understanding or by will, we

do anything in God or for God: as, for example, by beholding him, or

anything for love of him; by hearing him, or those that speak for him;

by speaking to him, or to some one for love of him; and by doing any

work whatsoever for his honour and service. Yea, one may continue in

God's presence not only by hearing him, seeing him, or speaking to him,

but also by waiting to see if it may please him to look at us, to speak

to us, or to make us speak to him: or yet again, by doing nothing of

all this, but by simply staying where it pleases him for us to be, and

because it pleases him for us to be there. But if to this simple

fashion of staying before him, it pleases him to add some little

feeling that we are all his, and he all ours--O God! how desirable and

precious is our privilege!

My dear Theotimus, let us further take the liberty to frame this

imagination. If a statue which the sculptor had niched in the gallery

of some great prince were endowed with understanding, and could reason

and talk; and if it were asked: O fair statue, tell me now, why art

thou in that niche?--It would answer,--Because my master placed me

there. And if one should reply,--But why stayest thou there without

doing anything?--Because, would it say, my master did not place me here

to do anything, but simply that I should be here motionless. But if one

should urge it further, saying: But, poor statue, what art thou the

better for remaining there in that sort? Well! would it say, I am not

here for my own interest and service, but to obey and accomplish the

will of my master and maker; and this suffices me. And if one should

yet insist thus: Tell me then, statue, I pray, not seeing thy master

how dost thou find contentment in contenting him? No, verily, would it

confess; I see him not, for I have not eyes for seeing, as I have not

feet for walking; but I am too contented to know that my dear master

sees me here, and takes pleasure in seeing me here. But if one should

continue the dispute with the statue, and say unto it: But wouldst thou

not at least wish to have power to move that thou mightest approach

near thy maker, to afford him some better service? Doubtless it would

answer, No, and would protest that it desired to do nothing but what

its master wished. Is it possible then, would one say at last, that

thou desirest nothing but to be an immovable statue there, within that

hollow niche? Yes, truly, would that wise statue answer in conclusion;

I desire to be nothing but a statue and ever in this niche, so long as

my master pleases, contenting myself to be here, and thus, since such

is the contentment of him whose I am, and by whom I am what I am.

O true God! how good a way it is of remaining in God's presence to be,

and to will to be, ever and for ever, at his good-pleasure! For so, I

consider, in all occurrences, yea, in our deepest sleep, we are still

more deeply in the most holy presence of God. Yea, verily, Theotimus:

for if we love him we sleep not only in his sight, but at his pleasure,

and not only by his will, but also according to his will. And meseems

it is himself, our Creator and heavenly sculptor, who lays us there on

our beds as statues in their niches, that we may settle there as birds

nestle in their nests. Then at our waking, if we reflect upon it, we

find that God was ever present with us, and that we were in no wise

absent or separated from him. We have then been there in the presence

of his good-pleasure, though without seeing or noticing him, so that we

might say in imitation of Jacob: [297] Indeed I have slept by my God

and in the arms of his divine presence and providence, and I knew it

not!

Now this quiet, in which the will works not save only by a simple

acquiescence in the divine good-pleasure, willing to be in prayer

without any other aim than to be in the sight of God according as it

shall please him, is a sovereignly excellent quiet, because it has no

mixture of self-interest, the faculties of the soul taking no content

in it, nor even the will save by its supreme point, in which its

contentment is to admit no other contentment but that of being without

contentment for the love of the contentment and good-pleasure of its

God, in which it rests. For in fine the height of love's ecstasy is to

have our will not in its own contentment but in God's, or, not to have

our contentment in our own will, but in God's.

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[295] Luke xxiv.

[296] II. 2.

[297] Gen. xxviii. 16.

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CHAPTER XII.

OF THE OUTFLOWING (escoulement) OR LIQUEFACTION OF THE SOUL IN GOD.

Moist and liquid things easily receive the figures and limits which may

be given them, because they have no firmness or solidity which stops or

limits them in themselves. Put liquid into a vessel, and you will see

it remain bounded within the limits of the vessel, and according as

this is round or square the liquid will be the same, having no other

limit or shape than that of the vessel which contains it.

The soul is not so by nature, for she has her proper shapes and limits:

she takes her shape from her habits and inclinations, her limits from

her will; and when she is fixed upon her own inclinations and wills, we

say she is hard, that is, self-willed, obstinate. I will take away,

says God, the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart

of flesh. [298] To change the form of stones, iron, or wood, the axe,

hammer and fire are required. We call that a heart of iron, or wood, or

stone, which does not easily receive the divine impressions, but lives

in its own will, amidst the inclinations which accompany our depraved

nature. On the contrary, a gentle, pliable and tractable heart, is

termed a melting and liquefied heart. My heart, said David, speaking in

the person of our Saviour upon the cross, is become like wax melting in

the midst of my bowels! [299] Cleopatra, that infamous Queen of Egypt,

striving to outvie Mark Antony in all the excesses and dissolutions of

his banquets, at the end of a feast which she made in her turn, called

for a vial of fine vinegar, and dropped into it one of the pearls which

she wore in her ears, valued at two hundred and fifty thousand crowns,

which being dissolved, melted and liquefied, she swallowed it, and

would further have buried, in the sink of her vile stomach, the pearl

which she wore in her other ear, if Lucius Plautus had not prevented

her. Our Saviour's heart, the true oriental pearl, singularly unique

and priceless, thrown into the midst of a sea of incomparable

bitternesses in the day of his passion, melted in itself, dissolved,

liquefied, gave way and flowed out in pain, under the press of so many

mortal anguishes; but love, stronger than death, mollifies, softens and

melts hearts far more quickly than all the other passions.

My heart, said the holy spouse, melted when he spoke. [300] And what

does melted mean save that it was no longer contained within itself,

but had flowed out towards its divine lover? God ordered that Moses

should speak to the rock, and that it should produce waters: no marvel

then if he himself melted the heart of his spouse when he spoke to her

in his sweetness. Balm is so thick by nature that it is not fluid or

liquid, and the longer it is kept the thicker it grows, and in the end

grows hard, becoming red and transparent: yet heat dissolves it and

makes it fluid. Love had made the beloved fluid and flowing, whence the

spouse calls him oil poured out; and now she tells us that she herself

is all melted with love. My soul, said she, melted when he spoke. The

love of her spouse was in her heart and breast as a strong new wine

which cannot be contained in the tun; for it overflowed on every side;

and, because the soul follows its love, after the spouse had said: Thy

breasts are better than wine, smelling sweet of the best ointments, she

adds: Thy name is as oil poured out. [301] And as the beloved had

poured out his love and his soul into the heart of the spouse, so the

spouse reciprocally pours her soul into the heart of her beloved; and

as we see a honeycomb touched with the sun's ardent rays goes out of

itself, and forsakes its form, to flow out towards that side where the

rays touch it, so the soul of this lover flowed out towards where the

voice of her beloved was heard, going out of herself and passing the

limits of her natural being, to follow him that spoke unto her.

But how does this sacred outflowing of the soul into its well-beloved

take place? An extreme complacency of the lover in the thing beloved

begets a certain spiritual powerlessness, which makes the soul feel

herself no longer able to remain in herself. Wherefore, as melted balm,

that no longer has firmness or solidity, she lets herself pass and flow

into what she loves: she does not spring out of herself as by a sudden

leap, nor does she cling as by a joining and union, but gently glides

as a fluid and liquid thing, into the divinity whom she loves. And as

we see that the clouds, thickened by the south wind, melting and

turning to rain, cannot contain themselves, but fall and flow

downwards, and mix themselves so entirely with the earth which they

moisten that they become one thing with it, so the soul which, though

loving, remained as yet in herself, goes out by this sacred outflowing

and holy liquefaction, and quits herself, not only to be united to the

well-beloved, but to be entirely mingled with and steeped in him.

You see then clearly, Theotimus, that the outflowing of a soul into her

God is a true ecstasy, by which the soul quite transcends the limits of

her natural form of existence (maintien) being wholly mingled with,

absorbed and engulfed in, her God. Hence it happens that such as attain

to these holy excesses of heavenly love, afterwards, being come to

themselves, find nothing on the earth that can content them, and living

in an extreme annihilation of themselves, remain much weakened in all

that belongs to the senses, and have perpetually in their hearts the

maxim of the Blessed Mother (S.) Teresa: "What is not God is to me

nothing." And it seems that such was the loving passion of that great

friend of the well-beloved, who said: I live, now not I; but Christ

liveth in me, [302] and: Our life is hid with Christ in God. [303] For

tell me, I pray you, Theotimus, if a drop of common water, thrown into

an ocean of some priceless essence, were alive, and could speak and

declare its condition, would it not cry out with great joy: O mortals!

I live indeed, but I live not myself, but this ocean lives in me, and

my life is hidden in this abyss?

The soul that has flowed out into God dies not, for how can she die by

being swallowed up in life? But she lives without living in herself,

because, as the stars without losing their light still do not shine in

the presence of the sun, but the sun shines in them and they are hidden

in the light of the sun, so the soul, without losing her life, lives

not herself when mingled with God, but God lives in her. Such, I think,

were the feelings of the great Blessed (SS.) Philip Neri and Francis

Xavier, when, overwhelmed with heavenly consolations, they petitioned

God to withdraw himself for a space from them, since his will was that

their life should a little longer appear unto the world; which could

not be while it was wholly hidden and absorbed in God.

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[298] Ezech. xxxvi. 26.

[299] Ps. xxi. 15.

[300] Cant. v. 6.

[301] Cant. i. 1, 2.

[302] Gal. ii. 20.

[303] Col. iii. 3.

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CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE WOUND OF LOVE.

All these terms of love are drawn from the resemblance there is between

the affections of the mind and the passions of the body. Grief, fear,

hope, hatred, and the rest of the affections of the soul, only enter

the heart when love draws them after it. We do not hate evil except

because it is contrary to the good which we love: we fear future evil

because it will deprive us of the good we love. Though an evil be

extreme yet we never hate it except in so far as we love the good to

which it is opposed. He who does not much love the commonwealth is not

much troubled to see it ruined: he who scarcely loves God, scarcely

also hates sin. Love is the first, yea the principle and origin, of all

the passions, and therefore it is love that first enters the heart; and

because it penetrates and pierces down to the very bottom of the will

where its seat is, we say it wounds the heart. "It is sharp," says the

apostle of France, [304] "and enters into the spirit most deeply." The

other affections enter indeed, but by the agency of love, for it is

this which piercing the heart makes a passage for them. It is only the

point of the dart that wounds, the rest only increases the wound and

the pain.

Now, if it wound, it consequently gives pain. Pomegranates, by their

vermilion colour, by the multitude of their seeds, so close set and

ranked, and by their fair crowns, vividly represent, as S. Gregory

says, most holy charity, all red by reason of its ardour towards God,

loaded with all the variety of virtues, and alone bearing away the

crown of eternal rewards: but the juice of pomegranates, which as we

know is so agreeable both to the healthy and to the sick, is so mingled

of sweet and sour that one can hardly discern whether it delights the

taste more because it has a sweet tartness or because it has a tart

sweetness. Verily, Theotimus, love is thus bitter-sweet, and while we

live in this world it never has a sweetness perfectly sweet, because it

is not perfect, nor ever purely satiated and satisfied: and yet it

fails not to be of very agreeable taste, its tartness correcting the

lusciousness of its sweetness, as its sweetness heightens the relish of

its tartness. But how can this be? You shall see a young man enter into

a company, free, hearty, and in the best of spirits, who, being off his

guard, feels, before he goes away, that love, making use of the

glances, the gestures, the words, yea even of the hair of a silly and

weak creature, as of so many darts, has smitten and wounded his poor

heart, so that there he is, all sad, gloomy and depressed. Why I pray

you is he sad? Without doubt because he is wounded. And what has

wounded him? Love. But love being the child of complacency, how can it

wound and give pain? Sometimes the beloved object is absent, and then,

my dear Theotimus, love wounds the heart by the desire which it

excites; this it is which, being unable to satiate itself, grievously

torments the spirit.

If a bee had stung a child, it were to poor purpose to say to him: Ah!

my child, the bee that stung you is the very same that makes the honey

you are so fond of. For he might say: it is true, that its honey is

very pleasant to my taste, but its sting is very painful, and while its

sting remains in my cheek I cannot be at peace, and do you not see that

my face is all swollen with it? Theotimus, love is indeed a

complacency, and consequently very delightful, provided that it does

not leave in our heart the sting of desire; for when it leaves this, it

leaves therewith a great pain. True it is this pain proceeds from love,

and therefore is a loveable and beloved pain. Hear the painful yet

love-full ejaculations of a royal lover. My soul hath thirsted after

the strong living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of

God? My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me

daily: where is thy God? [305] And the sacred Sulamitess, wholly

steeped in her dolorous loves, speaking to the daughters of Jerusalem:

Ah! says she, I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my

beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love. [306] Hope that

is deferred afflicteth the soul. [307]

Now the painful wounds of love are of many sorts. 1. The first strokes

we receive from love are called wounds, because the heart which

appeared sound, entire and all its own before it loved, being struck

with love begins to separate and divide itself from itself, to give

itself to the beloved object. Now this separation cannot be made

without pain, seeing that pain is nothing but the division of living

things which belong to one another. 2. Desire incessantly stings and

wounds the heart in which it is, as we have said. 3. But, Theotimus,

speaking of heavenly love, there is in the practice of it a kind of

wound given by God himself to the soul which he would highly perfect.

For he gives her admirable sentiments of and incomparable attractions

for his sovereign goodness, as if pressing and soliciting her to love

him; and then she forcibly lifts herself up as if to soar higher

towards her divine object; but stopping short, because she cannot love

as much as she desires:--O God! she feels a pain which has no equal. At

the same time that she is powerfully drawn to fly towards her dear

well-beloved, she is also powerfully kept back and cannot fly, being

chained to the base miseries of this mortal life and of her own

powerlessness: she desires the wings of a dove that she may fly away

and be at rest, [308] and she finds not. There then she is, rudely

tormented between the violence of her desires and her own

powerlessness. Unhappy man that I am, said one of those who had

experienced this torture, who shall deliver me from the body of this

death? [309] In this case, if you notice, Theotimus, it is not the

desire of a thing absent that wounds the heart, for the soul feels that

her God is present; he has already led her into his wine-cellar, he has

planted upon her heart the banner of love: but still, though already he

sees her wholly his, he urges her, and from time to time casts a

thousand thousand darts of his love, showing her in new ways, how much

more he is lovable than loved. And she, who has not so much force to

love as love to force herself, seeing her forces so weak in respect of

the desire she has to love worthily him whom no force of love can love

enough,--Ah! she feels herself tortured with an incomparable pain; for,

as many efforts as she makes to fly higher in her desiring love, so

many thrills of pain does she receive.

This heart in love with its God, desiring infinitely to love, sees

notwithstanding that it can neither love nor desire sufficiently. And

this desire which cannot come to effect is as a dart in the side of a

noble spirit; yet the pain which proceeds from it is welcome, because

whosoever desires earnestly to love, loves also earnestly to desire,

and would esteem himself the most miserable man in the universe, if he

did not continually desire to love that which is so sovereignly worthy

of love. Desiring to love, he receives pain; but loving to desire, he

receives sweetness.

My God! Theotimus, what am I going to say? The blessed in heaven seeing

that God is still more lovable than they are loving, would fail and

eternally perish with a desire to love him still more, if the most holy

will of God did not impose upon theirs the admirable repose which it

enjoys: for they so sovereignly love this sovereign will, that its

willing stays theirs, and the divine contentment contents them, they

acquiescing to be limited in their love even by that will whose

goodness is the object of their love. If this were not so, their love

would be equally delicious and dolorous, delicious by the possession of

so great a good, dolorous through an extreme desire of a greater love.

God therefore continually drawing arrows, if we may say so, out of the

quiver of his infinite beauty, wounds the hearts of his lovers, making

them clearly see that they do not love him nearly as much as he is

worthy to be beloved. That mortal who does not desire to love the

divine goodness more, loves him not enough; sufficiency in this divine

exercise is not sufficient, when a man would stay in it as though it

sufficed him.

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[304] S. Denis (Tr.)

[305] Ps. xli. 3.

[306] Cant. v. 8.

[307] Prov. xiii. 12.

[308] Ps. liv. 7.

[309] Rom. vii. 24.

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CHAPTER XIV.

OF SOME OTHER MEANS BY WHICH HOLY LOVE WOUNDS THE HEART.

Nothing so much wounds a loving heart as to perceive another wounded

with the love of it. The pelican builds her nest upon the ground,

wherefore serpents often sting her young ones. Now when this happens,

the pelican, as an excellent physician, with the point of her beak

wounds these poor chicks all over, to cause the poison which the

serpents' sting had spread through all the parts of their bodies to

flow out with the blood; and to get out all the poison she lets out all

the blood, and thus consequently, permits this little pelican-brood to

perish. But seeing them dead she wounds herself, and spreading her

blood over them she vivifies them with a new and purer life. Her love

wounded them, and forthwith by the same love she wounds herself. Never

do we wound a heart with the wound of love but we ourselves are wounded

with the same. When the soul sees her God wounded by love for her sake,

she immediately receives from it a reciprocal wound. Thou hast wounded

my heart, [310] said the heavenly lover to the Sulamitess, and the

Sulamitess cries out: Tell my beloved that I languish with love. [311]

Bees never wound without being themselves wounded to death. And we,

seeing the Saviour of our souls wounded to death by love of us, even to

the death of the cross,--how can we but be wounded for him, but wounded

with a wound as much more dolorously amorous as his was amorously

dolorous, and a wound as great as is our inability to love him as much

as his love and death require? It is, again, another wound of love,

when the soul feels truly that she loves God, and yet he treats her as

if he knew not that she loved him, or as if he were distrustful of her

love: for then, my dear Theotimus, the soul is put into an extreme

anguish, as it is insupportable to her to see and feel even the mere

pretence God makes of distrusting her. The poor S. Peter had and felt

his heart all filled with love for his master, and Our Lord, hiding his

knowledge of it: Peter, said he, dost thou love me more than these? Ah!

Lord, said the Apostle, thou knowest that I love thee. But, Peter,

lovest thou me, replied Our Saviour. My dear Master, said the Apostle,

truly I love thee, thou knowest it. But this sweet master to prove him,

and as if showing a diffidence of his love: Peter, said he, dost thou

love me? Ah! Lord, thou woundest this poor heart, which greatly

afflicted cries out, amorously yet dolorously: Lord thou knowest all

things: thou knowest that I love thee. [312] It happened once that a

possessed person was being exorcised, and the wicked spirit being urged

to tell his name: I am, said he, that miserable being deprived of love:

and S. Catharine of Genoa who was there present suddenly perceived her

whole frame disturbed and disordered, merely from having heard the

words, privation of love, pronounced: for as the devils so hate divine

love that they quake when they see its sign, or hear its name, that is,

when they see the cross, or hear the name of Jesus pronounced, so those

who dearly love Our Lord thrill with pain and horror when they see some

sign or hear some word, that refers to the privation of this holy love.

S. Peter was quite sure that Our Lord, knowing all things, could not be

ignorant how much he was loved by him, yet because the repetition of

this demand: Peter, dost thou love me? had some appearance of distrust,

S. Peter is greatly grieved by it. Alas! that poor soul who feels that

she is resolved rather to die than offend her God, and yet feels not a

spark of fervour, but on the contrary an extreme coldness, which so

benumbs and weakens her that at every step she falls into very sensible

imperfections,--this soul I say, Theotimus, is all wounded: for her

love is exceedingly in pain to see that God lets himself look as if he

did not see how much she loves him, leaving her as a creature not

belonging to him; and she fancies that amid her failings, her

distractions and coldness, Our Lord smites her with this reproach: How

canst thou say that thou lovest me, seeing thy soul is not with me? And

this is a dart of pain through her heart, but a dart of pain which

proceeds from love; for if she loved not, she would not be afflicted

with the fear that she loved not.

Sometimes this wound of love is made merely by the remembrance we have

that there was a time in which we loved not our God. "Oh! too late have

I loved thee, beauty ever ancient and ever new," said that saint who

for thirty years was a heretic. The past life is an object of horror to

the present life of him who has passed his previous life without loving

the sovereign goodness.

Sometimes love wounds us with the mere consideration of the multitude

of those who contemn the love of God; so that we faint away with grief

for this, as did he who said: My zeal hath made me pine away: because

my enemies forgot thy words. [313] And the great S. Francis, thinking

he was not heard, upon a day wept, sobbed and lamented so pitifully,

that a good man hearing him ran as if to the succour of one who was

going to be slain, and finding him all alone asked him: why dost thou

cry so hard, poor man? Alas! said he, I weep to think that Our Lord

endured so much for love of us and no one thinks of it: and having said

thus he took to his tears again, and this good man sobbed and wept with

him.

But, however it be, there is this admirable in the wounds received from

the divine love that their pain is delightful, and all that feel it

consent to it, and would not change this pain for all the pleasures of

the world. There is no pain in love, or if there is pain it is

well-beloved pain. Once a Seraph, holding a golden arrow, from the head

of which issued a little flame, darted it into the heart of the Blessed

Mother (S.) Teresa; and when he would draw it out, it seemed to this

virgin that he was tearing out her very entrails, the pain being so

excessive that she had only strength to utter low and feeble moans; but

yet a pain so dear that she would have wished never to be delivered

from it. Such was the arrow of love that God sent into the heart of the

great S. Catharine of Genoa in the beginning of her conversion, after

which she became another woman, dead to the world and things created,

to live only to her Creator. The well-beloved is a bundle of bitter

myrrh, and this bitter bundle again is well-beloved, which abides

dearly placed between the breasts, [314] that is, the best-beloved of

all the well-beloved.

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[310] Cant. iv. 9.

[311] Cant. v. 8.

[312] John xxi. 19.

[313] Ps. cxviii. 139.

[314] Cant. i. 12.

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CHAPTER XV.

OF THE AFFECTIONATE LANGUISHING OF THE HEART WOUNDED WITH LOVE.

It is a thing very well known that human love not only wounds the

heart, but even makes the body sick unto death; because, as the passion

and temperament of the body have great power to incline the soul and

draw her after it, so the affections of the soul have great force to

stir the humours and change the qualities of the body. But besides

this, love when it is violent bears away the soul to the thing beloved

with such impetuosity, and so strongly possesses her, that she fails in

all her other operations, be they sensitive or intellectual; so that to

feed and second this love, the soul seems to abandon all other care,

all other exercises, yea and herself too, whence Plato said that love

was poor, ragged, naked, barefoot, miserable, houseless, that it lies

without doors upon the hard ground, always in want. It is poor, because

it makes one quit all for the thing beloved; it is houseless, because

it urges the soul to leave her own habitation to follow continually him

who is loved; it is miserable, pale, lean and broken down, because it

makes one lose sleep, meat and drink; it is naked and barefoot, since

it makes one forsake all other affections to embrace those of the thing

beloved; it lies without upon the hard ground because it causes the

heart that is in love to lie open, making it manifest its passion by

sighs, plaints, praises, suspicions, jealousies; it lies along at the

gate like a beggar, because it makes the lover perpetually attentive to

the eyes and mouth of the thing which it loves, keeping continually to

the ears thereof to speak to it and beg favours, wherewith love is

never satiated; now the eyes, ears, and mouth are the gates of the

soul. In fine the condition of its life is to be ever indigent, for if

ever it is satiated it is no longer ardent, nor, consequently, love.

True it is, Theotimus, that Plato spoke thus of the abject, vile and

miserable love of worldlings; yet the same properties fail not to be

found in heavenly and divine love. For turn your eyes a little upon

those first masters of Christian doctrine, I mean those first doctors

of holy evangelical love, and mark what one of them who had laboured

the most said: Even unto this hour, says he, we both hunger, and

thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no fixed abode. And

we labour working with our own hands: we are reviled, and we bless: we

are persecuted, and we suffer it. We are blasphemed, and we entreat: we

are made as the refuse of this world, the off-scouring, and as it were

the parings, of all even until now. [315] As though he had said we are

so abject that if the world be a palace we are held the sweepings

thereof, if the world be an apple we are its parings. What I pray you

had brought them to this state but love? It was love that threw S.

Francis naked before his bishop, and made him die naked upon the

ground; it was love that made him a beggar all his life; it was love

that sent the great S. Francis Xavier poor, needy, ragged, through the

Indies and amongst the Japanese; it was love that brought the great

Cardinal S. Charles, Archbishop of Milan, to that extremity of poverty

amidst the riches which his birth and dignity gave him, that, as says

the eloquent orator of Italy, Master (Monseigneur) Pancirola, he was as

a dog in his master's house, eating but a bit of bread, drinking but a

drop of water, and lying upon a little straw.

Let us hear, I beseech you, the holy Sulamitess, who cries almost in

this manner: Although by reason of a thousand consolations which my

love gives me I be more fair than the rich tents of my Solomon (I mean

more fair than heaven, which is the inanimate pavilion of his royal

majesty, while I am his animated pavilion), yet am I all black, rent,

dust-worn, and all spoilt by so many wounds and blows given me by the

same love. Ah! regard not my hue, for truly I am brown, because my

beloved, who is my sun, has darted the rays of his love upon me; rays

which by their light illuminate, but which by their heat have made me

sunburnt and swarthy, and touching me with their splendour they have

bereft me of my colour. The passion of love has made me too happy in

giving me a spouse such as is my king, but the same passion which is a

mother to me (seeing she alone gave me in marriage, and not my merits),

has other children which fiercely assault and trouble me, bringing me

to such a languor, that as, on the one hand, I am like to a queen who

is beside her king, so on the other hand I am as a vineyard-keeper who,

in a miserable hut, looks to a vineyard, and a vineyard that is not his

own.

Truly, Theotimus, when the wounds and strokes of love are frequent and

strong they put us into a languor, and into love's well-beloved

sickness. Who could ever describe the loving languors of the SS.

Catharine of Siena and Genoa, or of a S. Angela of Foligno, or S.

Christina, or the Blessed Mother (S.) Teresa, a S. Bernard, a S.

Francis. And as for this last, his life was nothing but tears, sighs,

plaints, languors, wastings, love-trances. But in all this nothing is

so wonderful as that admirable communication which the sweet Jesus made

him of his loving and precious pains, by the impression of his wounds

and stigmata. Theotimus, I have often pondered this wonder, and have

made this conception of it. That great servant of God, a man wholly

seraphical, beholding the lively picture of his crucified Saviour,

represented in a shining seraph, who appeared unto him upon Mount

Alverno, was touched beyond what could be imagined, being taken with a

sovereign consolation and compassion, in beholding this bright mirror

of love, which the angels cannot satisfy themselves in beholding. Ah!

he as it were swooned away with sweetness and contentment. But seeing

also the lively representation of the marks and wounds of his Saviour

crucified, he felt in his soul the merciless sword which transfixed the

sacred breast of the virgin-mother on the day of the passion, with as

much interior pain as though he had been crucified with his dear

Saviour. O God! Theotimus, if the picture of Abraham holding the

death-stroke over his dear only-begotten, to sacrifice him, a picture

drawn by mortal hand, had the power to touch and make weep the great S.

Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, as often as he beheld it,--Ah! how extreme

was the tenderness of the great S. Francis when he beheld the picture

of our Saviour sacrificing himself upon the cross, a picture which not

a mortal hand, but the master-hand of a heavenly seraph, had drawn and

traced from its very original, representing to the life and to nature

the divine king of angels, bruised, wounded, pierced, broken,

crucified.

This soul then being thus mollified, softened and almost melted away in

this love-full pain, was thereby extremely disposed to receive the

impressions and marks of the love and pain of his sovereign lover; for

his memory was wholly steeped in the remembrance of this divine love,

his imagination forcibly applied to represent unto himself the wounds

and livid bruises which his eyes then saw so perfectly expressed in the

picture before him; the understanding received those most vivid images

which the imagination furnished to it; and, finally, love employed all

the forces of the will to enter into and conform itself to the passion

of her well-beloved; whence without doubt the soul found herself

transformed into a second crucified. Now the soul, as the form and

mistress of the body, exercising her authority over it, impressed the

pains of the wounds with which she was struck, on the parts

corresponding to those wherein her beloved had endured them. Love is

admirable in sharpening the imagination to penetrate to the exterior.

In Laban's ewes the imagination had a corporal effect upon the lambs,

and the imagination of human mothers affects their children. A strong

imagination makes a man become grey in one night, and disturbs his

health and all his humours. Love then drove the interior torment of

this great lover S. Francis to the exterior, and wounded the body with

the same dart of pain with which it had wounded the heart; but love

being within could not well make the holes in the flesh without, and

therefore the burning seraph coming to its help, darted rays of so

penetrating a light, that it really made in the flesh the exterior

wounds of the crucified, which love had imprinted interiorly in the

soul. So the seraph seeing that Isaias did not dare to speak, because

he perceived his lips defiled, came in the name of God to touch and

purify his lips with a burning coal taken from off the altar, seconding

in this sort his desire. The myrrh tree brings forth its gum and first

liquor by way of sweat and transpiration, but that it may let out all

its juice, it must be helped by incision. In the same way the divine

love of S. Francis appeared in his whole life, after the manner of a

sweating, for in all his actions he showed nothing but this sacred

affection; but to make the incomparable abundance of it plainly appear,

the divine seraph came to make the incision and wounds. And to the end

it might be known that these wounds were wounds of Heaven's love, they

were made not with the steel, but with rays of light. O true God!

Theotimus, what amorous dolours and dolorous loves! For not only at

that instant, but also his whole life after, this poor Saint went

pining and languishing, as sick with very love.

The Blessed (S.) Philip Neri, at fourscore years of age, had such an

inflammation of heart through divine love, that the heat making the

ribs give way to it, greatly enlarged them, and broke the fourth and

fifth, that the heart might receive air and be refreshed. B. (S.)

Stanislaus Kotska, a youth of fourteen years, was so assaulted by the

love of his Saviour that he often fainted away and fell down, and he

was constrained to apply linen steeped in cold water to his breast, to

moderate the violence of the burning which he felt.

To conclude, Theotimus, how do you think that a soul which has once

tasted divine consolations at all freely, can live in this world so

full of miseries, without an almost continual pain and languishing?

That great man of God, Francis Xavier, was often heard lifting up his

voice to Heaven, when he thought himself all alone, in this sort: Ah!

my God, do not, for pity, do not bear me down with so great abundance

of consolations; or if through thy infinite goodness it please thee to

make me so abound in delights, draw me then into Paradise; for he who

has once tasted thy sweetness must necessarily live in bitterness while

he does not enjoy thee. And therefore when God has somewhat largely

bestowed his heavenly sweetnesses upon a soul, and afterwards withdraws

them, he wounds her by this privation, and she afterwards is left

pining; sighing out with David: My soul hath thirsted after the strong

living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God? [316]

And with the great Apostle: Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me

from the body of this death? [317]

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[315] 1 Cor. iv. 11.

[316] Ps. xli. 3.

[317] Rom. vii. 24.

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BOOK VII.

OF THE

UNION OF THE SOUL WITH HER GOD, WHICH IS PERFECTED IN PRAYER.

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CHAPTER I.

HOW LOVE EFFECTS THE UNION OF THE SOUL WITH GOD IN PRAYER.

We speak not here of the general union of the heart with its God, but

of certain particular acts and movements which the soul, recollected in

God, makes by way of prayer, to be more and more united and joined to

his divine goodness: for there is truly a difference between joining or

uniting one thing to another, and clasping or pressing one thing

against or upon another; because to join or unite there is only

required an application of one thing to the other, so that they may

touch, and be together, as we join vines to elms, and jessamine to the

trellis-work of the arbours which are made in gardens. But to squeeze

and press together, a strong application must be made, which increases

and augments the union; so that to clasp together is to join strongly

and closely, as we see ivy joined to trees, which is not united only,

but pressed and clasped so hard to them that it even penetrates and

enters into their bark.

We must not drop the comparison of the love of little children towards

their mothers, because of its innocence and purity. Regard, then, that

sweet little child, to whom the seated mother presents her breast. It

casts itself into her arms, gathering and folding its little body in

this bosom and on this beloved breast. And see the mother,

reciprocally, how, receiving it she clasps it, and as it were glues it

to her bosom, and joining her mouth to its mouth kisses it. But see

again this little babe, allured with its mother's caresses, how for its

part it concurs in this union between its mother and itself: for it

also, as much as it possibly can, squeezes and presses itself to its

mother's breast and face, as though it would wholly dive into, and hide

itself in that beloved being from whom it came. Now, Theotimus, in this

moment union is perfect; which being but one, proceeds notwithstanding

from the mother and the child, yet so, that it has its whole dependence

upon the mother. For she drew the child to her, she first locked it in

her arms, and pressed it to her breast; nor had the babe strength

enough to clasp and keep itself so tight to its mother. Yet the poor

little one does for its part what it can, and joins itself with all its

strength to its mother's bosom, not consenting only to the delightful

union which its mother makes, but contributing, with all its heart, its

feeble endeavours: and I say its feeble endeavours, because they are so

weak that they rather resemble efforts after union than actual union.

Thus then, Theotimus, our Saviour, showing the most delightful breast

of his divine love to the devout soul, draws her wholly to himself,

gathers her up, and as it were folds all her powers in the bosom of his

more than motherly sweetness, and then burning with love, he clasps the

soul, joins, presses and glues her on his lips of sweetness, and to his

delicious breast, kissing her with the sacred kiss of his mouth, and

making her relish his breasts more sweet than wine. [318] Then the

soul, allured with the delights of these favours, not only consents,

and yields herself to the union which God makes, but with all her power

co-operates, forcing herself to join and clasp herself closer and

closer to the divine goodness; yet in such a way that she fully

acknowledges her union and attachment to this sovereign sweetness to be

wholly dependent upon God's operation, without which she could not make

the least effort in the world to be united unto him.

When we see an exquisite beauty beheld with great ardour, or an

excellent melody heard with great attention, or a rare discourse

listened to with great satisfaction, we are wont to say that this

beauty rivets the eyes of the spectators, this music takes the ears,

and this discourse captivates the hearts, of the auditors. What does

this mean--to rivet the eyes and ears, or to captivate the heart--save

to unite and most closely join these senses and powers to their

objects? The soul then closely joins herself to, and presses herself

upon, her object, when she exercises her affection towards it with

great intensity; for pressure is nothing more than the progress and

advancement of the union and conjunction. We make use of this word,

according to our language, even in moral matters: he presses me to do

this, or he presses me to stay, that is, he does not merely use his

persuasion and prayer, but does it with earnestness and entreaty, as

did the pilgrims in Emmaus, who not only petitioned our Saviour, but

even pressed and forcibly urged him, and compelled him by a loving

violence to remain in their lodging with them.

Now in prayer this union is often made by manner of little yet frequent

flights and advancings of the soul towards God: and if you take notice

of little children united and joined to their mothers' breasts, you

will see that ever and anon they press and clasp closer, with little

movements which the pleasure they take in sucking makes them give: so

the heart united to God in prayer often makes certain renewals of

union, by movements which press and join it more closely to the divine

sweetness. As for example, the soul having long dwelt in the feeling of

the union whereby she sweetly tastes how happy she is to belong to God,

in fine, augmenting this union by an amorous pressing and moving

forwards: Yea, Lord, will she say, I am thine, all, all, all, without

reserve; or: Ah Lord! I am so indeed, and will be daily ever more; or,

by way of prayer: O sweet Jesus! Ah! draw me still more deeply into thy

heart, that thy love may devour me, and that I may be swallowed up in

its sweetness.

But at other times the union is made not by repeated movements, but by

way of a continued insensible pressing and advancing of the heart in

the divine goodness. For as we see a great and heavy mass of lead,

brass or stone, though not forced down, so work itself, sink down, and

press itself, into the earth where it lies, that at length it is found

buried, by reason of the effect of its weight, which makes it

incessantly tend to the centre;--so our heart, being once joined to

God, if without being drawn away it remain in this union, sinks still

deeper by an insensible progress of union, till it is wholly in God, by

reason of the sacred inclination given it by love to unite itself ever

more and more to the sovereign goodness. For as the great apostle of

France says: "Love is a unitive virtue:" that is, it carries us to

perfect union with the sovereign good. And since it is an undoubted

truth that divine love, while we are in this life, is a movement, or at

least a habit active and tending to movement; even after it has

attained simple union, it ceases not to act, though imperceptibly, in

order more and more to increase and perfect it.

So trees that require transplanting, as soon as they are moved spread

their roots and lodge them deeply in the bosom of the earth, which is

their element and their aliment, nor do any perceive it while it is

doing, but only after it is done. And man's heart, transplanted out of

the world into God by celestial love, if it earnestly practise prayer,

will certainly ever extend itself, and will fasten itself to the

Divinity, uniting itself more and more to his goodness, but by

imperceptible advances, whose progress one can hardly see while it is

doing, but only when it is done. If you drink any exquisite water, for

instance, imperial water, the simple union of it with you is instantly

made upon your receiving it; for the receiving and union is all one in

this case; but afterwards by little and little this union is increased,

by a progress imperceptibly sensible: for the virtue of this water

penetrating to all parts, will strengthen the brain, invigorate the

heart, and extend its influence through all your humours. In like

manner, a feeling of love--as for example: How good God is!--having got

entrance into the heart, at first causes union with this goodness; but

being entertained for some fairly long time, as a precious perfume it

penetrates every part of the soul, pours out and dilates itself in our

will, and as it were, incorporates itself with our spirit, joining and

fastening itself on every side more and more closely to us, and uniting

us to it. And this is what the great David teaches us, when he compares

the sacred words to honey; for who knows not that the sweetness of

honey is united more and more to our sense by a continual increase of

savour, when, keeping it a good while in our mouth, or swallowing it

slowly, the relish thereof more deeply penetrates our sense of taste.

In the same way that sentiment of the divine goodness, expressed in

those words of S. Bruno: O Goodness! or those of S. Thomas: My Lord and

my God! or those of S. Magdalen: Ah! my Master! or those of S. Francis:

My God and my All!--this sentiment, I say, having been kept some while

within a loving heart, dilates itself, spreads itself, and sinks into

the spirit by an intimate penetration, and more and more steeps it all

in its savour. This is nothing else than to increase union; as does

precious ointment or balm, which, falling upon cotton-wool, so sinks

into it and unites itself to it more and more, little by little, that

in the end one cannot easily say whether the wool is perfumed or

perfume, or, whether the perfume is wool, or the wool perfume. Oh! how

happy is the soul who in the tranquillity of her heart lovingly

preserves the sacred feeling of God's presence! For her union with the

divine goodness will have continual though imperceptible increase, and

will thoroughly steep the spirit of such a one in infinite sweetness.

Now when I speak here of the sacred sentiment of the presence of God, I

do not mean to speak of a sensible feeling, but of that which resides

in the summit and supreme point of the spirit, where heavenly love

reigns and conducts its principal exercises.

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[318] Cant. i. 1.

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CHAPTER II.

OF THE VARIOUS DEGREES OF THE HOLY UNION WHICH IS MADE IN PRAYER.

Sometimes the union is made without our co-operation, save only by a

simple following (suite), permitting ourselves to be united to the

divine goodness without resistance, as a little child, in love with its

mother's breasts, and yet so feeble that it cannot move itself towards

them, nor cleave to them when there; only it is--Ah! so happy, to be

taken and drawn within its mother's arms, and to be pressed by her to

her bosom.

Sometimes we co-operate, when, being drawn, we willingly run, [319] to

second the force of God's goodness which draws us and clasps us to him

by love.

Sometimes we seem to begin to join and fasten ourselves to God before

he joins himself to us, because we feel the action of the union on our

part, without perceiving what God is doing on his side, who, however,

there is no doubt, always acts first on us, though we do not always

perceive his action: for unless he united himself to us we should never

unite ourselves to him; he always chooses and lays hold of us, before

we choose or lay hold of him. But when, following his imperceptible

attractions, we begin to unite ourselves to him, he sometimes makes the

continuation of our union, assisting our weakness, and joining himself

perceptibly to us, insomuch that we feel him enter and penetrate our

hearts with an incomparable sweetness. And sometimes also, as he drew

us insensibly to the union, he continues insensibly to aid and assist

us. And we know not indeed how so great a union is made, yet know we

well that our forces are not able to make it, wherefore we justly argue

that some secret power is working insensibly in us: as skippers with a

cargo of iron perceiving their ships move apace with a very light

breeze, know that they are near mountains of loadstone, which draw them

imperceptibly, and thus they perceive a sensible and perceptible

advancement caused by an insensible and imperceptible means. For so

when we see our spirit unite itself ever closer and closer to God,

during the little efforts which our will makes, we rightly judge that

we have too little wind to sail so fast, and that it must needs be that

the loadstone of our souls draws us by the secret influence of his

grace: which he would leave imperceptible, that it may be more

admirable, and that undistracted by the sense of his drawings, we may

with more purity and simplicity be occupied in uniting ourselves to his

goodness.

Sometimes this union is made so insensibly that our heart neither

perceives the divine operation in her, nor yet her own co-operation,

but finds simply the union itself insensibly effected, like Jacob, who

found himself married to Lia without thinking of it: or rather, like

another Samson, but more happy, the heart finds itself netted and tied

in the bands of holy union, without having ever perceived it.

At other times we feel the embraces, the union being made by sensible

actions as well on God's side, as on ours.

Sometimes the union is made by the will only, and in the will only; and

sometimes the understanding has its part therein, because the will

draws it after it and applies it to its object, making it take a

special pleasure in being fastened down to the consideration thereof;

as we see that love causes in our corporal eyes a profound and special

attention, to rivet them on the sight of what we love.

Sometimes this union is made by all the faculties of the soul, which

gather about the will, not to be united to God themselves, not being

all capable of it, but to give more convenience to the will to make its

union; for if the other faculties were applied each to its proper

object, the soul working in them, could not so perfectly give herself

to the action by which the union with God is made. Such is the variety

of unions.

Look at S. Martial (for he was, they say, the blessed child mentioned

in S. Mark): Our Saviour took him, lifted him up, and held him for a

good while in his arms. O lovely little Martial, how happy thou art to

be laid hold of, taken up and carried, to be united, joined and clasped

to the heavenly bosom of our Saviour, and kissed with his sacred mouth,

without any co-operation of thine, save that thou didst not resist the

receiving of those divine caresses! On the contrary, S. Simeon embraces

our Saviour, and clasps him to his bosom, our Saviour giving no sign of

co-operating in this union, though, as the holy Church sings: "The old

man carried the child, but the child was governing the old man." S.

Bonaventure, touched with a holy humility, did not only not unite

himself to our Saviour, but withdrew himself from his real presence,

that is, from the holy sacrament of the altar, when, hearing Mass one

day, our Saviour came to unite himself with him, bringing him his holy

sacrament. But this union being made,--Ah! Theotimus, think with what

fervour this holy soul locked his Saviour in his heart! On the contrary

S. Catharine of Siena ardently desiring our Saviour in the holy

communion, pressing and advancing her soul and affection towards

him--he came and joined himself unto her, entering into her mouth with

a thousand benedictions. So that our Saviour began the union with S.

Bonaventure, and S. Catharine seemed to begin that which she had with

her Saviour. The sacred spouse in the Canticles speaks as having

practised both sorts of unions. I to my beloved, and his turning is

towards me: [320] which is as much as if she had said: I am united to

my dear love, and he likewise turns towards me, to the end that uniting

himself more and more unto me he may become wholly mine. A bundle of

myrrh is my beloved to me, he shall abide between my breasts. [321] My

soul, says David, hath stuck close to thee: thy right hand hath

received me. [322] But in another place she confesses that she is first

taken, saying: My beloved to me and I to him. [323] We make a holy

union, by which he joins himself to me and I join myself to him. And

yet to show that the whole union is ever made by God's grace, which

draws us unto it, and by its attractions moves our soul and animates

the movement of our union towards him, she cries out, as being wholly

powerless: Draw me: yet to testify that she will not let herself be

drawn as a stone or a galley-slave, but that on her side she will

concur and will mingle her feeble movements with the mighty drawings of

her lover: We will run after thee, she says, to the odour of thy

ointments. [324] And to make it known that if she is strongly drawn by

the will, all the powers of the soul will make towards the union: Draw

me, says she, and we will run; the spouse draws but one, and many run

to the union. It is the will only that God desires, but all the other

powers run after it to be united to God with it.

To this union the divine Shepherd of souls provoked his dear

Sulamitess. Put me, says he, as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon

thy arm. [325] To impress properly a signet upon wax, one not only

applies it, but presses it hard down: so he desires that we should be

united unto him by a union so strict and close, that we should remain

marked with his seal.

The charity of Christ presses us. [326] O God! what an example of

excellent union! He was united to our human nature by grace, as a vine

to its elm, to make it in some sort participate in his fruit; but

seeing this union undone by Adam's sin, he made another more close and

pressing union in the Incarnation, whereby human nature remains for

ever joined in personal unity to the Divinity; and to the end that not

human nature only, but that every man might be intimately united with

his goodness, he instituted the Sacrament of the most holy Eucharist,

in which every one may participate, to unite his Saviour to himself

really and by way of food. Theotimus, this sacramental union urges and

aids us towards the spiritual, of which we speak.

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[319] Cant. i. 3.

[320] Cant. vii. 10.

[321] Cant. i. 12.

[322] Ps. lxii. 9.

[323] Cant. ii. 16.

[324] Cant. i. 3.

[325] Cant. viii. 6.

[326] 2 Cor. v. 14.

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CHAPTER III.

OF THE SOVEREIGN DEGREE OF UNION BY SUSPENSION AND RAVISHMENT.

Whether, therefore, the union of our soul with God be made perceptibly

or imperceptibly, God is always the author thereof; for none can be

united to him, but by going unto him, nor can any one go unto him,

unless he be drawn by him, as the heavenly lover testifies, saying: No

man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him.

[327] Which his holy spouse also protests, saying: Draw me; we will run

after thee to the odour of thy ointments. [328]

Now the perfection of this union consists in two points; in being pure,

and in being strong. May I not approach a person to speak to him, to

see him better, to obtain something of him, to smell the perfumes which

are about him, to lean on him? And then I certainly go towards him and

join myself unto him: yet the approach and union is not my principal

intention, and I only make this a means and way to the obtaining of

another thing. But if I approach and join myself to him for no other

end than to be near him, and to enjoy this proximity and union, it is

then an approach of pure and simple union.

Thus many approach our Saviour: some to hear him as Magdalen; some to

be cured by him, as she that had the issue of blood; others to adore

him, as the three kings; others to serve him, as Martha; others to

overcome their unbelief, as S. Thomas; others to embalm him, as

Magdalen, Joseph, Nicodemus; but his divine Sulamitess seeks him to

find him, and having found him, desires no other thing than to hold him

fast, and holding him, never to quit him. I held him, says she, and

will not let him go. [329] Jacob, says S. Bernard, having fast hold of

God, will let him go, provided he receive his benediction; but the

Sulamitess will not let him depart for all the benedictions he can give

her; for she wills not the benedictions of God, but the God of

benedictions, saying with David: What have I in heaven, and besides

thee what do I desire upon earth? Thou art the God of my heart, and the

God that is my portion for ever. [330]

Thus was the glorious Mother at the foot of her Son's cross. Ah! what

dost thou seek, O Mother of life, on this mount of Calvary, in this

place of death? I am seeking, would she have said, my child, who is the

life of my life. And why dost thou seek him? To be close by him. But

now he is amidst the sorrows of death. Ah! it is not joy I seek, it is

himself, and my heart, full of love, makes me seek alway to be united

to that amiable child, my tenderly beloved one. In a word, the

intention of the soul in this union is nothing, save to be with her

lover.

But when the union of the soul with God is most specially strict and

close, it is called by theologians inhesion or adhesion, because by it

the soul is caught up, fastened, glued and affixed to the divine

majesty, so that she cannot easily loose or draw herself back again.

Regard, I pray you, that man caught and pressed by attention to the

delight of an harmonious music, or mayhap (which is extravagant) to the

folly of a game at cards: you would draw him from it, but cannot; what

business soever is waiting for him at home, there is no forcing him

thence; even meat and drink are forgotten for it. O God! Theotimus, how

much more ought the soul which is in love with its God to be held and

fast locked, being united to the divinity of the infinite sweetness,

and taken and wholly possessed by this object of incomparable

perfections? Such was the soul of the great vessel of election who

cried out: That I may live to God, with Christ I am nailed to the

Cross: [331] and he protests that nothing, no not death itself can

separate him from his master. This effect of love was also produced

between David and Jonathan, for it is said that: The soul of Jonathan

was knit with the soul of David. [332] And it is an axiom celebrated

amongst the ancient Fathers, that friendship which can end was never

true friendship, as I have said elsewhere.

See, I beseech you, Theotimus, this little child cleaving to the breast

and neck of his mother; if one offer to take him thence to lay him in

his cradle, it being high time, he struggles and disputes as far as he

is able, in order not to leave that beloved bosom, and if he is made to

let go with one hand, with the other he grapples, and if he is carried

quite off, he falls a weeping; and keeping his heart and his eyes where

he cannot keep his body, he continues crying out for his dear mother,

till by rocking he is brought to sleep. So the soul who by the exercise

of union has come as far as to be taken and fastened to the divine

goodness, can hardly be drawn from it save by force and with much pain.

It is not possible to make her loose hold; if one divert her

imagination she ceases not to keep hold by her understanding, and if

one loose her understanding she cleaves by the will; or if by some

violent distraction one make her abandon it with her will, she turns

back every instant towards her dear object, from which she cannot be

entirely untied, but, striving all she can to link together again the

sweet bonds of her union with him by the frequent returns which she

makes, as by stealth, she experiences S. Paul's distress: [333] for she

is pressed with two desires; to be freed from all exterior employment

in order to remain with Jesus Christ in her interior, and yet to

proceed to the work of obedience which the very union with Jesus Christ

teaches her to be necessary.

Now the Blessed Mother (S.) Teresa says excellently, that when union

arrives at this perfection of keeping us held by and fastened to our

Saviour, it is not distinguished from a rapture, trance, or suspension

of the spirit; but that it is called only union, trance or suspension,

when it is short; and when it is long, ecstasy or rapture, because the

soul which is so firmly and closely united to her God that she cannot

easily be drawn from him, is actually no longer in herself but in God;

as a crucified body belongs not to itself but to the cross, and as ivy

which grasps a wall, is no longer its own, but of the wall.

But to avoid all ambiguity, know, Theotimus, that charity is a bond,

and a bond of perfection; [334] and he that has more charity is more

closely united and fastened unto God. But we have not been speaking of

that union which is permanent in us by manner of habit, whether we be

sleeping or waking, but of the union made by action, and which is one

of the exercises of love and charity. Imagine then that S. Paul, S.

Denis, S. Augustine, S. Bernard, S. Francis, SS. Catharine of Genoa and

Siena, are again in this world, and have fallen asleep, wearied with

their many labours, undertaken for the love of God. Represent to

yourself on the other side some good soul, yet not so holy as they are,

who is in the prayer of union at the same time: I ask you, Theotimus,

who is more united, clasped and fastened to God,--is it these great

saints who sleep, or that soul who prays? Without doubt, these

admirable lovers; for they have more charity, and their affections,

though in some sort asleep, are so engaged and tied to their master

that they cannot be separated from him. But, you will say to me, how

can it be, that a soul in the prayer of union, even unto ecstasy,

should be less united unto God than such as sleep, be they never so

saintly? Mark what I tell you, Theotimus; that soul is more advanced in

the exercise of union, those in the union itself: these are united,

they are not being united, as they are asleep: and that one is being

united, that is, she is in the actual practice and exercise of union.

For the rest, this exercise of union with God may even be practised by

short and passing, yet frequent, movements of our heart to God, by way

of ejaculatory prayer made for this intention. Ah Jesus! Who will give

me the grace to be one spirit with thee! At last, Lord, rejecting the

multiplicity of creatures, I desire thine only unity! O God, thou art

the only one and only unity necessary for my soul! Alas! dear love of

my heart, unite my poor one soul, to thy one singular goodness! Ah!

thou art wholly mine, when shall I be wholly thine? The adamant draws

and unites iron unto it; O Lord, my lover, be my draw-heart, clasp,

press and unite my heart for ever unto thy fatherly breast! Ah! since I

am made for thee, why am I not in thee? Swallow up, as a single drop,

this spirit which thou hast bestowed upon me, into the sea of thy

goodness from whence it proceeds. Ah Lord! seeing that thy heart loves

me, why does it not force me to itself, since I truly will it? Draw me,

and I will run after thy drawings, to cast myself into thy fatherly

arms, to leave them no more for ever and ever. Amen.

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[327] John vi. 44.

[328] Cant. i. 3.

[329] Cant. iii. 4.

[330] Ps. lxxii. 25, 26.

[331] Gal. ii. 19.

[332] 1 Kings xviii. 1

[333] Phil. i. 23.

[334] Col. iii. 14.

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CHAPTER IV.

OF RAPTURE, AND OF THE FIRST SPECIES OF IT.

An ecstasy is called a rapture inasmuch as God does thereby rapt us,

and raise us up to himself, and a rapture is termed an ecstasy, because

by it we go and remain out of, and above, ourselves, to be united to

God. And although the attractions by which God draws us be admirably

pleasing, sweet and delicious, yet on account of the force which the

divine beauty and goodness have to draw unto them the attention and

application of the spirit, it seems that it not only raises us but that

it ravishes and bears us away. As, on the contrary, by reason of the

most free consent and ardent motion, by which the ravished soul goes

out after the divine attractions, she seems not only to mount and rise,

but also to break out of herself and cast herself into the very

divinity. Similarly the soul may be ravished out of itself by the

infamous ecstasy of sensual pleasure, by which however it is not raised

up, but is degraded below itself.

But, my dear Theotimus, as to sacred ecstasies, they are of three

kinds; the one of them belongs to the understanding, another to the

affection, and the third to action. The one is in splendour, the other

in fervour, the third in works: the one is made by admiration, the

other by devotion, and the third by operation. Admiration is caused in

us by the meeting with a new truth, which we neither knew, nor yet

expected to know; and if the new truth we meet with be accompanied by

beauty and goodness, the admiration which proceeds from it is very

delicious. So the Queen of Saba finding more true wisdom in Solomon

than she had imagined, became filled with admiration. And the Jews,

acknowledging in our Saviour more knowledge than they could ever have

believed, were taken with a great admiration. When therefore it pleases

the divine goodness to illuminate our heart with some special light,

whereby it is raised to an extraordinary and sublime contemplation of

heavenly mysteries, then, discovering more beauty in them than it could

have imagined, it falls into admiration.

Now admiration of things that cause pleasure closely fixes and glues

the spirit to the thing admired, as well by reason of the excellent

beauty which it causes to be found therein, as by the novelty of this

excellence, the understanding being unable to delight itself enough in

seeing what it never saw before, and what is so agreeable to the view.

Sometimes also besides this, God imparts to the soul a light not only

clear but growing, like the daybreak; and then, as those who have found

a gold-mine continually break more earth, ever to find more of the

wished-for metal, so the understanding ever buries itself deeper and

deeper in the consideration and admiration of its divine object: for

even as admiration has produced philosophy, and the attentive study of

natural things, so it has also caused contemplation and mystical

theology; and as this admiration when it is strong, keeps us out of

ourselves and above ourselves by a lively attention and application of

our understanding to heavenly things, it carries us consequently into

ecstasy.

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CHAPTER V.

OF THE SECOND SPECIES OF RAPTURE.

God draws men's spirits unto him by his sovereign beauty and

incomprehensible goodness, which two excellences are however but one

supreme divinity, at once most singularly beautiful and good. Every

thing is done for the good and for the beautiful, all things look

towards them, are moved and stayed by them. The good and beautiful are

desirable, agreeable, and dear to all, for them all things do and will

whatsoever they do and will. And as for the beautiful, because it draws

and recalls all things to itself, the Greeks give it a name which

signifies recalling. [335]

In like manner, as to good, its true image is light, especially because

light collects, reduces and turns all things towards itself, whence the

sun is named amongst the Greeks from a word [336] which shows that its

influence causes all things to be drawn together and united, bringing

together things dispersed; as goodness turns all things unto itself,

being not only the sovereign unity, but sovereignly unitive, since all

things desire it, as their principle, their preservation and their last

end. So that in conclusion, the good and the beautiful is but one and

the same thing, because all things desire the good and the beautiful.

This discourse, Theotimus, is almost entirely composed of the words of

the divine S. Denis the Areopagite; and certainly it is true that the

sun, the source of corporeal light, is the true image of the good and

the beautiful; for amongst merely corporeal creatures there is neither

goodness nor beauty equal to that of the sun. Now the beauty and

goodness of the sun consist in his light, without which nothing would

be beautiful, nothing good, in this corporeal world. As beautiful he

illuminates all, as good he heats and quickens all: insomuch as he is

beautiful and bright, he draws unto himself all seeing eyes in the

world; insomuch as he is good and gives heat, he gains unto himself all

the appetites and inclinations of the corporeal world. For he extracts

and draws up the exhalations and vapours, he draws and makes rise from

their originals plants and living creatures; nor is there any

production to which the vital heat of this great luminary does not

contribute. So God, Father of all light, sovereignly good and

beautiful, draws our understanding by his beauty to contemplate him,

and draws our will by his goodness to love him. As beautiful,

replenishing our understanding with delight, he pours his love into our

wills; as good, filling our wills with his love, he excites our

understanding to contemplate him,--love provoking us to contemplation,

and contemplation to love: whence it follows that ecstasies and

raptures depend wholly on love, for it is love that carries the

understanding to contemplation and the will to union: so that, finally,

we must conclude with the great S. Denis, that divine love is ecstatic,

not permitting lovers to live to themselves, but to the thing beloved:

for which cause the admirable Apostle S. Paul, being possessed of this

divine love, and participating in its ecstatic power, said with

divinely inspired mouth: I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.

[337] As a true lover gone out of himself into God, he lived now not

his own life, but the life of his beloved, as being sovereignly to be

loved.

Now this rapture of love happens in the will thus. God touches it with

the attractions of his sweetness, and then, as the needle touched by

the loadstone turns and moves towards the pole, forgetful of its

insensible condition, so the will touched with heavenly love moves

forward and advances itself towards God, leaving all its earthly

inclinations, and by this means enters into a rapture, not of

knowledge, but of fruition; not of admiration but of affection; not of

science but of experience; not of sight but of taste and relish. It is

true, as I have already signified, the understanding enters sometimes

into admiration, seeing the sacred delight which the will takes in her

ecstasy, as the will often takes pleasure to perceive the understanding

in admiration, so that these two faculties interchange their

ravishments; the view of beauty making us love it, and the love thereof

making us view it. Rarely is a man warmed by the sunbeams without being

illuminated, or illuminated without being warmed. Love easily makes us

admire, and admiration easily makes us love. Still the two ecstasies,

of the understanding and of the will, are not so essential to one

another that the one may not very often be without the other; for as

philosophers have had more knowledge than love of the Creator, so good

Christians often have more love than knowledge, and consequently

exceeding knowledge is not always followed by exceeding love, as I have

remarked elsewhere. Now if the ecstasy of admiration be alone, we are

not made better by it, according to what he said of it who had been

lifted up in ecstasy into the third heaven. If I should know, said he,

all mysteries, and all knowledge,--and have not charity, I am nothing;

[338] and therefore the evil spirit can put into an ecstasy, if we may

so say, and ravish the understanding by proposing unto it wonders which

hold it suspended and elevated above its natural forces, and further,

by such lights he can give the will some kind of vain, soft, tender and

imperfect love, by way of sensible complacency, satisfaction and

consolation. But to give the true ecstasy of the will, whereby it is

solely and powerfully joined unto the divine goodness, appertains only

to that sovereign Spirit by whom the charity of God is spread abroad in

our hearts. [339]

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[335] to kalon [Tr.]

[336] helios [Tr.]

[337] Gal. ii. 20

[338] 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

[339] Rom. v. 5.

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CHAPTER VI.

OF THE SIGNS OF GOOD RAPTURE, AND OF THE THIRD SPECIES OF THE SAME.

Indeed, Theotimus, there have been many in our age who believed, and

others with them, that they were very frequently ravished by God in

ecstasy, and yet in the end it was discovered that all were but

diabolical illusions and operations. A certain priest in S. Augustine's

time put himself into ecstasies whenever he pleased, singing or getting

sung certain mournful and melancholy airs, and this only to content the

curiosity of those who desired to view this spectacle. But what is most

wonderful is, that his ecstasy went so far that he did not feel fire

which was applied to him, till after he was come to himself; and yet if

any one spoke somewhat loudly, and with a clear voice, he heard them as

if from afar, and he had no respiration. The philosophers themselves

acknowledged certain species of natural ecstasies, caused by a vehement

application of the spirit to the consideration of high things:

wherefore we must not think it strange if the devil, to play the ape,

to beguile souls, to scandalize the weak, and to transform himself into

an angel of light, cause raptures in certain souls who are not solidly

instructed in solid piety.

To the end, then, that one might discern divine ecstasies from human

and diabolical, God's servants have left many teachings: but for my

part, it will suffice for my purpose to propose to you two marks of the

good and holy ecstasy. The one is, that sacred ecstasy never so much

takes and affects the understanding as it does the will, which it

moves, warms and fills with a powerful affection towards God. So that,

if the ecstasy be more beautiful than good, more bright than warm, more

speculative than affective, it is very doubtful, and deserving of

suspicion. I do not say that one may not have raptures, yea prophetical

visions, without charity: for, as I know well one may have charity

without being ravished, or prophesying, so one may also be ravished and

may prophesy without having charity: but I affirm that he who in his

rapture has more light in the understanding to admire God, than heat in

the will to love him, is to stand upon his guard; for it is to be

feared that this ecstasy may be false, and may rather puff up the

spirit than edify it, putting him indeed as Saul, Balaam, and Caiphas,

amongst the prophets, yet still leaving him amongst the reprobate.

The second mark of true ecstasy consists in the third species of

ecstasy which we mentioned above, an ecstasy all holy, all worthy of

love, the crown of the two others,--the ecstasy of act and life. The

entire observance of God's commandments is not within the bounds of

human strength, yet is it within the stretch of the instinct of the

human spirit, as being most conformable to natural light and reason: so

that living according to God's commandments, we are not therefore

outside our natural inclination. Yet besides God's commandments, there

are certain heavenly inspirations to the effecting of which it is not

only requisite that God should raise us above our own strength, but

also that he should draw us above our natural instincts and

inclinations, because although these inspirations are not opposite to

human reason, yet they exceed it, surpass it, and are placed above it,

so that then we live not only a civil, honest, and Christian life, but

a supernatural, spiritual, devout and ecstatic life, that is, a life

which is in every way beyond and above our natural condition.

Not to steal, not to lie, not to commit impurity, to pray to God, not

to swear in vain, to love and honour one's father, not to kill,--is to

live according to man's natural reason: but to forsake all our goods,

to love poverty, to call her and to consider her a most delightful

mistress, to repute reproaches, contempts, abjections, persecutions,

martyrdoms, as felicities and beatitudes, to contain oneself within the

terms of a most absolute chastity, and in fine to live, amidst the

world and in this mortal life, contrary to all the opinions and maxims

of the world, and against the current of the river of this life, by

habitual resignations, renunciations, and abnegatioris of

ourselves;--this is not to live in ourselves, but out of and above

ourselves; and because no one is able to go out of himself in this

manner above himself unless the eternal Father draw him, hence it is

that this kind of life is a perpetual rapture, and a continual ecstasy

of action and operation.

You are dead, said the great Apostle to the Colossians, and your life

is hid with Christ in God. [340] Death's effect is that the soul no

longer lives in its body nor in the limits thereof. What then do these

words of the Apostle mean, Theotimus: you are dead? it is as though he

said: you no longer live in yourselves nor in the limits of your

natural condition; your soul does not now live according to herself but

above herself. The true nature of the phoenix lies in this, that by the

help of the sunbeams, she annihilates her own life, to have a life more

desirable and vigorous, hiding, as it were, her life under ashes.

Silkworms change their being, and from worms become butterflies; bees

are born worms, then become nymphs crawling on their feet, and at last

they become flying bees. We do the same, Theotimus, if we are

spiritual: for we forsake our natural life to live a more eminent life

above ourselves, hiding all this new life in God with Jesus Christ, who

alone sees, knows and bestows it. Our new life is heavenly love, which

quickens and animates our soul, and this love is wholly hidden in God

and divine things with Jesus Christ: for since (as the sacred Gospel

text says), after our Saviour had shown himself for a little to his

disciples as he rose up to heaven, thither above, he was at length

environed with a cloud which took him and hid him from their

view,--therefore Jesus Christ is hidden in heaven in God. Now Jesus

Christ is our love, and our love is the life of our soul: therefore our

life is hidden in God with Jesus Christ; and when Jesus Christ, who is

our love, and consequently our spiritual life, shall appear, in the day

of Judgment, we also shall appear with him in glory; that is, Jesus

Christ our love will glorify us, communicating to us his felicity and

splendour.

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[340] Col. iii. 3.

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CHAPTER VII.

HOW LOVE IS THE LIFE OF THE SOUL, AND CONTINUATION OF THE DISCOURSE ON

THE ECSTATIC LIFE.

The soul is the first act and principle of all the vital movements of

man, and, as Aristotle expresses it, the principle whereby we live,

feel and understand: whence it follows, that we know the different

kinds of life from the difference of movements; so much so, indeed,

that animals when entirely without movement are entirely without life.

Even so, Theotimus, love is the first act or principle of our devout or

spiritual life, by which we live, feel and move: and our spiritual life

is such as the movements of our love are, and a heart that has no

movement nor affection, has no love; as on the contrary a heart

possessed of love is not without affective movement. As soon therefore

as we have set our affection upon Jesus Christ, we have consequently

placed in him our spiritual life. But he is now hidden in God in

heaven, as God was hidden in him while he was here below. Our life

therefore is hidden in him, and when he shall appear in glory, our life

and our love shall likewise appear with him in God. Hence S. Ignatius

(Martyr) as S. Denis relates, said that his love was crucified, as

though he would say: my natural and human love, with all the passions

that depend on it, is nailed to the cross; I have put it to death as a

mortal love, which made my heart live a mortal life; and as my Saviour

was crucified and died according to his mortal life, so did I die with

him upon the cross according to my natural love, which was the mortal

life of my soul, to the end that I might rise again to the supernatural

life of a love which, because it can be exercised in heaven, is

consequently also immortal.

When therefore we see a soul that has raptures in prayer, by which she

goes out from and mounts above herself in God, and yet has no ecstasy

in her life, that is, leads not a life elevated and united to God, by

abnegation of worldly concupiscences, by mortification of natural wills

and inclinations, by an interior sweetness, simplicity, humility, and

above all by a continual charity;--believe, Theotimus, that all these

raptures are exceedingly doubtful and dangerous; these are raptures fit

to stir up men to admiration, but not to sanctify them. For what can it

profit the soul to be ravished unto God by prayer, while in her life

and conversation she is ravished by earthly, base and natural

affections; to be above herself in prayer and below herself in life and

operation, to be angelic in meditation and brutish in conversation? It

is to halt on two sides, [341] to swear by the Lord and swear by

Melchom. [342] In a word it is a true mark that such raptures and

ecstasies are but operations and deceits of the evil spirit. Blessed

are they who live a superhuman and ecstatic life, raised above

themselves, though they may not be ravished above themselves in prayer.

There are many saints in heaven who were never in ecstasy or rapture of

contemplation. For how many martyrs and great saints do we see in

history never to have had other privilege in prayer than that of

devotion and fervour. But there was never saint who had not the ecstasy

and rapture of life and operation, overcoming himself and his natural

inclinations.

And who sees not, I pray you, Theotimus, that it is the ecstasy of life

and operation that the great Apostle principally speaks of when he

says: I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me; [343] for he himself

explains it in other terms to the Romans, saying that: Our old man is

crucified with him, [344] that we are dead to sin with him, and that we

are also risen with him to walk in newness of life, that we may serve

sin no longer. Behold, Theotimus, how two men are represented in each

of us, and consequently two lives; the one of the old man, which is an

old life; like, they say, the eagle's, which having grown into old age

can but drag its wings along, and is unable to take flight: the other

is the life of the new man, which also is a new life, like that of the

eagle, which, being disburdened of its old feathers, now shaken off

into the sea, takes new ones, and having grown young again, flies in

the newness of its strength.

In the first life we live according to the old man, that is, according

to the failings, weaknesses and infirmities contracted by the sin of

our first father, Adam; and therefore we live to Adam's sin, and our

life is a mortal life, yea death itself. In the second life we live

according to the new man, that is, according to the graces, favours,

ordinances and wills of our Saviour, and consequently, we live to

salvation and redemption, and this new life is a lively, living and

life-giving life. But whosoever would attain the new life, must make

his way by the death of the old, crucifying his flesh with the vices

and concupiscences [345] thereof, burying it under the waters of holy

baptism or penance: as Naaman drowned and buried in the waters of

Jordan his leprous and infected old life, to live a new, sound, and

spotless life; for one might well have said of him, that he was not now

the old, leprous, corrupt, infected Naaman, but a new, clean, sound,

and honourable Naaman, because he was dead to leprosy and was living to

health and cleanness.

Now whosoever is raised up again to this new life of our Saviour,

neither lives to himself, nor for himself, but to his Saviour, in his

Saviour, and for his Saviour. So you also reckon, says S. Paul, that

you are dead to sin but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord. [346]

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[341] 3 Kings xviii. 21.

[342] Soph. i. 5.

[343] Gal. ii. 20.

[344] Rom. vi. 6.

[345] Gal. v. 24.

[346] Rom. vi. 11

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CHAPTER VIII.

AN ADMIRABLE EXHORTATION OF S. PAUL TO THE ECSTATIC AND SUPERHUMAN

LIFE.

But finally, methinks S. Paul makes the most forcible, pressing and

admirable argument that ever was made, to urge us all to the ecstasy

and rapture of life and operation. Hear, Theotimus, I beseech you; be

attentive and weigh the force and efficacy of the ardent and heavenly

words of this Apostle, ravished and transported with the love of his

Master. Speaking then of himself (and the like is to be said of

everyone), the charity, says he, of Christ presseth us. [347] Yes,

Theotimus, nothing so much presses man's heart as love; if a man know

that he is beloved, be it by whom it may, he is pressed to love in his

turn. But if a common man be beloved by a great lord, he is much more

pressed; and if by a great monarch, how much more yet? And now, I pray

you, knowing well that Jesus Christ, the true eternal God omnipotent,

has loved us even to suffering death for us, and the death of the cross

is----not this, O my dear Theotimus, to have our hearts under the

press, and to feel them strongly pressed, and to feel love pressed out

of them by violence and constraint, which is so much the more violent

by how much it is more lovable and beloved! But how does this divine

lover press us? The charity of Christ presseth us, says his holy

Apostle, judging this. What means that judging this? It means that our

Saviour's charity presses us then especially when we judge, consider,

ponder, meditate, and attend to, the resolution of this question which

faith gives. And what resolution? Mark, my good Theotimus, how he

proceeds, graving, fixing and stamping his conception on our hearts.

Judging this, says he; and what? That if one died for all, then all

were dead, and Jesus Christ died for all. It is true, indeed: if one

Jesus Christ died for all, all then are dead in the person of this only

Saviour who died for them, and his death is to be imputed unto them,

since it was endured for them and in consideration of them.

But what follows from this? Methinks I hear that apostolic mouth, as

with a peal of thunder startling the ears of our hearts! That follows

then, O Christians, which Jesus Christ dying for us desired of us. And

what did he desire of us but that we should be conformed unto him, to

the end, says the Apostle, that those who live may not now live to

themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again. True God!

Theotimus, how powerful a consequence is this in the matter of love!

Jesus Christ died for us; by his death he has given us life; we only

live because he died; he died for us, as ours, and in us; our life then

is no more ours, but his who has purchased it for us by his death: we

are therefore no more to live to ourselves but to him, nor in ourselves

but in him, nor for ourselves but for him. A maiden of the Isle of

Sestos had brought up a young eagle with the care children are wont to

bestow upon such affairs; the eagle being come to its full growth began

little by little to fly and to chase birds, according to its natural

instinct; then getting more strength it seized upon wild beasts, never

failing faithfully to take home the prey to its dear mistress, as in

acknowledgment of the bringing up which it had had from her. Now it

happened upon a day that this young damsel died, while the poor eagle

was on the hunt, and her body, according to the custom of that time and

country, was publicly placed upon the funeral pile to be burnt; when

even as the flame began to seize upon her the eagle came up with strong

and eager flight, and, when it beheld this unlooked-for and sad

spectacle, pierced with grief, it opened its talons, let fall its prey,

and spread itself upon its poor beloved mistress; and covering her with

its wings, as it were to defend her from the fire, or for pity's sake

to embrace her, it remained there constant and immovable, courageously

dying and burning with her; the ardour of its affection not giving way

to flames and ardours of fire, that so it might become the victim and

holocaust of its brave and prodigious love, as its mistress was of

death and fire.

O Theotimus! To what a high flight this eagle moves us! Our Saviour has

bred us up from our tender youth, yea he formed us and received us as a

loving nurse into the arms of his divine Providence, even from the

instant of our conception.

Not being yet, thy holy hand did make me;

Scarce born, into thy arms thy love did take me.

He made us his own by Baptism, and tenderly nourishes both our soul and

our body with an incomprehensible love; to purchase us life he suffered

death, he has fed us with his own flesh and blood. Ah! what remains

then, my dear Theotimus, what conclusion are we to draw from this,

except that those who live should live no more to themselves but to him

that died for them: that is to say, that we should consecrate all the

moments of our life to the divine love of our Saviour's death, bringing

home to his glory all our prey, all our conquests, all our actions, all

our thoughts, and all our affections. Let us behold him, Theotimus,

this heavenly Redeemer, extended upon the cross as upon a funeral pile

of honour, where he dies of love for us, yea of a love more dolorous

than death itself, or a death more amorous than love itself. Ah! why do

we not spiritually cast ourselves upon him to die upon the cross with

him, who has truly willed to die for love of us? I will hold him,

should we say, if we had the eagle's generosity, and will never depart

from him. I will die with him and burn in the flames of his love, one

and the same fire shall consume this divine Creator and his poor

creature. My Jesus is wholly mine, and I am wholly his: I will live and

die upon his breast, nor life nor death shall ever separate me from

him. Thus then is made the holy ecstasy of true love, when, we live not

according to human reason and inclinations, but above them, following

the inspirations and instincts of the divine Saviour of our souls.

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[347] 2 Cor. v. 14.

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CHAPTER IX.

OF THE SUPREME EFFECT OF AFFECTIVE LOVE, WHICH IS THE DEATH OF THE

LOVERS; AND FIRST, OF SUCH AS DIED IN LOVE.

Love is as strong as death. [348] Death separates the soul of him who

dies from the body, and from all the things of the world; sacred love

separates the soul of the lover from his body and from all the things

of the world: nor is there any other difference, saving that death does

that in effect, which love ordinarily does only in affection. I say

ordinarily, Theotimus, because holy love is sometimes so violent that

it even actually causes a separation between the body and the soul;

making the lovers die a most happy death, better than a hundred lives.

As it is the special character of the reprobate that they die in sin,

so of the elect it is, that they die in the love and grace of God. But

still this happens in different ways. The just man never dies

unprovidedly; for to have persevered in Christian justice even to the

end, is to have well provided for death; but he does sometimes die of

unexpected or sudden death. For this cause the all-wise Church does not

make us pray in her Litanies that we may simply be delivered from

sudden death, but from sudden and unprovided death. It is no worse for

being sudden, if it be not also unprovided. If weak and ordinary souls

had seen the fire from heaven fall upon the great S. Simeon Stylites's

head and kill him, what would they have thought but thoughts of

scandal? Yet ought we to have no other thought than that this great

saint, having most perfectly immolated himself to God in his heart, and

being already wholly consumed with love, the fire came from heaven to

perfect the holocaust and entirely consume it; for the Abbot Julian,

being a day's journey off, saw his soul ascend to heaven, and thereupon

caused incense to be offered in thanksgiving to God. The Blessed

Homobonus of Cremona, on a certain day hearing Mass on his knees with

extreme devotion, rose not at the Gospel according to custom, whence

those that were about him, looked at him, and perceived that he was

dead. There have been in our time men most famous for virtue and

learning, found dead, some in a confessional, others while hearing a

sermon: yea some have been seen to fall down dead at their going out of

the pulpit, where they had preached with great fervour; and all these

deaths were sudden, yet not unprovided. And how many good people do we

see die in apoplexy, in a lethargy, and a thousand other ways, very

suddenly? And others die in delirium and madness, out of the use of

reason; and all these, together with children who are baptized, die in

grace and consequently in the love of God. But how could they die in

the love of God, since they did not even think of God at the time of

their departure?

Learned men, Theotimus, lose not their knowledge while they are asleep;

otherwise they would be unlearned at their awaking, and have to return

to school. The like it is in all the habits of prudence, temperance,

faith, hope and charity; they are ever within the just man's heart,

though they are not always in action. While a man sleeps it seems that

all his habits sleep with him, and when he awakes awake with him; so a

just man dying suddenly, whether crushed by a house falling upon him,

or killed by thunder, or stifled by an effusion on the lungs, or dying

out of his senses by the violence of a burning fever, dies not indeed

in the exercise of holy love, yet he dies in the habit thereof.

Whereupon the wise man says: The just man, if he be prevented with

death, shall be in rest: [349] for to obtain eternal life it suffices

to die in the state and habit of love and charity.

Many saints, however, have departed this life not only in charity and

with the habit of heavenly love, but even in the act and practice

thereof. S. Augustine died in the exercise of holy contrition, which

cannot be without love: S. Jerome exhorting his dear children to the

love of God, of their neighbour, and of virtue: S. Ambrose in a

rapture, sweetly discoursing with his Saviour, immediately after he had

received the holy Sacrament of the altar: S. Antony of Padua after he

had recited a hymn to the glorious Virgin-mother, and while talking

joyously with our Saviour: S. Thomas Aquinas joining his hands,

elevating his eyes towards heaven, raising his voice very high, and

pronouncing by way of ejaculation with great fervour, these words of

the Canticles (the last which he had expounded): Come my beloved, let

us go forth into the field, let us abide in the villages. [350] All the

Apostles and almost all the Martyrs died in prayer. The Blessed and

Venerable Bede having foreknown by revelation the time of his

departure, went to Vespers (and it was Ascension day), and standing

upright, leaning only on the elbows of his stall, without any disease

at all, ended his life at the same instant that he ended his singing of

Vespers, as it were directly to follow his Master ascending unto

heaven, there to enjoy the fair morning of eternity, which has no

Vesper. [351] John Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, a man

so learned and pious that, as Sixtus Senensis says, one can hardly

discern whether his learning surpassed his piety, or his piety his

learning, having expounded the fifty properties of divine love

mentioned in the Canticle of Canticles, three days afterwards, having a

face and heart full of life, expired pronouncing and repeating many

times, by way of ejaculatory prayer, these holy words, drawn out of the

same Canticles: O God! thy love is strong as death. S. Martin, as

everyone knows, died so attentive to the exercise of devotion, that

more could not be. S. Louis, that great king amongst saints, and great

saint amongst kings, being struck with the plague, never ceased to

pray; and then, having received the divine Viaticum, spreading out his

arms in form of a cross, his eyes fixed upon heaven, yielded up the

ghost, ardently sighing out these words with a perfect confidence of

love: I will come into thy house; I will worship towards thy holy

temple and I will give glory to thy name. [352] S. Peter Celestine,

being wholly steeped in cruel afflictions which can scarce be

described, having reached the end of his days, began to sing, as a

sacred swan, the last of the psalms, and ended his song and his life

with these amorous words: Let every spirit praise the Lord. The

admirable S. Eusebia, surnamed the stranger, died on her knees and in

fervent prayer, S. Peter Martyr, writing with his finger and in his own

blood the confession of the faith for which he died, and uttering these

words: Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and the great Apostle

of the Japanese, S. Francis Xavier, holding and kissing the image of

the crucifix, and repeating at every kiss these ejaculations of his

soul: "O Jesus! the God of my heart!"

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[348] Cant. viii. 6.

[349] Wis. iv. 7.

[350] Cant. vii. 11.

[351] S. Francis's account of this blessed death is not strictly

according to history. We cannot ascertain what Life of Venerable Bede

he used (Tr.).

[352] Pss. v. 8; cxxxvii. 2.

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CHAPTER X.

OF THOSE WHO DIED BY AND FOR DIVINE LOVE.

All the Martyrs, Theotimus, died for the love of God; for when we say

that some of them died for the faith, we mean not that they died for a

dead faith, but for the living faith, that is, quickened by charity.

And again the confession of faith is not so much an act of the

understanding and of faith, as an act of the will and of the love of

God. And this is why the great S. Peter, keeping the faith in his soul

on the day of the passion, yet lost charity, refusing in words to

profess him to be his Master, whom in his heart he acknowledged to be

such. But there were yet other Martyrs who died expressly for charity

alone, as our Saviour's great Precursor, who was martyred for fraternal

correction; and the glorious princes of the Apostles, S. Peter and S.

Paul, and particularly S. Paul, died for having reclaimed those women

to a pious and pure life whom the infamous Nero had led into sin. The

holy Bishops Stanislaus and Thomas of Canterbury were slain for a

matter that touched not faith, but charity. In fine a great part of the

sacred Virgin-martyrs were slain for the zeal they had to preserve

their chastity, which charity had caused them to dedicate to their

heavenly spouse.

But some sacred lovers so absolutely give themselves over to the

exercises of divine love, that this holy fire wastes and consumes their

life. Grief does sometimes so long hinder the afflicted from eating,

drinking, or sleeping, that in the end weakened and wasted they die;

whence it is commonly said that such die of grief: but it is not so

indeed; for they die through failure of strength, and inanition. Yet

since this failure came through grief, we must allow that though they

died not of grief, they died by reason of grief and by grief. So, my

dear Theotimus, when the fervour of holy love is great, it gives so

many assaults to the heart, so often wounds it, causes in it so many

languors, melts it so habitually, and puts it so frequently into

ecstasies and raptures, that by this means, the soul, almost entirely

occupied in God, not being able to afford sufficient assistance to

nature to effect digestion and nourish itself properly, the animal and

vital spirits begin little by little to fail, life is shortened, and

death takes place.

O God! Theotimus, how happy this death is! How delightful is this

love-dart, which, wounding us with the incurable wound of heavenly

love, makes us for ever pining and sick, with so strong a beating of

the heart, that at length we must yield to death. How much, do you

think, did these sacred languors and labours undergone for charity,

advance the days of the divine lovers S. Catharine of Siena, S.

Francis, young Stanislaus Kotska, S. Charles, and many hundreds more

who died so young? Verily, as for S. Francis, from the time that he

received the holy stigmata of his master, he had such violent and sharp

pains, pangs, convulsions and illnesses, that he became mere skin and

bone, and he seemed rather to be a skeleton, or a picture of death,

than a man yet living and breathing.

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CHAPTER XI.

HOW SOME OF THE HEAVENLY LOVERS DIED ALSO OF LOVE.

All the elect then, Theotimus, died in the habit of holy love; but

further, some died even in the exercise of it, others for this love,

and others by this same love. But what belongs to the sovereign degree

of love is, that some die of love; and then it is that love not only

wounds the soul, so as to make her languish, but even pierces her

through, delivering its blow right in the middle of the heart, and so

fatally, that it drives the soul out of the body;--which happens thus.

The soul, powerfully drawn by the divine sweetness of her beloved, to

correspond on her side with his sweet attractions, forcibly and to the

best of her power springs out towards this longed-for beloved who

attracts her, and, not being able to draw her body after her, rather

than stay with it in this miserable life, she quits it and gets clear;

flying alone, as a fair dove, into the delicious bosom of her heavenly

spouse. She throws herself upon her beloved, and her beloved draws and

ravishes her to himself. And as the bridegroom leaves father and mother

to cleave to his dearly beloved, so this chaste bride forsaketh the

flesh to unite herself to her beloved. Now this is the most violent

effect of love in a soul, and one which requires first a great

offstripping of all such affections as keep the heart attached either

to the world or to the body, so that as fire, having by little and

little separated an essence from its mass, and wholly purified it, at

length brings out the quintessence,--even so holy love having withdrawn

man's heart from all humours, inclinations, and passions, as far as may

be, does at length urge out the soul, to the end that by this death,

precious in the divine eyes, she may pass to eternal glory.

The great S. Francis, who in this subject of heavenly love ever returns

before my eyes, could not possibly escape dying by love, because of the

manifold and great languors, ecstasies and faintings which his love of

God gave him; but besides this, God, who had set him forth to the view

of the whole world as a miracle of love, willed that he should not only

die for love but also of love. For consider, I beseech you, Theotimus,

his death. Perceiving himself upon the point of his departure, he

caused himself to be laid naked upon the ground, where having received

as an alms a habit which they put on him, he discoursed to his

brethren, animating them to the love of God and the Church, had our

Saviour's passion read, and then with an extreme fervour began Psalm

cxli.: I cried to the Lord with my voice; with my voice I made

supplication to the Lord; and having pronounced these last words: Bring

my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name; the just wait for

me, until thou reward me, he died,--in his forty-fifth year. Who sees

not, I beseech you, Theotimus, that this seraphical man who had so

earnestly desired to be martyred and to die for love, died in the end

of love, as in another place I have described?

S. Magdalen having for the space of thirty years lived in a cave which

is yet to be seen in Provence, having seven times each day bad raptures

and been borne up in the air by angels, as though she went to sing the

seven canonical hours in their choir; in the end, upon a Sunday, she

came to Church, where her dear Bishop, S. Maximin, finding her in

contemplation, her eyes full of tears and her arms stretched out,

communicated her, and soon afterwards she delivered up her blessed

soul, which once again, for good and all, went to her Saviour's feet,

to enjoy the better part, which she had already made choice of here

below.

S. Basil had contracted a strict friendship with a physician, a Jew by

nation and religion, with the intention of bringing him to the faith of

Jesus Christ, which nevertheless he could not effect till such time as,

worn out with fastings, watchings and labours, being upon the point of

dying, he inquired of the physician what opinion he had of him,

conjuring him to speak frankly. The physician did so, and having felt

his pulse:--there is no further remedy, said he; before the sun sets

you will depart this life. But what will you say, replied the patient,

if to-morrow I shall be alive? I will become a Christian, I promise

you, said the physician. With this the saint prayed to God, and

obtained a prolongation of his own temporal life, for the good of his

physician's spiritual life, who having seen this miracle was converted,

and S. Basil rising courageously out of his bed, went to the Church and

baptized him with all his family, then returning to his chamber and to

his bed, having entertained himself a good space with our Saviour in

prayer, he holily exhorted the assistants to serve God with their whole

heart, and finally, seeing the angels approach, and pronouncing with an

extreme delight these words: O God I recommend unto thee my soul, and

restore it into thy hands; he died. But the poor converted physician

seeing him thus pass away, embracing him, and melting into tears over

him:--"O great Basil, said he, indeed if thou hadst willed thou wouldst

no more have died to-day than yesterday." Who does not see that this

death was wholly of love? And the Blessed Mother (S.) Teresa of Jesus

revealed after her death that she died of an impetuous assault of love,

which had been so violent that nature not being able to support it, the

soul had departed towards the beloved object of its affections.

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CHAPTER XII.

MARVELLOUS HISTORY OF THE DEATH OF A GENTLEMAN WHO DIED OF LOVE ON

MOUNT OLIVET.

Besides what I have said, I have found a history which to sacred lovers

is none the less credible for being wonderful, since, as the holy

Apostle says: Charity willingly believeh all things; [353] that is, it

is not quick to believe that any one is lying, and if there are no

apparent marks of falsehood in things which are told, it makes no

difficulty about believing them; but above all when they are things

which exalt and magnify the love of God towards men, or the love of men

towards God, for charity, which is sovereign queen of the virtues,

rejoices in the things which contribute to the glory of its empire and

domination. And although the account I am about to give is not so fully

published nor so well witnessed as the greatness of the marvel which it

contains would require, it does not therefore lose its truth; for, as

S. Augustine excellently says, miracles, magnificent as they may be,

are scarcely known in the very place where they are worked; and even

when they are related by those who have seen them, they are with

difficulty believed, but they do not therefore cease to be true; and,

in matter of religion, good souls have more sweetness in believing

things in which there is more difficulty and admiration.

Upon a time, then, a very illustrious and virtuous knight went beyond

seas to Palestine, to visit the holy places in which Our Lord had done

the works of our redemption; and, properly to begin this holy exercise,

before everything he worthily confessed and communicated. Then he went

first to the town of Nazareth, where the angel announced to the most

holy Virgin the most sacred Incarnation, and where the most adorable

conception of the Eternal Word took place; and there this good pilgrim

set himself to contemplate the abyss of the heavenly goodness, which

had deigned to take human flesh in order to withdraw men from

perdition. Thence he passed to Bethlehem, to the place of the Nativity,

and one could not say how many tears there he shed, contemplating those

with which the Son of God, little infant of the Virgin, had watered

that holy stable, kissing and kissing again a hundred times that sacred

earth, and licking the dust on which the first infancy of the divine

Babe had been received. From Bethlehem he went to Bethabara, and passed

as far as the little place of Bethania, when, remembering that Our Lord

had unclothed himself to be baptized, he also unclothed himself, and

entering into the Jordan, and bathing in it, and drinking of the waters

thereof, it seemed to him as if he saw his Saviour receiving baptism

from the hand of his precursor, and the Holy Ghost descending upon him

in the form of a dove, with the heavens yet opened, while from them

seemed to him to come the voice of the Eternal Father, saying: This is

my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. From Bethania he goes into

the desert, and there sees with the eyes of his Spirit the Saviour

fasting, and fighting and conquering the enemy, then the angels

ministering to him admirable meats. Thence he goes up to Mount Thabor,

where he sees the Saviour transfigured, then to Mount Sion, where he

seems to see Our Lord still on his knees in the supper-room, washing

the disciples' feet, and afterwards distributing to them his divine

body in the sacred Eucharist. He passes the torrent of Cedron, and goes

to the Garden of Gethsemani, where his heart melts into the tears of a

most loving sorrow, while he there represents to himself his dear

Saviour sweating blood, in that extreme agony, which he suffered there,

to be soon afterwards bound fast with cords and led into Jerusalem;

whither he goes also, following everywhere the footprints of his

beloved, and in imagination sees him dragged hither and thither, to

Annas, to Caiphas, to Pilate, to Herod, scourged, blindfolded, spat

upon, crowned with thorns, presented to the people, condemed to death,

loaded with his cross--which he carries, and while carrying it has the

pitiful meeting with his mother all steeped in grief, and with the

daughters of Jerusalem who weep over him. He ascends at last, this

devout pilgrim, to Mount Calvary, when he sees in spirit the cross laid

upon the earth, and our Saviour, stript naked, thrown down and nailed

hands and feet upon it, most cruelly. He contemplates then how they

raise the cross and the Crucified into the air, and the blood which

streams from all parts of this ruined divine body. He regards the poor

sacred Virgin, quite transpierced with the sword of sorrow; then he

turns his eyes on the crucified Saviour, whose seven words he hears

with a matchless love, and at last he sees him dying, then dead, then

receiving the lance-stroke, and showing by the opening of the wound his

divine heart, then taken down from the cross and carried to the

sepulchre, whither he follows him, shedding a sea of tears on the

places moistened with the blood of his Redeemer. And so he enters into

the sepulchre and buries his heart by the body of his divine Master;

then, rising again with him, he goes to Emmaus, and sees all that

passes between the Lord and the two disciples; and at last returning to

Mount Olivet, where the mystery of the Ascension took place, and there

seeing the last marks and vestiges of the feet of the Divine Saviour,

prostrate upon them, and kissing them a thousand thousand times, with

sighs of an infinite love, he began to draw up to himself all the

forces of his affections, as an archer draws the string of his bow when

he wishes to shoot his arrow, then rising, his eyes and his hands

turned to heaven: O Jesus! said he, my sweet Jesus! I know no more

where to seek and follow thee on earth. Ah! Jesus, Jesus, my love,

grant then to this heart that it may follow thee and go after thee

thither above. And with these ardent words, he at the same moment shot

his soul into heaven, a sacred arrow which as an archer of God he

directed into the central-white of his most blessed mark. But his

companions and servants who saw this poor lover fall suddenly thus as

if dead, amazed at this accident, ran instantly for the doctor, who

coming found that he had really passed away: and to make a safe

judgment on the causes of so unexpected a death, he inquires of what

temperament, of what manners, and of what feelings, the deceased might

be; and he learned that he was of a disposition very sweet, very

amiable, wondrously devout, and most ardent in the love of God.

Whereupon the doctor said: Without doubt, then, his heart has broken

with excess and fervour of love. And in order the better to confirm his

decision, he would have him opened, and found that glorious heart open,

with this sacred word engraved within it: Jesus my love! Love, then,

did in this heart the office of death, separating the soul from the

body, no other cause concurring. And it is S. Bernardine of Siena, a

very wise and very holy doctor, who makes this relation in the first of

his Sermons on the Ascension.

Indeed, another author of nearly the same age, who has concealed his

name out of humility, but who is worthy to be named, in a book which he

has entitled: Mirror of Spiritual Persons, relates a history even more

admirable. For he says that in the parts of Provence there was a

nobleman entirely devoted to the love of God and to the devotion of the

Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Now one day, being extremely

afflicted with a malady which caused him continual vomitings, the

divine communion was brought him; and not daring to receive it on

account of the danger of casting it up again, he begged his pastor to

apply it at least to his breast, and with it to make the sign of the

cross over him. This was done, and in a moment his breast, inflamed

with holy love, was cleft, and drew into itself the heavenly food

wherein his beloved was contained, and at the same instant gave up its

breath. I see in good truth that this history is extraordinary, and

would deserve a more weighty testimony: yet after the true history of

the cleft heart of S. Clare of Montefalco, which all the world may see

even to this day, and that of the stigmata of S. Francis, which is most

certain, my soul finds nothing hard to be believed amongst the effects

of divine love.

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[353] 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THAT THE MOST SACRED VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD DIED OF LOVE FOR HER SON.

One can hardly well doubt that the great S. Joseph died before the

passion and death of our Saviour, who otherwise would not have

commended his mother to S. John. And how can one then imagine that the

dear child of his heart, his beloved foster-child, did not assist him

at the hour of his departure? Blessed are the merciful for they shall

obtain mercy. Ah! how much sweetness, charity and mercy, did this good

foster-father use towards our Saviour, when he was born a little child

in the world! And who can then believe but that, at his departure out

of it, this divine child rendered him the like a hundred-fold, filling

him with heavenly delights? Storks are the true representation of the

mutual piety of children towards their parents and of parents towards

their children: for, being birds of passage, they bear their old

parents with them in their journey, as their parents had borne them

while they were yet young, on the like occasions. While our Saviour was

yet a little child, the great S. Joseph his foster-father, and the most

glorious Virgin his mother, had many times carried him, but especially

in their journey from Judea to Egypt, and from Egypt to Judea. Ah! who

then can doubt that this holy father being come to the end of his days,

was reciprocally carried by his divine foster-child, in the passage

from this to another life, into Abraham's bosom, to be translated

thence into his own, into glory, on the day of his Ascension? A saint

who had loved so much in his life, could not die but of love; for his

heart not being able to love his dear Jesus as much as he desired while

he continued amongst the distractions of this life, and having already

performed the duty which was required in the childhood of Jesus, what

remained but that he should say to the eternal Father: O Father, I have

finished the work which thou gavest me to do: [354] and then to the

Son, O my child! as thy heavenly Father put thy tender body into my

hands the day of thy coming into this world, so do I render up my soul

into thine, this day of my departure out of the world.

Such, as I conceive, was the death of this great patriarch, a man

elected to perform the most tender and loving offices that ever were or

shall be performed to the Son of God, save those that were done by his

sacred spouse, the true natural mother of the said Son. Now of her it

is not possible to imagine that she died of any other kind of death

than of love, the noblest of deaths, and consequently due to the

noblest life that ever was amongst creatures: a death of which the very

angels would desire to die, if die they could. If the primitive

Christians were said to have but one heart and one soul, by reason of

their perfect mutual love, if S. Paul lived not in himself, but Jesus

Christ lived in him, by reason of the close union of his heart to his

Master's, whereby his soul was as it were dead in his heart which it

animated, to live in the heart of the Saviour which it loved,--O true

God! how much more really had the sacred virgin and her son but one

soul, one heart and one life, so that this heavenly mother, living,

lived not, but her son lived in her! 'Twas a mother the most loving and

the most beloved that ever could be, yea loving and beloved with a love

incomparably more eminent than that of all the orders of angels and

men, as the names of mother-only and only-son, are names passing all

other names in matter of love. And I say mother-only and only-son,

because all the other sons of men divide the acknowledgment of their

production between their father and mother; but in this son, as all his

human birth depended on his mother alone, who alone contributed that

which was requisite to the virtue of the Holy Ghost for the conception

of this heavenly child, so to her alone all the love which sprang from

that production was due and rendered: wherefore this son and this

mother were united in a union by so much more excellent, as her name is

excellent in love above all other names. For which of all the seraphim

can say to our Saviour: Thou art my true son, and I love thee as my

true son? And to which of all his creatures did our Saviour ever say:

Thou art my true mother, and as my true mother I love thee: thou art my

true mother, entirely mine, and I am thy true son wholly thine? If then

a loving servant durst say, and did say, that he had no other life than

his master's--Ah! how confidently and fervently might this mother

exclaim: I have no life but the life of my son, my life is wholly in

his, and his wholly in mine; for it was no longer union but unity of

hearts between this mother and this son.

And if this mother lived her son's life, she also died her son's death.

The phoenix, as report goes, grown very aged, gathers together on the

top of a mountain a quantity of aromatical wood, upon which, as upon

its bed of honour, it goes to end its days: for when the sun, being at

its highest, pours out its hottest beams, this sole bird, to contribute

an increase of activity to the ardour of the sun, ceases not to beat

with its wings upon its bed, till it has made it take fire, and burning

with it is consumed, and dies in those odoriferous flames. In like

manner, Theotimus, the virgin-mother, having collected in her spirit

all the most beloved mysteries of the life and death of her son by a

most lively and continual memory of them, and withal, ever receiving

directly the most ardent inspirations which her child, the sun of

justice, has cast upon human beings in the highest noon of his charity;

and besides, making on her part also, a perpetual movement of

contemplation, at length the sacred fire of this divine love consumed

her entirely as a holocaust of sweetness, so that she died thereof, the

soul being wholly ravished and transported into the arms of the

dilection of her son. O, death, amorously life-giving! O, love, vitally

death-giving!

Several sacred lovers were present at the death of the Saviour, amongst

whom those who had the most love had the most sorrow; for love was then

all steeped in sorrow, and sorrow in love; and all they who for their

Saviour were impassioned with love were in love with his passion and

sorrow. But the sweet Mother, who loved more than all, was more than

all transfixed with the sword of sorrow. The sorrow of the Son at that

time was a piercing sword, which passed through the heart of the

Mother, because that Mother's heart was glued, joined and united to her

Son, with so perfect a union that nothing could wound the one without

inflicting a lively torture upon the other. Now this maternal bosom,

being thus wounded with love, not only did not seek a cure for its

wound, but loved her wound more than all cure, dearly keeping the

shafts of sorrow she had received, on account of the love which had

shot them into her heart, and continually desiring to die of them,

since her Son died of them, who, as say all the Holy Scriptures and all

Doctors, died amidst the flames of his charity, a perfect holocaust for

all the sins of the world.

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[354] John xvii. 4.

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CHAPTER XIV.

THAT THE GLORIOUS VIRGIN DIED BY AN EXTREMELY SWEET AND TRANQUIL DEATH.

It is said on the one side that Our Lady revealed to S. Mechtilde that

the malady of which she died was no other thing than an impetuous

assault of divine love; but S. Bridget and S. John Damascene testify

that she died an extremely peaceful death: and both statements are

true, Theotimus.

The stars are marvellously beautiful to see, and send forth a fair

light; but, if you have taken notice, it is by flushes of light, by

sparks and flashes, that they produce their rays, as if they brought

forth light with effort, at distinct intervals; whether it is because

their feebler light cannot so continuously shine with evenness, or

because our weak eyes do not allow us a constant and firm view of them,

on account of the great distance there is between them and our eyes. In

the same way, generally speaking, the saints who died of love felt a

great variety of accidents and symptoms of love, before it brought them

to death; many sudden movement, many assaults, many ecstasies, many

languors, many agonies; and it seemed that their love with many renewed

efforts brought forth their blessed death: this happened on account of

the weakness of their love, not yet absolutely perfect, which could not

continue its loving with an even fervour.

But it was quite otherwise with the most holy Virgin. For, as we see

the lovely dawning of day grow, not at intervals and by shocks, but by

a certain dilating and continuous brightening, which is almost

insensibly perceptible, so that we truly see it grow in clearness, but

so evenly that no one perceives any interruption, separation or

discontinuance in its growing;--thus divine love grew at each moment in

the virginal heart of our glorious Lady, but by sweet, peaceable and

continuous growths, without any agitation, or shock, or violence. Ah!

no, Theotimus, we must not suppose an impetuosity of agitation in this

celestial love of the maternal heart of the Virgin; for love, of

itself, is sweet, gracious, peaceful and tranquil. If it sometimes

deliver assaults, if it give shocks to the spirit, this is because it

finds resistance there: but when the passages of the soul are opened to

it without opposition or contradiction, it makes its progress

peaceably, with an incomparable sweetness. It was so, then, that holy

love employed its force in the virginal heart of the sacred Mother,

without effort of violent impetuosity, because it found no resistance

or hindrance whatever. For as we see great rivers boil and leap, with a

mighty roaring, in rough places where the rocks make shoals and reefs

to oppose and prevent the flowing of the waters, but, on the contrary,

finding themselves on the plain, sweetly glide and flow without

effort;--so divine love, finding in human souls some hindrance and

resistance (as in truth all have in some degree, though differently),

does violence there, combating bad inclinations, striking the heart,

pushing the will by divers agitations and various efforts to get room

for itself, or at least to pass these obstacles. But in the sacred

Virgin, everything favoured and seconded the course of heavenly love;

its progress and increase were incomparably greater than in all other

creatures, yet a progress infinitely sweet, peaceful and tranquil. No,

she swooned not away, either with love or with compassion, by the cross

of her Son, although she then experienced the most ardent and painful

attack of love that can be imagined: for although the attack was

extreme, yet, at the same time, it was at once equally strong and

gentle, mighty and tranquil, active and peaceful, consisting in a heat

which was sharp but sweet.

I am not saying, Theotimus, that in the soul of the most holy Virgin

there were not two portions, and consequently two appetites, one

according to the spirit and superior reason, the other according to the

senses and inferior reason, so that she could feel repugnances and

contradictions of the one to the other appetite, for this burden was

felt even by her Son;--but I say that in this celestial Mother all the

affections were so well ranged and ordered, that divine love exercised

in her its empire and domination most peaceably, without being troubled

by the diversity of wills and appetites, or by the contradiction of the

senses, because neither the repugnances of the natural appetite nor the

movements of the senses ever went as far as sin, not even as far as

venial sin; but, on the contrary, all was employed holily and

faithfully in the service of holy love, for the exercise of the other

virtues, which, for the most part, cannot be practised save amid

difficulties, oppositions and contradictions.

Thorns, according to the vulgar opinion, are not only different from,

but even contrary to, flowers; and it seems as if things would go

better if there were none in the world: which has made S. Ambrose think

that but for sin there would be none. But still, as here they are, the

good husbandman renders them useful, making from them, about his fields

and young trees, hedges and enclosures which serve as defence and

rampart against cattle. So the glorious Virgin, having had a part in

all human miseries, saving such as directly tend to sin, employed them

most profitably for the exercise and increase of the holy virtues of

fortitude, temperance, justice and prudence, poverty, humility,

patience and compassion: so that these were so far from hindering, that

they even assisted and strengthened heavenly love by continual

exercises and advancements. And, in her, Magdalen is not distracted

from the attention wherewith she receives from her Saviour the

impressions of love, by all Martha's ardour and solicitude. She has

made choice of her Son's love, and nothing deprives her of it.

The loadstone, as every one knows, Theotimus, naturally draws iron unto

it, by a secret and most wonderful virtue: yet five things there are

which hinder this operation. 1�. A too great distance. 2�. A diamond

interposed. 3�. If the iron be greased. 4�. If it be rubbed with an

onion. 5�. If it be too weighty. Our heart is made for God, who

continually allures it, never ceasing to throw into it the baits of his

celestial love. But five things hinder the operation of his holy

attraction. 1�. Sin, which puts us at a distance from God. 2�.

Affection to riches. 3�. Sensual pleasures. 4�. Pride and vanity.

5�. Self-love together with the multitude of inordinate passions which

it brings forth, and which are to us an overcharging load which weighs

us down. But none of these hindrances had place in the glorious

Virgin's heart. 1�. She was ever preserved from all sin. 2�. Ever

most poor in spirit. 3�. Ever most pure. 4�. Ever most humble. 5�.

Ever peaceful mistress of all her passions, and totally exempt from the

rebellion which self-love raises against the love of God. And therefore

as iron, if clear of all obstacles and freed from its own weight, would

be powerfully, yet gently and equably, drawn by the loadstone, in such

sort, however, that the attraction would ever grow more active and

forcible as they came nearer the one to the other, and the motion

nearer to its end:--so the most holy Mother, having nothing in her

which hindered the operation of the divine love of her Son, was united

unto him in an incomparable union, by gentle ecstasies, without trouble

or travail, ecstasies in which the sensible powers ceased not to

perform their actions, without in any way disturbing the union of the

spirit, as again the perfect application of her spirit did not much

divert her senses. So that this Virgin's death was more sweet than

could be imagined, her Son sweetly drawing her after the odour of his

perfumes, and she most lovingly flowing out after their sacred

sweetness even into the bosom of her Son's goodness. And although this

holy soul extremely loved her most holy, most pure, and most

love-worthy body, yet she forsook it without any pain or resistance; as

the chaste Judith, though she greatly loved the weeds of penance and

widowhood yet forsook them and freely put them off, to put on her

marriage garments when she went to be victorious over Holofernes; or as

Jonathan did when for the love of David he stripped himself of his

garments. Love had given at the foot of the cross to this divine Spouse

the supreme sorrows of death, and therefore it was reasonable that at

length death should give her the sovereign delights of love.

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BOOK VIII.

OF THE

LOVE OF CONFORMITY, BY WHICH WE UNITE OUR WILL TO THE WILL OF GOD,

SIGNIFIED UNTO US BY HIS COMMANDMENTS, COUNSELS AND INSPIRATIONS.

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CHAPTER I.

OF THE LOVE OF CONFORMITY PROCEEDING FROM SACRED COMPLACENCY.

As good ground having received the seed renders it back in its season a

hundredfold, so the heart which has taken complacency in God cannot

hinder itself from wishing to offer another complacency to God. No one

pleases us but we desire to please him. Cool wine cools for a while

those who drink it, but, as soon as it grows warm within the receiver,

it reciprocally warms him, and the more heat is given to it, the more

it gives back. True love is never ungrateful, but strives to please

those in whom it finds its pleasure; and hence comes that loving

conformity, which makes us such as those we love. The most devout and

most wise King Solomon, became idolatrous and foolish when he loved

women who were foolish and idolatrous, and served as many idols as his

wives had. For this cause the Scripture terms those men effeminate who

passionately love women as such, because love metamorphoses them from

men into women, in manners and humours.

Now this transformation is made insensibly by complacency, which having

got entry into our heart brings forth another complacency, to give to

him of whom we have received it. They say there is a little land animal

in the Indies, which finds such pleasure with fishes and in the sea,

that by often swimming with them it becomes a fish, and of an animal of

the land becomes entirely an animal of the sea. So by often delighting

in God we become conformed to God, and our will is transformed into

that of the Divine Majesty, by the complacency which it takes therein.

The example of those we love has a sweet and unperceived empire and

insensible authority over us: it is necessary either to imitate or

forsake them. He who, drawn by the sweetness of perfumes, enters a

perfumer's shop, while receiving the pleasure which he takes in the

smell of those odours, perfumes himself, and going out, communicates to

others the pleasure which he has received, spreading amongst them the

scent of perfumes which he has contracted. Our heart, together with the

pleasure which it takes in the thing beloved, draws unto itself the

quality thereof, for delight opens the heart, as sorrow closes it,

whence the sacred holy Scripture often uses the word, dilate, instead

of, rejoice. Now the heart being opened by pleasure, the impressions of

the qualities on which the pleasure depends find easy passage into the

spirit; and together with them such others also as are in the same

subject, though disagreeable to us, creep in amid the throng of

pleasures, as he that lacked his marriage garment got into the banquet

amongst those that were adorned with it. So Aristotle's scholars took

pains to stammer like him, and Plato's walked bent-backed in imitation

of their master. In fine the pleasure which we take in a thing has a

certain communicative power which produces in the lover's heart the

qualities of the thing which pleases. And hence it is that holy

complacency transforms us into God whom we love, and by how much

greater the complacency, by so much the transformation is more perfect:

thus the saints that loved ardently were speedily and perfectly

transformed, love transporting and translating the manners and

disposition of the one heart into the other.

A strange yet a true thing! Place together two lutes which are in

unison, that is, of the same sound and accord, and let one of them be

played on:--the other though not touched will not fail to sound like

that which is played on, the affinity which is between them, as by a

natural love, causing this correspondence. We have a repugnance to

imitate those we hate even in good things, nor would the Laced�monians

follow the good counsel of a wicked man, unless some good man

pronounced it after him. On the contrary, we cannot help conforming

ourselves to what we love. In this sense, as I think, the great Apostle

said that the law was not made for the just: [355] for in truth the

just man is not just but insomuch as he has love, and if he have love

there is no need to press him by the rigour of the law, love being the

most pressing teacher and solicitor, to urge the heart which it

possesses to obey the will and the intention of the beloved. Love is a

magistrate who exercises his authority without noise, without

pursuivants or sergeants, by that mutual complacency, by which, as we

find pleasure in God, so also we desire to please him. Love is the

abridgment of all theology; it made the ignorance of a Paul, an Antony,

an Hilarion, a Simeon, a Francis, most holily learned, without books,

masters or art. In virtue of this love, the spouse may say with

assurance. My beloved is wholly mine, by the complacency wherewith he

pleases and feeds me; and I, I am wholly his, by the benevolence

wherewith I please and feed him again. My heart feeds on the pleasure

it takes in him, and his on my taking pleasure in him for his own sake.

As a holy shepherd he feeds me, his dear sheep, amidst the lilies of

his perfections, in which I take pleasure; and I, as his dear sheep,

feed him with the milk of my affections, by which I strive to please

him. Whosoever truly takes pleasure in God desires faithfully to please

God, and in order to please him, desires to conform himself to him.

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[355] 1 Tim. i. 9.

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CHAPTER II.

OF THE CONFORMITY OF SUBMISSION WHICH PROCEEDS FROM THE LOVE OF

BENEVOLENCE.

Complacency then draws into us the traits of the divine perfections

according as we are capable of receiving them, as the mirror receives

the sun's image, not according to the excellence and amplitude of that

great and admirable luminary, but in proportion to the capacity and

measure of its glass: so that we thus become conformed to God.

But besides this the love of benevolence brings us to this holy

conformity by another way. The love of complacency draws God into our

hearts, but the love of benevolence casts our hearts into God, and

consequently all our actions and affections, most lovingly dedicating

and consecrating them unto him: for benevolence desires to God all the

honour, all the glory, and all the acknowledgment which it is possible

to give him, as a certain exterior good which is due to his goodness.

Now this desire is practised according to the complacency which we take

in God, as follows. We have had an extreme complacency in perceiving

that God is sovereignly good, and therefore by the love of benevolence

we desire that all the loves which we can possibly imagine be employed

to love this goodness properly. We have taken delight in the sovereign

excellency of God's perfection, and thereupon we desire that he be

sovereignly loved, honoured and adored. We have rejoiced to consider

how God is not only the first beginning but also the last end, author,

preserver, and Lord of all things, for which reason we desire that all

things be subject to him by a sovereign obedience. We see God's will

sovereignly perfect, right, just and equitable; and upon this

consideration our desire is that it be the rule and sovereign law of

all things, and that it be observed, kept and obeyed by all other

wills.

But note, Theotimus, that I treat not here of the obedience due unto

God as he is our Lord and Master, our Father and Benefactor, for this

kind of obedience belongs to the virtue of justice, not to love. No, it

is not this I speak of at present, for though there were no hell to

punish the rebellious, nor heaven to reward the good, and though we had

no kind of obligation or duty to God (be this said by imagination of a

thing impossible and scarce imaginable), yet would the love of

benevolence move us to render all obedience and submission to God by

election and inclination, yea by a sweet violence of love, in

consideration of the sovereign goodness, justice and rectitude of his

divine will.

Do not we see, Theotimus, that a maiden by a free choice, which

proceeds from the love of benevolence, subjects herself to her husband,

to whom otherwise she owed no duty; or that a gentleman submits himself

to a foreign prince's command, or, perhaps, gives up his will into the

hands of the superior of some religious order which he may join? Even

so is our heart conformed to God's, when by holy benevolence we throw

all our affections into the hands of the divine will, to be turned and

directed as it chooses, to be moulded and formed to its good liking.

And in this point consists the profoundest obedience of love, which has

no need to be spurred by menaces or rewards, nor by any law or any

commandment; for it foreruns all this, submitting itself to God solely

for the most perfect goodness which is in God, whereby he deserves that

all wills should be obedient, subject and submissive to him, conforming

and uniting themselves for ever, in everything, and everywhere, to his

divine intentions.

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CHAPTER III.

HOW WE ARE TO CONFORM OURSELVES TO THAT DIVINE WILL, WHICH IS CALLED

THE SIGNIFIED WILL.

We sometimes consider God's will as it is in itself, and finding it all

holy and all good, we willingly praise, bless and adore it, and

sacrifice our own and all other creatures' wills to its obedience, by

that divine exclamation: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

At other times we consider God's will in the particular effects of it,

as in the events that touch us, and accidents that befall us, and

finally in the declaration and manifestation of his intentions. And

although God in reality has but one quite single and most simple will,

yet we call it by different names, according to the variety of the

means whereby we know it; by which variety also we are, in various

ways, obliged to conform ourselves to it.

Christian doctrine clearly proposes unto us the truths which God wills

that we should believe, the goods he will have us hope for, the pains

he will have us dread, what he will have us love, the commandments he

will have us observe, and the counsels he desires us to follow. And

this is called God's signified will, because he has signified and made

manifest unto us that it is his will and intention that all this should

be believed, hoped for, feared, loved and practised.

Now forasmuch as this signified will of God proceeds by way of desire,

and not by way of absolute will, we have power either to follow it by

obedience, or by disobedience to resist it; for to this purpose God

makes three acts of his will: he wills that we should be able to

resist, he desires that we should not resist, and yet allows us to

resist if we please. That we have power to resist depends on our

natural condition and liberty; that we do resist proceeds from our

malice; that we do not resist is according to the desire of the divine

goodness. And therefore when we resist, God contributes nothing to our

disobedience, but leaving our will in the hands of its liberty permits

it to make choice of evil; but when we obey, God contributes his

assistance, his inspiration, and his grace. For permission is an action

of the will which of itself is barren, sterile and fruitless, and is as

it were a passive action, which acts not but only permits action;

desire on the contrary is an active, fruitful, fertile action, which

excites, invites and urges. Wherefore God, in his desire that we should

follow his signified will, solicits, exhorts, excites, inspires, aids

and succours us, but in permitting us to resist he does nothing but

simply leave us to our own wills, according to our free election,

contrary to his desire and intention. And yet this desire is a true

desire, for how can one more truly express the desire that his friend

should make good cheer, than by providing a good and excellent banquet,

as did the king in the Gospel parable, and then, inviting, urging, and

in a manner compelling him, by prayers, exhortations and pressing

messages, to come and sit down at the table and eat. In truth, he that

should by main force open his friend's mouth, cram meat into his

throat, and make him swallow it, would not be giving courteous

entertainment to his friend, but would be using him like a beast, and

like a capon that has to be fattened. This kind of favour requires to

be offered by way of invitation, persuasion, and solicitation, not

violently and forcibly thrust upon a man, and hence it is done by way

of desire, not of absolute will. Now it is the same with regard to the

signified will of God: for in this, God desires with a true desire that

we should do what he makes known, and to this end he provides us with

all things necessary, exhorting and urging us to make use of them. In

this kind of favour one could desire no more, and as the sunbeams cease

not to be true sunbeams when they are shut out and repulsed by some

obstacle, so God's signified will remains the true will of God even if

it be resisted, though it has not the effects which it would have if it

were seconded.

The conformity then of our heart to the signified will of God consists

in this, that we will all that the divine goodness signifies unto us to

be of his intention,--believing according to his doctrine, hoping

according to his promises, fearing according to his threats, loving and

living according to his ordinances and admonitions, to which all the

protestations which we make so often in the holy ceremonies of the

Church do tend. For on this account we stand while the Gospel is read,

as being prepared to obey the holy signification of God's will

contained therein; hence we kiss the book at the place of the Gospel,

in adoration of the sacred word which declares his heavenly will. Hence

many saints of the old time carried in their bosoms the Gospel written,

as an epithem of love, as is related of S. Cecily, and S. Matthew's

Gospel was actually found upon the heart of the dead S. Barnabas,

written with his own hand. Wherefore in the ancient councils, in the

midst of the whole assembly of Bishops, there was erected a high

throne, and upon it was placed the book of the holy Gospels, which

represented the person of our Saviour,--King, Doctor, Director, Spirit

and sole Heart of the Councils, and of the whole Church: so much did

they reverence the signification of God's will expressed in that divine

book. Indeed that great mirror of the pastoral order, S. Charles,

Archbishop of Milan, never studied the holy Scripture but bareheaded

and upon his knees, to testify with what respect we are to read and

hear the signified will of God.

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CHAPTER IV.

OF THE CONFORMITY OF OUR WILL TO THE WILL WHICH GOD HAS TO SAVE US.

God has signified unto us by so many ways and means that his will is

that we should all be saved, that none can be ignorant of it. To this

purpose he made us to his own image and likeness by creation, and made

himself to our image and likeness by his Incarnation; after which he

suffered death to ransom and save all mankind, which he did with so

much love that, as the great S. Denis, apostle of France, recounts, he

said once to the holy man Carpus that he was ready to suffer another

Passion to save mankind, and that this would be agreeable to him if it

could be done without any man's sin.

And although all are not saved, yet is this will a true will of God's,

who works in us according to the condition of his and of our nature.

For his goodness moves him to liberally communicate unto us the

succours of his grace in order to bring us to the felicity of his

glory, but our nature requires that his liberality should leave us at

liberty to make use of it to our salvation, or to neglect it to our

damnation.

One thing I have asked of the Lord, said the prophet, this will I seek

after; . . . . that I may see the delight of the Lord and visit his

temple. [356] But what is the delight of the sovereign goodness, save

to pour out and communicate his perfections? Verily his delights are to

be with the children of men, and to shower his graces upon them.

Nothing is so agreeable and delightful to free agents as to do their

own will. Our sanctification is the will of God, and our salvation his

good-pleasure, nor is there any difference at all between good-pleasure

and delight, nor, consequently, between the divine delight and the

divine good will: yea the will which God has to do man good is called

good, [357] because it is amiable, kind, favourable, agreeable,

delicious, and as the Greeks, after S. Paul, said; it is a true

Philanthropy, that is a benevolence or a will entirely loving towards

men.

All the celestial temple of the triumphant and of the militant Church

resounds on every side with the canticles of this sweet love of God

towards us. And the most sacred body of our Saviour, as a most holy

temple of his divinity, is all decorated with the marks and tokens of

this benevolence. So that in visiting the divine temple we behold the

loving delights which his heart takes in doing us favours.

Let us then a thousand times a day turn our eyes upon this loving will

of God, and, making ours melt into it, let us devoutly cry out: O

goodness infinitely sweet, how amiable is thy will, how desirable are

thy favours! Thou hast created us for eternal life, and, thy maternal

bosom, with its sacred swelling breasts of an incomparable love,

abounds in the milk of mercy, whether it be to pardon sinners or to

perfect the just. Ah! why do not we then fasten our wills to thine, as

children fasten themselves on to their mother's breast, to draw the

milk of thy eternal benedictions!

Theotimus, we are to will our salvation in such sort as God wills it;

now he wills it by way of desire, and we also must incessantly desire

it, following his desire. Nor does he will it only, but in effect gives

us all necessary means to attain it: we then, in fulfilment of the

desire we have to be saved, must not only will, but in effect accept

all the graces which he has provided for us and offers unto us. It is

enough to say: I desire to be saved. But with regard to the means of

salvation, it is not enough to say: I desire them;--but we must, with

an absolute resolution, will and embrace the graces which God presents

to us: for our will must correspond with God's. And inasmuch as it

gives us the means of salvation, we ought to receive them, as we ought

to desire salvation in such sort as God desires it for us, and because

he desires it.

But it often happens that the means of attaining salvation, considered

in the gross and in general, are according to our hearts' liking, but

considered piecemeal and in particular, are terrifying to us. For have

we not seen poor S. Peter prepared to undergo in general all kind of

torments, yea, death itself, to follow his master, and yet, when it

came to the deed and performance, grow pale, tremble, and, at the word

of a simple maid, deny his master? Everyone deems himself able to drink

our Saviour's chalice with him, but when it is in fact presented to us,

we fly, we give up all. Things proposed in detail make a more strong

impression, and more sensibly wound the imagination. And for this

reason we have advised in the Introduction that after general

affections we should descend to particular ones in holy prayer. [358]

David accepted particular afflictions as an advancement towards his

perfection, when he sang in this wise: O Lord, how good it is for me

that thou hast humbled me, that I might learn thy justifications! [359]

So also were the Apostles joyous in their tribulations, because they

were held worthy to endure ignominy for their Saviour's name.

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[356] Ps. xxvi. 4.

[357] Rom. xii. 2.

[358] II. 6.

[359] Ps. cxviii. 71.

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CHAPTER V.

OF THE CONFORMITY OF OUR WILL TO THAT WILL OF GOD'S WHICH IS SIGNIFIED

TO US BY HIS COMMANDMENTS.

The desire which God has to make us observe his commandments is

extreme, as the whole Scripture witnesses. And how could he better

express it, than by the great rewards which he proposes to the

observers of his law, and the awful punishments with which he threatens

those who shall violate the same! This made David cry out: O Lord, thou

hast commanded thy Commandments to be kept most diligently. [360]

Now the love of complacency, beholding this divine desire, wills to

please God by observing it; the love of benevolence which submits all

to God, consequently submits our desires and wills to that will which

God has signified to us; and hence springs not only the observance, but

also the love of the commandments, which David extraordinarily extols

in Psalm cxviii., which he seems only to have composed for this object:

O how have I loved thy law, O Lord! It is my meditation all the day . .

. . . Therefore have I loved thy commandments above gold and the topaz

. . . . . How sweet are thy words to my palate, more than honey to my

mouth. [361]

But to stir up in us this holy and salutary love of the commandments,

we must contemplate their admirable beauty: for, as there are works

which are bad because they are prohibited, and others which are

prohibited because they are bad; so there are some that are good,

because they are commanded, and others that are commanded because they

are good and very useful. So that all of them are exceeding good and

worthy of love, because the commandment gives goodness to such as were

not otherwise good, and gives an increase of goodness to those others

which even if not commanded would not cease to be good. We do not take

good in good part, when it is presented by an enemy's hand. The

Laced�monians would not follow solid and wholesome advice coming from a

wicked person, till it was repeated to them by a good man. On the

contrary, a friend's present is always grateful. The sweetest

commandments become bitter when they are imposed by a tyrannical and

cruel heart; and they become most amiable when ordained by love.

Jacob's service seemed a royalty unto him, because it proceeded from

love. O how sweet and how much to be desired is the yoke of the

heavenly law, established by so amiable a king!

Many keep the commandments as sick men take medicines, more from fear

of dying in a state of damnation, than from love of living according to

our Saviour's pleasure. But as some persons have an aversion for

physic, be it never, so agreeable, only because it bears the name of

physic, so there are some souls who abhor things commanded simply

because they are commanded: and there was a certain man, 'tis said,

who, having lived quietly in the great city of Paris for the space of

fourscore years without ever going out of it, as soon as it was

enjoined him by the king that he should remain there the rest of his

days, went abroad to see the country, which in his whole lifetime

before he had not desired.

On the contrary, the loving heart loves the commandments; and the

harder they are, the more sweet and agreeable it finds them, because it

more perfectly pleases the beloved, and gives him more honour. It pours

forth and sings hymns of joy when God teaches it his commandments and

justifications. And as the pilgrim who merrily sings on his way adds

indeed the exertion of singing to that of walking, and yet actually, by

this increase of labour, unwearies himself, and lightens the hardship

of the way; even so the sacred lover finds such sweetness in the

commandments, that nothing so much eases and refreshes him, as the

gracious load of the precepts of his God. Whereupon the holy Psalmist

cries out: O Lord, thy justifications, or commandments, were the

subject of my song in the place of my pilgrimage. [362] It is said that

mules and horses laden with figs presently fall under their burden and

lose all their strength: more sweet than figs is the law of our Lord,

but brutal man who is become as the horse and the mule which have no

understanding, loses courage and finds not strength to bear this dear

burden. But as a branch of Agnus Castus keeps the traveller that bears

it about him from being weary, so the cross, the mortification, the

yoke, the law of our Saviour, who is the true Chaste Lamb, is a burden

which unwearies, refreshes and recreates the hearts that love his

divine Majesty. There is no labour where love is, or if there be any,

it is a beloved labour. Labour mixed with love is a certain

bitter-sweet, more pleasant to the palate than a thing purely sweet.

Thus then does heavenly love conform us to the will of God, and make us

carefully observe his commandments, as being the absolute desire of his

divine Majesty whom we will to please. So that this complacency with

its sweet and amiable violence, foreruns that necessity of obeying

which the law imposes upon us, converting this necessity into the

virtue of love, and every difficulty into delight.

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[360] Ps. cxviii. 4.

[361] vv. 97, 127, 103.

[362] Ps. cxviii. 54.

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CHAPTER VI.

OF THE CONFORMITY OF OUR WILL TO THAT WILL OF GOD WHICH IS SIGNIFIED

UNTO US BY HIS COUNSELS.

A Commandment testifies a most entire and absolute will in him who

gives it, but counsel only represents a will of desire: a commandment

obliges us, counsel only invites us; a commandment makes the

transgressors thereof culpable; counsel only makes such as do not

follow it less worthy of praise; those who violate commandments deserve

damnation, those who neglect counsels deserve only to be less

glorified. There is a difference between commanding and recommending:

in commanding we use authority to oblige, but in recommending we use

friendliness to induce and incite: a commandment imposes necessity,

counsel and recommendation induce to what is of greater utility:

commandments correspond to obedience, counsels to credence: we follow

counsel with intention to please, and commandments lest we should

displease. And thence it is that the love of complacency which obliges

us to please the beloved, consequently urges us to follow his counsels,

and the love of benevolence, which desires that all wills and

affections should be subjected unto him, causes that we not only will

what he ordains, but also what he counsels and exhorts to: as the love

and respect which a good child bears to his father make him resolve to

live not only according to the commandments which his father imposes,

but also according to the desires and inclinations which he manifests.

A counsel is indeed given for the benefit of him who receives it, to

the end that he may become perfect: If thou wilt be perfect, said our

Saviour, go sell all that thou hast, give it to the poor, and come,

follow me. [363] But the loving heart does not receive a counsel for

its utility, but to conform itself to the desire of him who gives the

counsel, and to render him the homage due to his will. And therefore it

receives not counsels but in such sort as God desires, nor does God

desire that every one should observe all counsels, but such only as are

suitable, according to the diversity of persons, times, occasions,

strengths, as charity requires: for she it is who, as queen of all the

virtues, of all the commandments, of all the counsels, and, in short,

of all Christian laws and works, gives to all of them their rank,

order, season and worth.

If your assistance be truly necessary to your father or mother to

enable them to live, it is no time then to practise the counsel of

retiring into a monastery, for charity ordains that you presently put

into execution its command of honouring, serving, aiding and succouring

your father or your mother. You are perhaps a prince, by whose

posterity the subjects of your crown are to be preserved in peace, and

assured against tyranny, sedition, civil wars: the effecting,

therefore, of so great a good, obliges you to beget lawful successors

in a holy marriage. It is either not to lose chastity, or at least to

lose it chastely, when for love of charity it is sacrificed to the

public good. Are you weak and uncertain in your health, and does it

require great support? Do not then voluntarily undertake actual

poverty, for this is forbidden you by charity. Charity not only forbids

fathers of families to sell all and give it to the poor, but also

commands them honestly to gather together what is requisite for the

support and education of wife, children and servants: as also it

commands kings and princes to lay up treasures, which, being acquired

by a laudible frugality, and not by tyrannical measures, serve as

wholesome defences against visible enemies. Does not S. Paul counsel

such as are married, that, the time of prayer being ended, they should

return to the well-ordered course of their married life? [364]

The counsels are all given for the perfection of the Christian people,

but not for that of each Christian in particular. There are

circumstances which make them sometimes impossible, sometimes

unprofitable, sometimes perilous, sometimes hurtful to some men, which

is one of the reasons why Our Saviour said of one of the counsels, what

he would have to be understood of them all: He that can receive it, let

him receive it: [365] as though he had said, according to S. Jerome's

exposition: he that can win and bear away the honour of chastity as a

prize of renown, let him take it, for it is proposed to such as shall

run valiantly. Not every one then is able, that is, it is not expedient

for every one, to observe always all the counsels, for as they are

granted in favour of charity, so is this the rule and measure by which

they are put in practice.

When, therefore, charity so orders, monks and religious are drawn out

of their cloisters to be made cardinals, prelates, parish-priests, yea

sometimes they are even joined in matrimony for a kingdom's repose, as

I have already said. And if charity make those leave their cloister

that bad bound themselves thereto by solemn vow,--for better reason,

and upon less occasion, one may by the authority of the same charity,

counsel many to live at home, to keep their means, to marry, yea to

turn soldiers and go to war, which is so perilous a profession.

Now when charity draws some to poverty and withdraws others from it,

when she directs some to marriage and others to continence, when she

shuts one up in a cloister and makes another quit it, she is not bound

to give account thereof to any one: for she has the plenitude of power

in Christian laws, as it is written: charity can do all things; she has

the perfection of prudence, according to that: charity does nothing

wrongly. [366] And if any would contest, and demand why she so does,

she will boldly make answer: The Lord hath need of it. [367] All is

made for charity, and charity for God. All must serve her and she none:

no, she serves not her well-beloved, whose servant she is not, but his

spouse, whom she does not serve, but love: for which cause we are to

take our orders from her how to exercise counsels. To some she will

appoint chastity without poverty, to others obedience and not chastity,

to others fasting but not alms-deeds, to others alms-deeds and fasting,

to others solitude and not the pastoral charge, to others intercourse

with men and not solitude. In fine she is a sacred water, by which the

garden of the church is fertilized, and though she herself have no

colour that can be called colour, yet the flowers which she makes

spring have each one its particular colour. She makes Martyrs redder

than the rose, Virgins whiter than the lily; some she dyes with the

fine violet of mortification, others with the yellow of marriage-cares,

variously employing the counsels, for the perfection of the souls who

are so happy as to live under her conduct.

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[363] Matt. xix. 21.

[364] 1 Cor. vii. 5.

[365] Matt. xix. 11.

[366] 1 Cor. xiii.

[367] Matt. xxi. 3.

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CHAPTER VII.

THAT THE LOVE OF GOD'S WILL SIGNIFIED IN THE COMMANDMENTS MOVES US TO

THE LOVE OF THE COUNSELS.

O Theotimus! how amiable is this Divine will! O how amiable and

desirable it is! O law all of love and all for love! The Hebrews by the

word, peace, understand the collection and perfection of all good

things, that is, happiness: and the Psalmist cries out: Much peace have

they that love thy law; and to them there is no stumbling-block: [368]

as though he would say: O Lord! what delights are in the love of thy

sacred commandments! The heart that is possessed with the love of thy

law is possessed of all delicious sweetness. Truly that great king

whose heart was made according to the heart of God, did so relish the

perfect excellence of the divine commandments, that he seems to be a

lover captivated with the beauty of this law as with the chaste spouse

and queen of his heart; as appears by his continual praises thereof.

When the heavenly spouse would express the infinite sweetness of her

divine lover's perfumes: Thy name, says she unto him, is as oil poured

out: [369] as though she said: thou art so excellently perfumed, that

thou seemest to be all perfume, and thou art more fitly termed ointment

and perfume, than anointed and perfumed. So the soul that loves God is

so transformed into the divine will, that it merits rather to be

called, God's will, than to be called, obedient and subject to his

will. Whence God says by Isaias, that he will call the Christian church

by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will pronounce, imprint, and

engrave, in the hearts of his faithful; and then, explaining this name,

he says it shall be: My will in her: [370] as though he had said, that

among such as are not Christians every one has his own will in the

midst of his heart, but among the true children of our Saviour, every

one shall forsake his own will, and shall have only one master-will,

dominant and universal, which shall animate, govern and direct all

souls, all hearts and all wills: and the name of honour amongst

Christians shall be no other than God's will in them, a will which

shall rule over all wills, and transform them all into itself; so that

the will of Christians and the will of Our Lord may be but one single

will. This was perfectly verified in the primitive Church, when, as

says the glorious S. Luke: In the multitude of the faithful there was

but one heart and one soul: [371] for he means not there to speak of

the heart that keeps alive our bodies, nor of the soul which animates

hearts with a human life, but he speaks of the heart which gives our

souls heavenly life, and of the soul that animates our hearts with the

supernatural life; the one, the singularly one heart and soul of true

Christians, which is no other thing than the will of God. Life, says

the Psalmist, is in the will of God, [372] not only because our

temporal life depends on the divine pleasure, but also because our

spiritual life consists in the execution of it, by which God lives and

reigns in us, making us live and subsist in him. On the contrary, the

wicked from of old (that is, always) have broken the yoke of the law of

God, and have said: I will not serve. [373] Wherefore God says that he

named them transgressors and rebels from the womb; [374] and speaking

to the king of Tyre, he reproaches him for having set his heart as the

heart of God: [375] for the spirit of revolt will have its heart to be

its own master, and its own will to be sovereign like the will of God;

it would not have the divine will to reign over it, but would be

absolute and without any dependence. O eternal Lord! suffer not

this,--but effect that not my will but thine be done. Yes, we are in

this world not to do our own will, but the will of thy goodness which

has placed us here. It was written of thee, O Saviour of my soul, that

thou didst the will of thy Eternal Father, [376] and by the first act

of the will of thy human soul, at the instant of thy conception, thou

didst lovingly embrace this law of the divine will, and didst place it

in the midst of thy heart there to reign and have dominion for ever.

Ah! who will give my soul the grace of having no will save the will of

her God!

Now when our love is exceeding great towards God's will, we are not

content to do only the Divine will which is signified unto us by the

commandments, but we also put ourselves under the obedience of the

counsels, which are only given us for a more perfect observing of the

commandments, to which also they have reference, as S. Thomas says

excellently well. O how well does he observe the prohibition of

unlawful pleasures who has even renounced the most just and legitimate

delights! How far is he from coveting another man's goods who rejects

even such as he might holily have kept! How far is he from preferring

his own will before God's, who, to do God's will, submits himself to

that of a man!

David upon a day was in his camp, and the Philistine garrison in

Bethlehem. [377] And David longed, and said: Oh! that some man would

give me a drink of the water out of the cistern that is in Bethlehem,

by the gate! And behold, he had no sooner said the word than three

valiant men set out, hand and head lowered, break through the hostile

camp, go to the cistern of Bethlehem, draw water, and bring it to

David, who, seeing the hazard which these three knightly men had run to

gratify his longing, would not drink the water obtained at the peril of

their blood and life, but poured it out in sacrifice to the eternal

God. Ah! mark, I beseech you, Theotimus, how great the ardour of these

cavaliers in the service and satisfaction of their master! They fly,

they break through the ranks of their enemies, they incur a thousand

dangers of destruction, to gratify only one simple desire, which their

king expresses before them. Our Saviour when he was in this world

declared his will in some cases by way of commandment, and in many

others he only signified it by way of desire: for he did highly commend

chastity, poverty, obedience and perfect resignation, the abnegation of

one's own will, widowhood, fasting, continual prayer; and what he said

of chastity, that he who could win the prize should win it, he said

sufficiently of all the other counsels. At this desire, the most

valiant Christians have entered on the race, and overcoming all

repugnances, concupiscences and difficulties, they have arrived at holy

perfection, keeping themselves to the strict observance of their King's

desires, and by this means bearing away the crown of glory.

Verily, as witnesses the divine Psalmist, God hears not only the

prayers of his faithful, but even their very desire and the mere

preparation of their hearts for prayer; [378] so inclined and forward

is he to do the will of those who love him. And why shall not we then

in return be so zealous in following God's holy will, as to do not only

what he orders, but also what we know he likes and wishes. Noble souls

need no other spur to the undertaking of a design than to know that

their beloved desires it: My soul, said one of them, melted when he

spoke. [379]

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[368] Ps. cxviii. 165.

[369] Cant. i. 2.

[370] Is. lxii. 14.

[371] Acts iv. 32.

[372] Ps. xxix. 6.

[373] Jer. ii. 20.

[374] Is. xlviii. 8.

[375] Ezech. xxviii. 2.

[376] Ps. xxxix. 9.

[377] 2 Kings xxiii.

[378] Ps. ix. 38

[379] Cant. v. 6.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THAT THE CONTEMPT OF THE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS IS A GREAT SIN.

The words in which our Saviour exhorts us to tend towards and aim at

perfection, are so forcible and so pressing, that we cannot dissemble

the obligation we have to undertake to carry out that design. Be holy,

says he, because I am holy. [380] He that is holy, let him be

sanctified still; and he that is just, let him be justified still.

[381] Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. [382] For this

cause, the great S. Bernard writing to the glorious S. Guerin, Abbot of

Aulps, whose life and miracles have left so sweet an odour in this

diocese: "The just man," says he, "never says it is enough; he still

hungers and thirsts after justice."

Truly, Theotimus, in temporal matters nothing suffices him who is not

satisfied with what is enough; for what can suffice him to whom

sufficiency is not sufficient? But in spiritual goods he has not

sufficient who is satisfied with what is enough, and sufficiency is not

sufficient, because true sufficiency in divine things consists partly

in the desire of affluence. God in the beginning commanded the earth to

bring forth the green herb, and such as may seed, and the fruit-tree

yielding fruit after its kind, which has also seed in itself. [383]

And do we not see by experience, that plants and fruits are not come to

their full growth and maturity till they bring forth their seeds and

pips, whence other trees and plants of the same kind spring. Never do

our virtues come to their full stature and measure, till such time as

they beget in us desires of progress, which like spiritual seeds serve

for the production of new degrees of virtue. And, methinks, the earth

of our heart is commanded to bring forth the plants of virtue, which

bear the fruits of good works, every one in its kind, and having the

seeds of desires and resolutions of ever multiplying and advancing in

perfection. And the virtue that bears not the seed of these desires is

not yet come to its growth and maturity. "So then," says S. Bernard to

the tepid man, "you do not want to advance in perfection? No. Nor yet

grow worse? No, truly. What, then--you would neither grow better nor

worse?--poor man, you would be what cannot be. Nothing, indeed, in the

world is either stable or constant; but of man it is said even more

specially that he never remaineth in the same state. [384] It is

necessary then that he either go forward or backward."

Now I say not, any more than does S. Bernard, that it is a sin not to

practise the counsels. No, in truth, Theotimus: for it is the very

difference between commandments and counsels, that the commandment

obliges us under pain of sin, and the counsel only invites us without

pain of sin. Yet I distinctly say that to contemn the aiming after

Christian perfection is a great sin, and that it is a still greater to

contemn the invitation by which our Saviour calls us to it; but it is

an insupportable impiety to contemn the counsels and means which our

Saviour points out for the attainment of it. It were a heresy to say,

that our Saviour had not given us good counsel, and a blasphemy to say

to God: Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways: [385]

but it is a horrible irreverence towards him who with so much love and

sweetness invites us to perfection, to say: I will not be holy or

perfect, nor have any larger portion of thy benevolence, nor follow the

counsels which thou givest me to make progress in perfection.

We may indeed without sin not follow the counsels, on account of the

affection we may have to other things: as for example, it is lawful for

a man not to sell what he possesseth to give to the poor, because he

has not the courage to make so entire a renunciation. It is also lawful

to marry, because one loves, or because one has not strength of mind

necessary to undertake the war which must be waged against the flesh.

But to profess not to wish to follow the counsels, nor any one of them,

cannot be done without contempt of him who gives them. Not to follow

the counsel of virginity, and so to marry, is not wrong, but marrying

as if putting marriage higher than chastity, as heretics do, that is a

great contempt either of the counsellor or of his counsel. To drink

wine against the doctor's advice when overcome with thirst or with a

desire to drink, is not precisely to contemn the doctor nor his advice:

but to say--I will not follow the doctor's advice--must necessarily

proceed from some bad opinion one harbours of him. Now as regards men,

one may often contemn their counsel, without contemning those who give

it, because to think that a man may have erred is not to contemn him.

But to reject and contemn God's counsel, can only spring from an idea

that he has not counselled us well; which cannot be thought but by a

spirit of blasphemy, as though God were not wise enough to be able, or

good enough to will, to give good advice. We may say the same of the

counsels of the Church, which by reason of the continued assistance of

the Holy Ghost, who instructs and conducts her in all truth, can never

give evil advice.

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[380] Levit. xi. 44.

[381] Apoc. xxii. 11

[382] Matt. v. 48.

[383] Gen. i. 11.

[384] Job xiv. 2.

[385] Job xxi. 14.

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CHAPTER IX.

A CONTINUATION OF THE PRECEDING DISCOURSE. HOW EVERY ONE, WHILE BOUND

TO LOVE, IS NOT BOUND TO PRACTISE, ALL THE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS, AND

YET HOW EVERY ONE SHOULD PRACTISE WHAT HE IS ABLE.

Although all the Evangelical Counsels cannot and should not be

practised by every Christian in particular, yet every one is obliged to

love them all, because they are all very good. If you have a sick

headache, and the smell of musk annoys you, will you therefore deny

that this smell is good and delightsome? If a robe of gold does not

suit you, will you say that therefore it is worth nothing? Or will you

throw a ring into the dirt because it fits not your finger? Praise

therefore, Theotimus, and dearly love, all the counsels that God has

given unto men.

Oh! blessed be the Angel of Great Counsel for ever, together with all

the counsels he gives and exhortations he makes to men! Ointment and

perfumes rejoice the heart, says Solomon, and the good counsels of a

friend are sweet to the soul! [386] But of what friend, and of what

counsels, do we speak? O God! it is of the friend of friends; and his

counsels are more delightful than honey: our friend is our Saviour, his

counsels are to save us. Let us rejoice, Theotimus, when we see others

undertake to follow those counsels, which we either cannot or must not

observe; let us pray for them, bless, favour and assist them: for

charity obliges us not only to love what is good for ourselves, but

that also which is good for our neighbour.

We shall sufficiently testify our love for all the counsels, when we

devoutly observe such as are suitable to our calling. For, as he that

believes one article of faith because God has revealed it by his Word

(announced and declared by the Church), cannot disbelieve the others:

and as he who observes one commandment for the pure love of God is most

ready to observe the others when occasion offers:--so he that loves and

prizes one evangelical counsel because it came from God, must

necessarily love all the others, because they are also from God. Now we

may with ease practise some of them, though not all of them together;

for God has given many, in order that every one may observe some of

them, and not a day passes without our having some opportunity of doing

so.

If charity require that to assist your father or mother you must live

with them, preserve at the same time the love and affection for your

seclusion; do not keep your heart in your father's house more than is

required for doing what charity orders to be done there. Is it

inexpedient for you, on account of your rank, to preserve perfect

chastity? Keep it at least, as much as you may without violating

charity. Let him who cannot do all, at least do some part. You are not

obliged to seek out him who has offended you, for it is his place to

return to himself, and to come to you to give you satisfaction, since

he began the injury and outrage: yet go, Theotimus, follow our

Saviour's counsel, prevent him in good, render him good for evil, cast

upon his head and heart the burning coals of signs of charity, that may

wholly inflame him and force him to a reconciliation. You are not bound

by rigour of law to give alms to all the poor you meet, but only to

such as are in very great need of them: yet do not therefore cease to

give willingly, according to our Saviour's counsel, to every poor

person you find, so far as your condition and your real necessities may

allow. You have no obligation to make any vow at all, yet make some,

such as shall be judged fit by your ghostly father for your advancement

in Divine love. You have liberty to use wine within the limits of

propriety; yet following S. Paul's counsel to Timothy, take only so

much as is requisite for your stomach's sake.

In counsels there are various degrees of perfection. To lend to such

poor people as are not in extreme want is the first degree of the

counsel of alms-deeds; to give it them is a degree higher; higher still

to give all; but the highest is to give oneself, dedicating our person

to their service. Hospitality except in extreme necessity is a counsel.

To entertain strangers is the first degree of it; but to stay by the

wayside to invite them as Abraham did, is a degree higher; and yet

higher than that is it to live in places of danger, in order to rescue,

help and wait upon travellers: in this excelled that great S. Bernard

of Menthon, a native of this diocese, who, being a scion of a most

noble house, did for many years inhabit the precipices and peaks of our

Alps, and there got together many associates to wait for, lodge and

rescue, and to deliver from the danger of the storm, travellers and

passers-by who would often perish amidst the tempests, snow and colds,

were it not for the hospices which this great friend of God erected and

founded upon the two mountains, which, taking their names from him, are

called the Great S. Bernard, in the diocese of Sion, and the Little S.

Bernard, in the diocese of Tarentaise. To visit the sick who are not in

extreme necessity is a laudable charity, to serve them is yet better,

but to consecrate a man's self to their service is the excellence of

that counsel: this, by their institute, the Clerks of the Visitation of

the Sick exercise; as do many ladies in various places; in imitation of

the great S. Samson, a gentleman and physician of Rome, who at

Constantinople, where he was made priest, with a wonderful charity

devoted himself to the service of the sick in a hospital which he began

there, and which the Emperor Justinian erected and finished: and in

imitation of SS. Catharine of Siena and of Genoa, S. Elizabeth of

Hungary, and the glorious friends of God S. Francis and the Blessed

(S.) Ignatius of Loyola, who in the beginning of their Orders performed

this exercise with an incomparable fervour and spiritual profit.

Virtues have then a certain sphere of perfection, and commonly we are

not obliged to practise them to the height of their excellence. It is

sufficient to go so far in the practice of them as really to enter upon

them. But to go farther, and to advance in perfection, is a counsel, as

the acts of heroic virtues are not ordinarily commanded, but counselled

only. And if upon some occasion we find ourselves obliged to exercise

them, it is by reason of some rare and extraordinary occurrence, which

makes them necessary for the preservation of God's grace. The blessed

door-keeper of the prison of Sebaste, seeing one of the forty who were

then martyred lose courage and the crown of martyrdom, took his place

without being apprehended, and thus made up the forty of those glorious

and triumphant soldiers of Our Lord. S. Adauctus seeing S. Felix led to

martyrdom,--I, quoth he (no one urging him), I also am as much a

Christian as he, worshipping the same Saviour; and with that, kissing

S. Felix, he walked with him to martyrdom and was beheaded. Thousands

of the ancient martyrs did the like, and having it equally in their

power to avoid or undergo martyrdom without sin, they chose rather

generously to undergo it than lawfully to avoid it. In these, martyrdom

was an heroic act of the fortitude and constancy which a holy excess of

love gave them. But when it is necessary to endure martyrdom or else to

renounce the faith, of martyrdom does not cease to be martyrdom, and an

excellent act love and valour, yet do I scarcely think it is to be

termed an heroic act, not being chosen by any excess of love but by

force of the law which in that case commands it. Now in the practice of

the heroic acts of virtue consists the perfect imitation of our

Saviour, who, as the great S. Thomas says, had all the virtues in an

heroic degree from the first instant of his conception; yea I would

willingly say more than heroic, since he was not simply more than man

but infinitely more than man, that is, true God.

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[386] Prov. xxvii. 9.

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CHAPTER X.

HOW WE ARE TO CONFORM OURSELVES TO GOD'S WILL SIGNIFIED UNTO US BY

INSPIRATIONS, AND FIRST, OF THE VARIETY OF THE MEANS BY WHICH GOD

INSPIRES US.

The rays of the sun enlighten while heating and heat while

enlightening. Inspiration is a heavenly ray which brings into our

hearts a light full of heat, by which it makes us see the good and

inflames us with a desire to pursue it. All that lives upon the face of

the earth is dulled by the cold of winter, but, upon the return of the

vital heat of spring, it all takes up its movement again. The animals

run more swiftly, birds fly more quickly and sing more merrily, and

plants put forth their leaves and flowers most gladsomely. Without

inspiration our souls would lead an idle, sluggish and fruitless life,

but on receiving the divine rays of inspiration we are sensible of a

light mingled with a quickening heat, which illuminates our

understanding, and which excites and animates our will, giving it the

strength to will and effect the good which is necessary for eternal

salvation. God having formed man's body of the slime of the earth, as

Moses says, breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a

living soul, that is, a soul which gave life, motion and operation to

the body; and the same eternal God breathes and infuses into our souls

the inspirations of the supernatural life, to the end that, as says the

great Apostle, they may become a quickening spirit, [387] that is, a

spirit which makes us live, move, feel, and work according to the

movements of grace, so that he who gave us being gives us also

operation. The breath of man warms the things it enters into; witness

the child of the Sunamitess, [388] to whose mouth the prophet Eliseus

having laid his, and breathed upon him, his flesh grew warm; and

experience makes it evident. But with regard to the breath of God, it

not only warms, but also gives a perfect light, his Spirit being an

infinite light, whose vital breath is called inspiration, because by it

the divine goodness breathes upon us and inspires us with the desires

and intentions of his heart.

Now it uses countless means of inspiring. S. Antony, S. Francis, S.

Anselm, and a thousand others, had frequent inspirations by the sight

of creatures. The ordinary means is preaching, but sometimes those whom

the word does not help are taught by tribulation, according to that of

the Prophet: And vexation alone shall make you understand what you

hear: [389] that is, such as by hearing the heavenly menaces against

the wicked do not amend, shall be taught the truth by the event and

effects, and feeling affliction shall become wise. S. Mary of Egypt was

inspired by the sight of a picture of Our Lady; S. Anthony, by hearing

the Gospel read at Mass; S. Augustine, by hearing the history of S.

Anthony's life; the Duke of Gandia (S. Francis Borgia), by looking upon

the dead empress; S. Pachomius, by seeing an example of charity; the

Blessed (S.) Ignatius of Loyola, by reading the lives of the Saints; S.

Cyprian (not the great Bishop of Carthage but a layman, yet a glorious

martyr) was moved by hearing the devil confess his impotence against

those that trust in God. When I was a youth at Paris, two scholars, one

of whom was a heretic, passing the night in the Faubourg S. Jacques in

debauchery, heard the Carthusians ring to Matins, and the heretic

asking the other why they rang, he described to him with what devotion

they celebrated the Divine office in that holy monastery: O God, quoth

he, how different is the practice of those religious from ours! They

perform the office of angels, and we that of brute beasts: and desiring

the day after to see by experience what he had learnt by his

companion's relation, he found the fathers in their stalls, standing

like a row of marble statues in their niches, motionless except for the

chanting of the Psalms, which they performed with a truly angelic

attention and devotion, according to the custom of this holy Order; so

that this poor youth, wholly ravished with admiration, was taken with

the exceeding consolation which he found in seeing God so well

worshipped amongst Catholics, and resolved, what afterwards he

effected, to put himself into the bosom of the Church, the true and

only spouse of him who had visited him with his inspiration, in the

infamous litter of abomination in which he had been.

Oh how happy are they who keep their hearts open to holy inspirations!

For these are never wanting to any, in so far as they are necessary for

living well and devoutly, according to each one's condition of life, or

for fulfilling holily the duties of his profession. For as God, by the

ministry of nature, furnishes every animal with the instincts which are

necessary for its preservation and the exercise of its natural powers,

so if we resist not God's grace, he bestows on every one of us the

inspirations necessary to live, to work, and to preserve our spiritual

life. O Lord, said the faithful Eliezer, the God of my master, Abraham,

meet me to-day, I beseech thee, and shew kindness to my master,

Abraham! Behold, I stand nigh the spring of water, and the daughters of

the inhabitants of this city will come out to draw water: now,

therefore, the maid to whom I shall say: let down thy pitcher that I

may drink: and she shall answer, drink, and I will give thy camels

drink also: let it be the same whom thou hast provided for thy servant

Isaac. [390] Theotimus Eliezer does not express any desire of water

except for himself, but the fair Rebecca, obeying the inspiration which

God and her kindness gave her, offers withal to water his camels;

whence she became holy Isaac's wife, daughter-in-law to the great

Abraham, and a grandmother to our Saviour. Truly, the souls which are

not contented with doing what the heavenly beloved requires at their

hands by his commandments and counsels, but also promptly comply with

sacred inspirations, are they whom the Eternal Father has destined to

be the spouses of his well-beloved son. And, as regards Eliezer, since

he cannot otherwise distinguish amongst the daughters of Haran (the

town of Nachor) which of them was destined for his master's son, God

reveals it unto him by inspiration. When we are at a loss, and human

help fails us in our perplexities, God then inspires us, nor will he

permit us to err, as long as we are humbly obedient. But I will say no

more of these necessary inspirations, having often spoken of them in

this work, as also in the Introduction to the Devout Life.

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[387] 1 Cor. xv. 45

[388] 4 Kings iv. 34.

[389] Is. xxviii. 19.

[390] Gen. xxiv. 12, 13, 14.

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CHAPTER XI.

OF THE UNION OF OUR WILL WITH GOD'S IN THE INSPIRATIONS WHICH ARE GIVEN

FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY PRACTICE OF VIRTUES; AND OF PERSEVERANCE IN ONE'S

VOCATION, THE FIRST MARK OF INSPIRATION.

There are certain inspirations which tend only to an extraordinary

perfection of the ordinary exercises of the Christian life. Charity

towards the sick poor is an ordinary exercise of true Christians; but

an ordinary exercise which was practised by S. Francis and S. Catharine

with an extraordinary perfection, when they licked and sucked the

ulcers of the leprous and the cancerous; and by the glorious S. Louis,

when bare-head and upon his knees he served the sick;--at which a

Cistercian abbot was lost in admiration, seeing him in this posture

handle and dress the horrible and cancerous sores of a poor wretch. And

it was also a very extraordinary exercise of this holy monarch to serve

the most abject and vile of the poor at his table, and to eat their

leavings. S. Jerome entertaining in his hospital at Bethlehem the

pilgrims of Europe who fled from the persecution of the Goths, did not

only wash their feet, but descended even so low as to wash and rub the

legs of their camels, imitating Rebecca whom we just mentioned, who not

only drew water for Eliezer, but for his camels also. S. Francis was

not only extreme in the practice of poverty, as is known to all, but

was equally so in the practice of simplicity. He redeemed a lamb which

he feared was going to be slaughtered, because it represented our

Saviour. He showed respect to almost all creatures, contemplating in

them their Creator, by an unusual yet most wise simplicity. Sometimes

he would busy himself with removing worms from the road, lest passers

by should trample them under their feet, remembering that our Saviour

had compared himself to the worm. He called creatures his brothers and

sisters, by a certain admirable consideration which love suggested unto

him. S. Alexius, a gentleman of very noble descent, practised in an

excellent manner the abjection of himself, living unknown for the space

of seventeen years in his father's house at Rome as a poor pilgrim. All

these inspirations were for ordinary exercises, practised, however,

with extraordinary perfection. Now, in this kind of inspiration we are

to observe the rules which we gave for desires in our Introduction.

[391] We must not strive to practise many exercises at once, and upon a

sudden, for the enemy often tries to make us undertake and begin many

designs, to the end that overwhelmed with the multiplicity of business

we may accomplish nothing, but leave all unfinished: yea, sometimes he

suggests the desire of undertaking some excellent work which he

foresees we shall not accomplish, in order to turn us from prosecuting

a work less excellent which we should have performed; for he cares not

how many purposes, plans and beginnings be made, so long as nothing is

done. He will not hinder the bringing forth of male children, any more

than Pharao did, provided that before they grow they are slain. On the

contrary, says the great S. Jerome, amongst Christians it is not so

much the beginning as the end that is regarded. We must not swallow so

much food as to be unable to digest what we take. The deceiving spirit

makes us stay in beginnings, and content ourselves with the flowery

spring-time, but the Divine Spirit makes us regard beginnings only in

order to attain the end, and only makes us rejoice in the flowers of

spring in the expectation of enjoying the ripe fruits of summer and

autumn.

The great S. Thomas is of opinion that it is not expedient to consult

and deliberate much concerning an inclination to enter a good and

well-regulated religious Order; for the religious life being counselled

by our Saviour in the Gospel, what need is there of many consultations?

It is sufficient to make one good one, with a few persons who are

thoroughly prudent and capable in such an affair, and who can assist us

to make a speedy and solid resolution; but as soon as we have once

deliberated and resolved, whether in this matter or in any other that

appertains to God's service, we must be constant and immovable, not

permitting ourselves to be shaken by any appearances of a greater good:

for very often, says the glorious S. Bernard, the devil deludes us, and

to draw us from the effecting of one good he proposes unto us some

other good, that seems better; and after we have started this, he, in

order to divert us from effecting it, presents a third, ready to let us

make plenty of beginnings if only we do not make an end. We should not

even go from one Order to another without very weighty motives, says S.

Thomas, following the Abbot Nestorius cited by Cassian.

I borrow from the great S. Anselm (writing to Lanzo) a beautiful

similitude. As a plant often transplanted can never take root, nor,

consequently, come to perfection and return the expected fruit; so the

soul that transplants her heart from design to design cannot do well,

nor come to the true growth of her perfection, since perfection does

not consist in beginnings but in accomplishments. The sacred living

creatures of Ezechiel went whither the impulse of the spirit was to go,

and they turned not when they went, and every one of them went straight

forward: [392] we are to go whither the inspiration moves us, not

turning about, nor returning back, but tending thither, whither God has

turned our face, without changing our gaze. He that is in a good way,

let him step out and get on. It happens sometimes that we forsake the

good to seek the better, and that having forsaken the one we find not

the other: better is the possession of a small treasure found, than the

expectation of a greater which is to find. The inspiration which moves

us to quit a real good which we enjoy in order to gain a better in the

future, is to be suspected. A young Portuguese, called Francis Bassus,

was admirable, not only in divine eloquence but also in the practice of

virtue, under the discipline of the Blessed (S.) Philip Neri in the

Congregation of the Oratory at Rome. Now he persuaded himself that he

was inspired to leave this holy society, to place himself in an Order,

strictly so called, and at last he resolved to do so. But the B.

Philip, assisting at his reception into the Order of S. Dominic, wept

bitterly; whereupon being asked by Francis Marie Tauruse, afterwards

Archbishop of Siena and Cardinal, why he shed tears: I deplore, said

he, the loss of so many virtues. And in fact this young man, who was so

excellently good and devout in the Congregation, after he became a

religious was so inconstant and fickle, that agitated with various

desires of novelties and changes, he gave afterwards great and grievous

scandal.

If the fowler go straight to the partridge's nest, she will show

herself, and counterfeit weakness and lameness, and, raising herself up

as though she would take a great flight, will immediately tumble down,

as if she were able to do no more, in order that the fowler being

busied in looking after her, and expecting easily to take her, may not

light on her little ones in the nest; but when he has pursued her a

while, and fancies he has her, she rises into the air and escapes. So

our enemy, seeing a man by God's inspiration undertake a profession and

manner of life fitted for his advancement in heavenly love, persuades

him to enter into some other way, more perfect in appearance; but

having put him out of his first way, he makes him by little and little

apprehend the second way impossible, proposing a third; that so keeping

him occupied in the continual inquiry for various and new means of

perfecting himself, he may hinder him from making use of any, and

consequently from attaining the end he seeks, which is perfection.

Young hounds leave the pack at every new scent, and make after the

fresh quarry; the old and well-scented hounds never change, but keep

the scent they are on. Let every one then, having once found out God's

holy will touching his vocation, keep to it holily and lovingly,

practising therein its proper exercises, according to the order of

discretion and with the zeal of perfection.

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[391] III. 37.

[392] Ezech. i. 12.

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CHAPTER XII.

OF THE UNION OF MAN'S WILL WITH GOD'S IN THOSE INSPIRATIONS WHICH ARE

CONTRARY TO ORDINARY LAWS; AND OF PEACE AND TRANQUILLITY OF HEART,

SECOND MARK OF INSPIRATION.

Thus then, Theotimus, we are to behave ourselves in those inspirations

which are only extraordinary in the sense that they move us to practise

ordinary Christian exercises with an extraordinary fervour and

perfection. But there are other inspirations which are called

extraordinary, not only because they make the soul pass the bounds of

ordinary actions, but also because they move it to actions contrary to

the common laws, rules and customs of the most holy Church and

therefore are more admirable than imitable. The holy maiden named by

historians Eusebia the Stranger, left Rome, her native city, with two

other maidens, and taking male attire embarked on a sea-voyage, went to

Alexandria, and thence to the Isle of Cos; there, finding herself safe,

she put on again her woman's dress, and again taking ship went into

Caria to the town of Mylassa, whither the great Paul, who had found her

in Cos and had taken her under his spiritual direction, led her, and

where afterwards being made Bishop, he so holily directed her that she

established a monastery and dedicated herself to serve the Church in

the office of deaconess (as in those days it was called), with such

fervour of charity that in the end she died a Saint, and by a number of

miracles which God did by her relics and intercession, was recognized

as such. To put on the attire belonging to the other sex, and thus

disguised to expose oneself to a journey with men, does not only pass

the ordinary rules of Christian modesty, but is even contrary to them.

A certain young man, having given his mother a kick, touched with a

lively repentance, confessed it to S. Anthony of Padua; who, to imprint

the horror of his sin more deeply in his heart, said to him, amongst

other things: My child, the foot which was the instrument of your

wickedness would deserve to be cut off for so great a trespass; which

the youth took in such good earnest, that having returned home to his

mother, transported with the feeling of contrition, he cut off his

foot. The words of the Saint would not have had such force, according

to their ordinary meaning, unless God had added his inspiration

thereunto; but it was so extraordinary an inspiration that it must

rather have been considered a temptation, if the miraculous restoration

of his foot, effected by the Saint's benediction, had not warranted it.

S. Paul the first hermit, S. Anthony, S. Mary of Egypt, did not bury

themselves in those vast wildernesses--deprived of hearing Mass, of

Communion, of Confession, and deprived, young as they were, of all

direction and assistance,--without a strong inspiration. The great

Simeon Stylites led a life that never mortal creature would have dreamt

of or undertaken without heavenly instinct and assistance. S. John,

bishop, surnamed the Silent, forsaking his diocese without the

knowledge of any of his clergy, passed the rest of his days in the

Monastery of Laura, nor was there afterwards any news heard of him. Was

not this contrary to the rule of keeping holy residence? And the great

S. Paulinus, who sold himself to ransom a poor widow's son, how could

he do it according to ordinary laws, since he was not his own, but, by

his episcopal consecration, belonged to the Church and his people?

Those virgins and married women who, being pursued for their beauty,

with voluntary wounds disfigured their faces, that under the mask of a

holy deformity they might preserve their chastity, did they not do a

thing, apparently, forbidden?

Now one of the best marks of the goodness of all inspirations in

general, and particularly of extraordinary ones, is the peace and

tranquillity of the heart that receives them: for though indeed the

Holy Ghost is violent, yet his violence is gentle, sweet and peaceful.

He comes as a mighty wind, [393] and as a heavenly thunder, but he does

not overthrow the Apostles, he troubles them not; the fear which they

had in hearing the sound was of no continuance, but was immediately

followed by a sweet assurance. That is why this fire sits upon each of

them, taking and causing a sacred repose; and as our Saviour is called

a peaceful or pacific Solomon, so is his spouse called Sulamitess, calm

and daughter of peace: and the voice, that is, the inspiration, of the

bridegroom does not in any sort disquiet or trouble her, but draws her

so sweetly that he makes her soul deliciously melt and, as it were,

flow out into him: My soul, says she, melted when my beloved spoke:

[394] and though she be warlike and martial, yet is she withal so

peaceable, that amidst armies and battles she maintains the concord of

an unequalled melody. What shalt thou see, saith she, in the Sulamitess

but the choirs of armies? [395] Her armies are choirs, that is,

harmonies of singers; and her choirs are armies, because the weapons of

the Church and of the devout soul, are only prayers, hymns, canticles

and psalms. Thus it is that those servants of God who had the highest

and sublimest inspirations were the most mild and peaceable men in the

world, as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob: Moses is styled the meekest of men;

David is lauded for his mildness. On the contrary, the evil spirit is

turbulent, rough, disturbing; and those who follow infernal

suggestions, taking them to be heavenly inspirations, are as a rule

easily known, because they are unquiet, headstrong, haughty, ready to

undertake or meddle with all affairs, men who under the cloak of zeal

turn everything upside down, censure every one, chide every one, find

fault with everything; they are persons who will not be directed, will

not give in to any one, will bear nothing, but gratify the passions of

self-love under the name of jealousy for God's honour.

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[393] Acts ii. 2.

[394] Cant. v. 6.

[395] Cant. vii. 1.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THIRD MARK OF INSPIRATION, WHICH IS HOLY OBEDIENCE TO THE CHURCH AND

SUPERIORS.

To peace and sweetness of heart is inseparably joined most holy

humility. But I do not term humility, that ceremonious profusion of

words, gestures, and kissings of the ground, obeisances,

inclinations,--when they are made, as often happens, without any inward

sense of our own abjection and of just esteem of our neighbour: for all

this is but a vain occupation of weak brains, and is rather to be

termed a phantom of humility, than humility.

I speak of a noble, real, productive and solid humility, which makes us

supple to correction, pliable and prompt to obedience. While the

incomparable Simeon Stylites was yet a novice at Teleda, he made

himself indocile to the advice of his superiors, who wished to hinder

him from practising so many strange austerities, which he did with an

inordinate cruelty to himself; so that at length he was on this account

turned out of the monastery, as being too little capable of the

mortification of the heart, and too much addicted to that of the body.

But having entered into himself and become more devout, and more

prudent in the spiritual life, he behaved quite differently, as he

showed in the following action. When the hermits who were dispersed

through the deserts near Antioch knew the extraordinary life which he

led upon the pillar, in which he seemed to be either an earthly angel

or a heavenly man, they despatched a messenger whom they ordered to

speak thus to him from them: Why dost thou, Simeon, leaving the highway

trodden by so many great and holy predecessors, follow another, unknown

of men, and so different from all that has been seen or heard to this

day? Simeon, quit this pillar, and come amongst other men to live,

after the manner of life and way of serving God used by the good

Fathers who have gone before us. In case Simeon, yielding to their

advice and giving in to their will, should show himself ready to

descend, they had charged the deputy to leave him free to persevere in

the manner of life he had begun, because by his obedience, said those

good Fathers, it could well be known that he had undertaken this kind

of life by the divine inspiration: but in case he should resist, and,

despising their exhortations, follow his own will, it would be

necessary to withdraw him thence by violence, and force him to forsake

his pillar. The deputy then, being come to the pillar, had no sooner

delivered his message, than the great Simeon, without delay, without

reservation, without any reply, began to descend with an obedience and

humility worthy of his rare sanctity. Which when the deputy saw: stay,

said he, O Simeon! remain there, persevere with constancy, take

courage, pursue thy enterprise valiantly; thy abiding upon this pillar

is from God.

But mark, I pray you, Theotimus, how these ancient and holy anchorites

in their general meeting, found no surer mark of a heavenly inspiration

in so extraordinary a matter as was the life of this holy Stylite, than

to find him simple, gentle, and tractable, under the laws of holy

obedience; and God, blessing the submission of this great man, gave him

the grace to persevere thirty whole years upon the top of a pillar

thirty-six cubits high, having previously passed seven years upon

others of six, twelve, and twenty feet, and having before that been ten

years on the peak of a little rock in the place called the Mandra. Thus

this bird of paradise, living above in air, and not touching earth, was

a spectacle of love to the angels, and of admiration to mortals. In

obedience all is secure, out of it all is to be suspected.

When God puts inspirations into a heart, the first he gives is

obedience. Was there ever a more illustrious and unmistakable

inspiration than that which was given to the glorious S. Paul? And the

principal point of it was, that he should repair to the city, where he

should learn from the mouth of Ananias what he was to do, and this

Ananias, a very famous man, was, as S. Dorotheus says, the Bishop of

Damascus. Whosoever says he is inspired, and yet refuses to obey his

superiors and follow their counsel, is an impostor. All the Prophets

and Preachers that ever were inspired by God, always loved the Church,

always adhered to her doctrine, always were approved by her, nor did

they ever announce anything so distinctly as this truth, that the lips

of the priest shall keep wisdom, and they shall seek the law at his

mouth. [396] So that extraordinary missions are diabolical illusions,

not heavenly inspirations, unless they be acknowledged and approved by

the pastors who have the ordinary mission. For thus Moses and the

prophets are reconciled. S. Francis, S. Dominic, and the other Fathers

of Religious Orders, were called to the service of souls by an

extraordinary inspiration, but they did so much the more humbly and

heartily submit themselves to the sacred Hierarchy of the Church. In

conclusion, the three best and most assured marks of lawful

inspirations, are perseverance, against inconstancy and levity; peace

and gentleness of heart, against disquiet and solicitude; humble

obedience, against obstinacy and extravagance.

And to conclude all that we have said touching the union of our will

with that will of God which is called signified;--almost all the herbs

which bear yellow flowers, yea, the chicory also which bears blue ones,

ever turn them towards the sun, and thus follow its course: but the

sunflower turns not only its flowers but also all its leaves, after the

movements of this great luminary. In the same way all the elect turn

the flower of their heart, which is obedience to the commandments,

towards the Divine will, but souls entirely taken with holy love not

only look towards this Divine goodness by obedience to the

commandments, but also by the union of all their affections, following

this heavenly sun in his round, in all that he commands, counsels and

inspires, without reserve or exception whatever; whence they can say

with the sacred Psalmist: Lord, I am become as a beast before thee: and

I am always with thee. Thou hast held me by my right hand; and by thy

will thou hast conducted me, and with thy glory thou hast received me.

[397] For as a well-broken horse is easily, gently and exactly managed

by his rider, in any way that is required, so the loving soul is so

pliable to God's will that he does with her what he pleases.

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[396] Mal. ii. 7.

[397] Ps. lxxii. 24, 23

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CHAPTER XIV.

A SHORT METHOD TO KNOW GOD'S WILL.

S. Basil says that God's will is made clear unto us by his ordinances

or commandments, and that then there is no deliberation to be made, for

we are simply to do what is ordained; but that for the rest we have

freedom to choose what seems good according to our liking; though we

are not to do all that is lawful but only what is expedient, and to

clearly discern what is expedient we are to follow the advice of our

spiritual father.

But, Theotimus, I am to warn you of a troublesome temptation which

often crosses the way of such souls as have a great desire to do what

is most according to God's will. For the enemy at every turn puts them

in doubt whether it is God's will for them to do one thing rather than

another; as for example, whether they should eat with a friend or no,

whether they should wear grey or black clothes, whether they should

fast Friday or Saturday, whether they should take recreation or abstain

from it; and in this they lose much time, and while they are busy and

anxious to find out what is the better, they unprofitably let slip the

time for doing many good things, the effecting of which would be far

more to God's glory, than this distinguishing between the good and the

better, which has taken up their time, could possibly be.

We are not accustomed to weigh little money, but only valuable pieces:

trading would be too troublesome and would devour too much time, if we

were to weigh pence, halfpence, farthings and half-farthings. So we are

not to weigh every petty action to know whether it be of more value

than others; yea there is often a kind of superstition in trying to

make this examination; for to what end should we puzzle to know whether

it were better to hear Mass in one church than in another, to spin than

to sew, to give alms to a man rather than a woman? It is not good

service to a master to spend as much time in considering what is to be

done, as in doing the things which are to be done. We are to proportion

our attention to the importance of what we undertake. It would be an

ill-regulated carefulness to take as much trouble in deliberating over

a journey of one day as over one of three or four hundred leagues.

The choice of one's vocation, the plan of some business of great

consequence, of some work occupying much time, of some very great

expenditure, the change of abode, the choice of society, and the like,

deserve to be seriously pondered, in order to see what is most

according to the will of God. But in little daily matters, in which

even a mistake is neither of moment nor irreparable, what need is there

to make a business of them, to scrutinize them, or to importunately ask

advice about them? To what end should I put myself upon the rack to

learn whether God would rather that I should say the Rosary or Our

Lady's Office, since there can be no such difference between them, that

a great examination need be held; that I should rather go to visit the

sick in the hospital than to Vespers, that I should rather go to a

sermon than to a church where there is an Indulgence? Commonly there is

no such importance in the one more than the other that it is worth

while to make any great deliberation. We must walk in good faith and

without minute consideration in such matters, and, as S. Basil says,

freely choose as we like, so as not to weary our spirit, lose our time,

or put ourselves in danger of disquiet, scruples, and superstition. But

I mean always where there is no great disproportion between the two

works, and where there is nothing of consideration on one side more

than on the other.

And even in matters of moment we are to use a great humility, and not

to think we can find out God's will by force of examination and

subtlety of discourse; but having implored the light of the Holy Ghost,

applied our consideration to the seeking of his good-pleasure, taken

the counsel of our director, and, perhaps, of two or three other

spiritual persons, we must resolve and determine in the name of God,

and must not afterwards question our choice, but devoutly, peacefully,

and firmly keep and pursue it. And although the difficulties,

temptations and the variety of circumstances which occur in the course

of executing our design, might cause us some doubt as to whether we had

made a good choice, yet we must remain settled, and not regard all

this, but consider that if we had made another choice we had perhaps

been a hundred times worse; to say nothing of our not knowing whether

it be God's will that we should be exercised in consolation or

desolation, in peace or war. The resolution being once holily taken, we

are never to doubt of the holiness of the execution; for unless we fail

it cannot fail. To act otherwise is a mark of great self-love, or of

childishness, weakness and silliness of spirit.

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BOOK IX.

OF THE

LOVE OF SUBMISSION, WHEREBY OUR WILL IS UNITED TO GOD'S GOOD-PLEASURE.

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CHAPTER I.

OF THE UNION OF OUR WILL TO THAT DIVINE WILL WHICH IS CALLED THE WILL

OF GOOD-PLEASURE.

Nothing, except sin, is done without that will of God which is called

absolute, or will of good-pleasure, which no one can hinder, and which

is only known to us by events: these show us, by their very happening,

that God has willed and intended them.

Let us consider, in one view, Theotimus, all that has been, is, and

shall be, and ravished with amazement, we shall be forced to cry out

with the Psalmist: I will praise thee, for thou art fearfully

magnified; wonderful are thy works, and my soul knoweth right well. Thy

knowledge is become wonderful to me; it is high, and I cannot reach to

it. [398] And from thence we pass on to most holy complacency,

rejoicing that God is so infinite in wisdom, power and goodness, which

are the three divine attributes, of which the world is but a small

evidence, or, as it were, sample.

Let us behold men and angels and all the variety of nature, of

qualities, conditions, faculties, affections, passions, graces and

privileges, which the Divine Providence has established in the

innumerable multitude of those heavenly intelligences and human

creatures in whom God's justice and mercy are so admirably exercised,

and we shall be unable to contain ourselves from singing, with a joy

full of respect and loving dread; Mercy and judgment I will sing to

thee, O Lord. [399]

Theotimus, we are to take an exceeding complacency in seeing how God

exercises his mercy in so many different benefits which he distributes

amongst men and angels in heaven and on earth, and how he exerts his

justice by an infinite, variety of pains and chastisements: for his

justice and mercy are equally amiable and admirable in themselves,

since both of them are no other thing than one same most singular

goodness and divinity. But the effects of his justice being sharp and

full of bitterness to us, he always sweetens them with the mingling of

his mercies, preserving the green olive amidst the waters of the deluge

of his just indignation, and giving power to the devout soul, as to a

chaste dove, to find it at last, provided always that after the fashion

of doves she very lovingly ruminate in her mind. So death, afflictions,

anguish, labours, whereof our life is full, and which by God's just

ordinance are the punishments of sin, are also, by his sweet mercy,

ladders to ascend to heaven, means to increase grace, and merits to

obtain glory. Blessed are poverty, hunger, thirst, sorrow, sickness,

death, persecution: for they are indeed the just punishments of our

faults, yet punishments so steeped in, or, to use the physician's term,

so aromatized with the Divine sweetness, benignity and clemency, that

their bitterness is most delicious. It is a strange yet a true thing,

Theotimus; if the damned were not blinded by their obstinacy, and by

their hatred for God, they would find consolation in their torments,

and see the divine mercy admirably mingled with their eternally

tormenting flames. Hence the Saints, considering on the one side the

horrible and dreadful torments of the damned, praise the Divine justice

therein, and cry out: Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right.

[400] but seeing on the other side that these pains, though eternal and

incomprehensible, come yet far short of the faults and crimes for which

they were inflicted--ravished with God's infinite mercy, they cry out:

O Lord, how good thou art, since in the very heat of thy wrath thou

canst not keep the torrent of thy mercies from pouring out its waters

on the pitiless flames of hell!

Mercy, O Lord, hath not thy soul forsaken,

E'en while thy justice hath its vengeance taken

In flames of hell; nor could thine ire repress

The torrent of thy wonted graciousness:

In fiercest wrath thou still dost interlace

Thy sternest justice with thine acts of grace.

Let us come, next, to ourselves in particular, and behold the multitude

of interior and exterior goods, as also the very great number of

interior and exterior pains, which the Divine Providence has prepared

for us: and, as if opening the arms of our consent, let us most

lovingly embrace all this, acquiescing in God's most holy will, and

singing unto him as it were a hymn of eternal acquiescence: Thy will be

done on earth as it is in heaven: yea, Lord, thy will be done on

earth,--where we have no pleasure which is not mixed with some pain, no

roses without thorns, no day without following night, no spring without

preceding winter; on earth, O Lord! where consolations are thinly, and

labours thickly, sown: yet, O God! thy will be done, not only in

carrying out thy commandments, counsels and inspirations, which are

things to be done by us, but also in suffering the afflictions and

pains which have to be borne by us; so that thy will may do by us, for

us, in us, and with us, all that it pleases.

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[398] Ps. cxxxviii. 14, 6

[399] Ps. c. 1.

[400] Ps. cxviii. 137.

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CHAPTER II.

THAT THE UNION OF OUR WILL WITH THE GOOD-PLEASURE OF GOD TAKES PLACE

PRINCIPALLY IN TRIBULATIONS.

Painful things cannot indeed be loved when considered in themselves,

but viewed in their source, that is, in the Divine Will and Providence

which ordains them, they are supremely delightful. Look at the rod of

Moses upon the ground, and it is a hideous serpent; look upon it in

Moses's hand, and it is a wand of miracles. Look at tribulations in

themselves, and they are dreadful; behold them in the will of God, and

they are love and delights. How often have we turned in disgust from

remedies and medicines when the doctor or apothecary offered them,

which, being offered by some well-beloved hand (love surmounting our

loathing), we receive with delight. In truth, love either takes away

the hardship of labour, or makes it dear to us while we feel it. It is

said that there is a river in Boeotia wherein the fish appear golden,

but taken out of those their native waters, they have the natural

colour of other fishes: afflictions are so; if we look at them outside

God's will, they have their natural bitterness, but he who considers

them in that eternal good-pleasure, finds them all golden, unspeakably

lovely and precious.

If Abraham had seen outside God's will the necessity of slaying his

son, think, Theotimus, what pangs and convulsions of heart he would

have felt, but seeing it in God's good-pleasure, it appears all golden,

and he tenderly embraces it. If the martyrs had looked upon their

torments outside this good-pleasure, how could they have sung, in

chains and flames? The truly loving heart loves God's good-pleasure not

in consolations only but in afflictions also; yea, it loves it better

upon the cross in pains and difficulties, because the principal effect

of love is to make the lover suffer for the thing beloved.

The Stoics, especially good Epictetus, placed all their philosophy in

abstaining and sustaining, bearing and forbearing; in abstaining from

and forbearing earthly delights, pleasures and honours; in sustaining

and bearing wrongs, labours and trials: but Christian doctrine, which

is the only true philosophy, has three principles upon which it grounds

all its exercises,--abnegation of self, which is far more than to

abstain from pleasures, carrying the cross, which is far more than

tolerating or sustaining it, following Our Lord, not only in renouncing

our self and bearing our cross, but also in the practice of all sorts

of good works. But at the same time there is not so much love shown in

abnegation or in action, as in suffering. The Holy Ghost in Holy

Scripture certainly signifies the death and passion which our Saviour

suffered for us, to be the highest point of his love towards us.

1. To love God's will in consolations is a good love when it is indeed

God's will that is loved, and not the consolation which is the form it

takes: however, this is a love without contradiction, repugnance and

effort: for who would not love so worthy a will in so agreeable a

form? 2. To love the will of God in his commandments, counsels and

inspirations is a second degree of love, and much more perfect, for it

leads us to the renouncing and quitting of our own will, and makes us

abstain from and forbear some pleasures, though not all. 3. To love

sufferings and afflictions for the love of God is the supreme point of

most holy charity, for there is nothing therein to receive our

affection save the will of God only; there is great contradiction on

the part of nature; and we not only forsake pleasures, but embrace

torments and labours.

Our mortal enemy knew well what was love's furthest and finest act,

when having heard from the mouth of God that Job was just, righteous,

fearing God, hating sin, and firm in innocence, he made no account of

this, in comparison with bearing afflictions, by which he made the last

and surest trial of the love of this great servant of God. To make

these afflictions extreme, he formed them out of the loss of all his

goods and of all his children, abandonment by all his friends, an

arrogant contradiction by his most intimate associates and his wife, a

contradiction full of contempt, mockery and reproach; to which be added

the collection of almost all human diseases, and particularly a

universal, cruel, offensive, horrible ulcer over all his body.

And yet behold the great Job, king as it were of all the miserable

creatures of the world, seated upon a dunghill, as upon the throne of

misery, adorned with sores, ulcers, and corruption, as with royal robes

suitable to the quality of his kingship, with so great an abjection and

annihilation, that if he had not spoken, one could not have discerned

whether Job was a man reduced to a dunghill, or the dunghill a

corruption in form of a man. Now, I say, hear the great Job crying out:

If we have received good things from the hand of the Lord, why shall we

not receive also evil? [401] O God! How this word is great with love!

He ponders, Theotimus, that it was from the hand of God that he had

received the good, testifying that he had not so much loved goods

because they were good, as because they came from the hand of the Lord;

whence he concludes that he is lovingly to support adversities, since

they proceed from the hand of the same Lord, which is equally to be

loved when it distributes afflictions and when it bestows consolations.

Every one easily receives good things, but to receive evil is a work of

perfect love, which loves them so much the more, inasmuch as they are

only lovable in respect of the hand that gives them.

The traveller who is in fear whether he has the right way, walks in

doubt, viewing the country over, and stands in a muse at the end of

almost every field to think whether he goes not astray, but he who is

sure of his way walks on gaily, boldly, and swiftly: even so the love

that desires to walk to God's will through consolations, walks ever in

fear of taking the wrong path, and of loving (in lieu of God's

good-pleasure) the pleasure which is in the consolation; but the love

that strikes straight through afflictions towards the will of God walks

in assurance, for affliction being in no wise lovable in itself, it is

an easy thing only to love it for the sake of him that sends it. The

hounds in spring-time are at fault at every step, finding hardly any

scent at all, because the herbs and flowers then smell so freshly that

their odour puts down that of the hart or hare: in the spring-time of

consolations love scarcely recognizes God's good-pleasure, because the

sensible pleasure of consolation so allures the heart, that it troubles

the attention which the heart should pay to the will of God. S.

Catharine of Siena, having from our Saviour her choice of a crown of

gold or a crown of thorns, chose this latter, as better suiting with

love: a desire of suffering, says the Blessed (S.) Angela of Foligno,

is an infallible mark of love: and the great Apostle cries out that he

glories only in the cross, [402] in infirmity, in persecution.

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[401] Job ii. 10.

[402] Gal. vi. 14.

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CHAPTER III.

OF THE UNION OF OUR WILL TO THE DIVINE GOOD-PLEASURE IN SPIRITUAL

AFFLICTIONS, BY RESIGNATION.

The love of the cross makes us undertake voluntary afflictions, as for

example, fasting, watching, hair-shirts and other macerations of the

flesh, and makes us renounce pleasures, honours and riches: and the

love in these exercises is very delightful to the beloved. Yet it is

still more so when we receive sweetly and contentedly pains, torments

and tribulations, by reason of the Divine will which sends us them. But

love is then at its height when we not only receive afflictions with

patience and sweetness, but cherish, love, and embrace them for the

sake of the Divine good-pleasure, whence they proceed.

Now of all the efforts of perfect love, that which is made by

acquiescence of spirit in spiritual tribulations, is doubtless the

purest and noblest. The Blessed (S.) Angela of Foligno makes an

admirable description of the interior pangs which she sometimes felt,

saying that her soul was tortured like to a man who being tied hand and

foot, should be hung by the neck without being strangled, and should

hang in this state betwixt life and death, without hope of help, and

unable to support himself by his feet or assist himself with his hands,

or to cry out, or even to sigh or moan. It is thus, Theotimus: the soul

is sometimes so overcharged with interior afflictions, that all her

faculties and powers are oppressed by the privation of all that might

relieve her, and by the apprehension and feeling of all that can be

grievous to her. So that in imitation of her Saviour she begins to be

troubled, to fear, and to be dismayed, and at length to sadden with a

sadness like to that of the dying. Whence she may rightly say: My soul

is sorrowful even unto death; and with the consent of her whole

interior, she desires, petitions, supplicates, that, if it be possible,

this chalice may pass, having nothing left her save the very supreme

point of her spirit, which cleaving hard to the divine will and

good-pleasure, says in a most sincere submission: O eternal Father, Ah!

not mine but thy will be done. And the main point is that the soul

makes this resignation amidst such a world of troubles, contradictions,

repugnances that she hardly even perceives that she makes it; at least

it seems done so coldly as not to be done from her heart nor properly,

since what then goes on for the divine good-pleasure is not only done

without delight and contentment, but even against the pleasure and

liking of all the rest of the heart, which is permitted by love to

bemoan itself (if only for the reason that it may not bemoan itself)

and to sigh out all the lamentations of Job and Jeremias, yet with the

condition that a sacred peace be still preserved in the depths of the

heart, in the highest and most delicate point of the spirit. But this

submissive peace is not tender or sweet, it is scarcely sensible,

though sincere, strong, unchangeable and full of love, and it seems to

have betaken itself to the very end of the spirit as into the

donjon-keep of the fort, where it remains in its high courage, though

all the rest be taken and oppressed with sorrow: and in this case, the

more love is deprived of all helps, and cut off from the aid of the

powers and faculties of the soul, the more it is to be esteemed for

preserving its fidelity so constantly.

This union or conformity with the divine good-pleasure is made either

by holy Resignation or by most holy Indifference. Now resignation is

practised with a certain effort of submission: one would willingly live

instead of dying, yet since it is God's pleasure that die we must, we

yield to it. We would willingly live, if it pleased God, yea, further,

we wish that it was his pleasure to let us live: we die submissively,

yet more willingly would we live; we depart with a reasonably good

will, yet we have a still stronger inclination to stay. Job in his

afflictions made the act of resignation: If we have received good

things at the hand of God, said he, why should we not receive the evil,

[403] why not sustain the pains and toils he sends us? Mark, Theotimus,

how he speaks of sustaining, supporting, enduring; As it hath pleased

the Lord so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord. [404] These

are words of resignation and acceptance, by way of suffering and

patience.

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[403] Job ii. 10.

[404] Job i. 21.

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CHAPTER IV.

OF THE UNION OF OUR WILL TO THE GOOD-PLEASURE OF GOD BY INDIFFERENCE.

Resignation prefers God's will before all things, yet it loves many

other things besides the will of God. Indifference goes beyond

resignation: for it loves nothing except for the love of God's will:

insomuch that nothing can stir the indifferent heart, in the presence

of the will of God. It is true that the most indifferent heart in the

world may be touched with some affection, so long as it does not know

where the will of God is. Eliezer being come to the fountain of Haran,

saw the virgin Rebecca, and found her lovely and amiable beyond his

expectation; but yet he stayed in Indifference, till he knew by a sign

from God, that the Divine will had prepared her for his master's son;

then he presented her with the earrings and bracelets of gold. On the

contrary, if Jacob had only loved in Rachel the alliance with Laban, to

which his father Isaac had obliged him, Lia would have been as dear

unto him as Rachel, they being both Laban's daughters; and consequently

his father's will would have been as well fulfilled in the one as in

the other. But because, besides his father's will, he desired to

satisfy his own liking, charmed with the beauty and grace of Rachel, he

disliked marrying Lia, and took her against his inclination,

resignedly.

But the indifferent heart is not such; for knowing that tribulation,

though hard-favoured as another Lia, ceases not on that account to be

daughter and well-beloved daughter to the Divine pleasure, it loves her

as much as consolation, though the latter be in herself more

amiable;--yea, it loves tribulation more, because it sees nothing

amiable in her save the mark of God's will. If I desire pure water

only, what care I whether it be served in a golden vessel or in a

glass, as in either case I take only the water: yea, I would rather

have it in a glass, because this has no other colour than water itself,

which thus I also see better. What matter whether God's will be

presented to us in tribulation or in consolation, since I seek nothing

in either of them but God's will, which is so much the better seen when

there is no other beauty present save that of this most holy, eternal,

good-pleasure.

Heroic, yea more than heroic, was the Indifference of the incomparable

S. Paul. I am straitened, said he, between two, having a desire to be

dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better. But to

abide still in the flesh is needful for you. [405] Wherein he was

followed by the great Bishop S. Martin, who having come to the end of

his life, pressed with an extreme desire to go to his God, did yet

testify that he would most willingly remain amongst the labours of his

charge, for the good of his flock, as if after having sung this

canticle: How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul

longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh

have rejoiced in the living God: [406] --went on to make this

exclamation: "Yet O Lord, if I am still necessary for the salvation of

your people, I refuse not the labour,--your will be done." Admirable

the Indifference of the Apostle, admirable that of this Apostolic man!

They see heaven open for them, they see a thousand labours on earth,

they are indifferent in the choice of either: nothing but the will of

God can set their hearts at rest; heaven appears no more pleasant than

worldly miseries, if God's good-pleasure be equally in them both:

labours are a heaven if God's will be found in them, and heaven is

unhappiness if it be not found therein; for as David said, they desire

nothing in heaven or earth except to see God's good-pleasure

accomplished. What have I in heaven, and besides thee what do I desire

upon earth? [407]

The indifferent heart is as a ball of wax in the hands of its God,

receiving with equal readiness all the impressions of the Divine

pleasure; it is a heart without choice, equally disposed for

everything, having no other object of its will than the will of its

God, and placing its affection not upon the things that God wills, but

upon the will of God who wills them. Wherefore, when God's will is in

various things, it chooses, at any cost, that in which it appears most.

God's will is found in marriage and in virginity, but because it is

more in virginity, the indifferent heart makes choice of virginity

though this cost it its life, as with S. Paul's dear spiritual daughter

S. Thecla, with S. Cecily, S. Agatha, and a thousand others. God's will

is found in the service of the poor and of the rich, but yet somewhat

more in serving the poor; the indifferent heart will choose that side.

God's will lies in moderation amid consolations, and in patience amid

tribulations: the indifferent heart prefers the latter, as having more

of God's will in it. To conclude, God's will is the sovereign object of

the indifferent soul; wheresoever she sees it she runs after the odour

of its perfumes, directing her course ever thither where it most

appears, without considering anything else. She is conducted by the

Divine will, as by a beloved chain; which way soever it goes, she

follows it: she would prize hell more with God's will than heaven

without it; nay she would even prefer hell before heaven if she

perceived only a little more of God's good-pleasure in that than in

this, so that if by supposition of an impossible thing she should know

that her damnation would be more agreeable to God than her salvation,

she would quit her salvation and run to her damnation.

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[405] Phil. i. 23.

[406] Ps. lxxxiii. 1.

[407] Ps. lxxii. 25.

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CHAPTER V.

THAT HOLY INDIFFERENCE EXTENDS TO ALL THINGS.

Indifference is to be practised in things belonging to the natural

life, as in health, sickness, beauty, deformity, weakness, strength: in

the affairs of the spiritual life, as in dryness, consolations, relish,

aridity; in actions, in sufferings,--briefly, in all sorts of events.

Job, in his natural life was struck with the most horrible sores that

ever eye beheld, in his civil life he was scorned, reviled, contemned,

and that by his nearest friends; in his spiritual life he was oppressed

with languors, oppression, convulsions, anguish, darkness, and with all

kinds of intolerable interior griefs, as his complaints and

lamentations bear witness. The great Apostle proclaims to us a general

Indifference; to show ourselves the true servants of God, in much

patience, in tribulation, in necessities, an distresses, in stripes, in

prisons, in seditions, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; in

chastity; in knowledge, in long-suffering, in sweetness, in the Holy

Ghost, in charity unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God;

by the armour of justice on the right hand and on the left, through

honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and

yet true; as unknown and yet known; as dying, and behold we live; as

chastised and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing: as needy,

yet enriching many; as having nothing, and possessing all things. [408]

Take notice, I pray you, Theotimus, how the life of the Apostles was

filled with afflictions: in the body by wounds, in the heart by

anguish, according to the world by infamy and prisons, and in all

these,--O God! what Indifference they had! Their sorrow is joyous,

their poverty rich, their death life-giving, their dishonour

honourable, that is, they are joyful for being sad, content to be poor,

strengthened with life amid the dangers of death, and glorious in being

made vile, because--such was the will of God. And whereas the will of

God was more recognized in sufferings than in the actions of virtues,

he ranks the exercise of patience first, saying: But in all things let

us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in

tribulation, in necessities, in distresses: and then, towards the end,

in chastity, in knowledge, in long-suffering.

In like manner our divine Saviour was incomparably afflicted in his

civil life, being condemned as guilty of treason against God and man;

beaten, scourged, reviled, and tormented with extraordinary ignominy;

in his natural life, dying in the most cruel and sensible torments that

heart could conceive; in his spiritual life enduring sorrows, fears,

terrors, anguish, abandonment, interior oppressions, such as never had,

nor shall have, their like. For though the supreme portion of his soul

did sovereignly enjoy eternal glory, yet love hindered this glory from

spreading its delicious influence into the feelings, or the

imagination, or the inferior reason, leaving thus his whole heart at

the mercy of sorrow and distress.

Ezechiel saw the likeness of a hand, which took him by a single lock of

the hairs of his head, lifting him up between heaven and earth; [409]

in like manner our Saviour, lifted up on the cross between heaven and

earth, seemed to be held in his Father's hand only by the very

extremity of the spirit, and, as it were, by one hair of his head,

which, touching the sweet hand of his eternal Father, received a

sovereign affluence of felicity, all the rest being swallowed up in

sorrow and grief: whereupon he cries out: My God, why hast thou

forsaken me?

They say that the fish termed lantern-of-the-sea in the midst of the

tempest thrusts out of the water her tongue, which is so luminous,

resplendent and clear, that it serves as a light or beacon for

mariners. So in the sea of passions by which Our Lord was overwhelmed,

all the faculties of his soul were, so to say, swallowed up and buried

in the whirlpool of so many pains, excepting only the point of his

spirit, which, exempt from all trouble, remained bright and resplendent

with glory and felicity. Oh how blessed is the love which reigns in the

heights of the spirit of faithful souls, while they are tossed upon the

billows and waves of interior tribulations!

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[408] 2 Cor. vi. 4-10

[409] Ezech. viii. 3.

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CHAPTER VI.

OF THE PRACTICE OF LOVING INDIFFERENCE, IN THINGS BELONGING TO THE

SERVICE OF GOD.

The divine good-pleasure is scarcely known otherwise than by events,

and as long as it is unknown to us, we must keep as close as possible

to the will of God which is already declared or signified to us: but as

soon as the Divine Majesty's pleasure appears, we must at once lovingly

yield ourselves to its obedience.

My mother (or it would be the same of myself) is ill in bed how do I

know whether God intends death to follow or not? Of course I cannot

know; but I know well that while awaiting the event from his

good-pleasure, he wills, by his declared will, that I use remedies

proper to effect a cure. But if it be the Divine pleasure that the

disease, victorious over the remedies, should at last bring death--as

soon as ever I am certain of this by the actual event, I will amorously

acquiesce, in the point of my spirit, in spite of all the opposition of

the inferior powers of my soul. Yes, Lord, I will say, it is my will

because thy good-pleasure is such; thus it has pleased thee, and so it

shall please me, who am the most humble servant of thy will.

But if the Divine pleasure were declared to me before the event took

place, as was to the great S. Peter the manner of his death, to the

great S. Paul his chains and prisons, to Jeremias the destruction of

his dear Jerusalem, to David the death of his son,--then we should have

at the same instant to unite our will to God's in imitation of the

great Abraham, and, like him, if we had such a command, we should have

to undertake the execution of the eternal decree even in the slaying of

our children: Oh admirable union of this patriarch's will to the will

of God, when, believing that it was the Divine pleasure that he should

sacrifice his child, he willed and undertook it so courageously!

admirable that of the child, who so meekly submitted himself to his

father's sword, to have God's good-pleasure performed at the price of

his own death!

But note here, Theotimus, a mark of the perfect union of an indifferent

heart with the Divine pleasure. Behold Abraham with the sword in his

hand, his arm extended ready to give the deathblow to his dear only

son: he is doing this to please the Divine will; and see at the same

time an angel, who, on the part of this same will, suddenly stops him,

and immediately he holds his stroke, equally ready to sacrifice or not

to sacrifice his son; whose life and whose death are indifferent to him

in the presence of God's will. When God gives him an order to sacrifice

his son he does not grow sad, when God dispenses with the order given

he does not rejoice, all is one to this great heart, so that God's will

be fulfilled.

Yes, Theotimus, for God oftentimes to exercise us in this holy

Indifference, inspires us with very high designs, which yet he will not

have accomplished, and as then we are boldly, courageously and

constantly to commence and to pursue the work as far as we can, so are

we sweetly and quietly to acquiesce in such result of our enterprise as

it pleases God to send us. S. Louis by inspiration passed the sea to

conquer the Holy Land; the event answered not his expectation, he

sweetly acquiesces. I more esteem the tranquillity of this submission

than the magnanimity of his enterprise. S. Francis went into Egypt to

convert the infidels, or amongst the infidels to die a martyr; such was

the will of God: yet he returned without performing either, and that

was also God's will. It was equally the will of God that S. Anthony of

Padua desired martyrdom and that he obtained it not. Blessed (S.)

Ignatius of Loyola having with such pains put on foot the Company of

the name of Jesus, from which he saw so many fair fruits and foresaw

many more in the time to come, had yet the nobility of soul to promise

himself that though he should see it dissolved (which would be the

bitterest pain that could befal him), within half an hour afterwards he

would be stayed and tranquil in the will of God. John of Avila, that

holy and learned preacher of Andalusia, having a design to form a

company of reformed priests for the advancement of God's glory, and

having already made good progress in the matter, as soon as he saw the

Jesuits in the field, thinking they were enough for that time,

immediately stopped his own undertaking, with an incomparable meekness

and humility. Oh how blessed are such souls, bold and strong in the

undertakings God proposes to them, and withal tractable and facile in

giving them over when God so disposes! These are marks of a most

perfect Indifference, to leave off doing a good when God pleases, and

to return from half way when God's will, which is our guide, ordains

it. Jonas was much to blame in being angry because God, as he

considered, did not fulfil his prophecy upon Ninive. Jonas did God's

will in announcing the destruction of Ninive; but he mingled his own

interest and will with that of God; whence, seeing that God did not

fulfil his prediction according to the rigour of the words he had used

in announcing it, he was offended and shamefully murmured. Whereas if

God's will had been the only motive of his actions, he would have been

as well content to have seen it accomplished in remission of the

penalty which Ninive had merited, as in punishment of the fault which

Ninive had committed. We desire that what we undertake or manage should

succeed, but it is not reasonable that God should do all after our

liking. If God wills Ninive to be threatened, and yet not overthrown

(since the threat is sufficient to correct it), why should Jonas think

himself aggrieved?

But if this be so, we are then to care for (affectionner) nothing, but

abandon our affairs to the mercy of events? Pardon me, Theotimus, we

are to omit nothing which is requisite to bring the work which God has

put into our hands to a happy issue, yet upon condition that, if the

event be contrary, we should lovingly and peaceably embrace it. For we

are commanded to have great care in what appertains to God's glory and

to our charge, but we are not bound to, or responsible for, the event,

because it is not in our power. Take care of him, was it said to the

innkeeper, in the parable of the poor man who lay half-dead between

Jerusalem and Jericho. It is not said, as St. Bernard remarks, cure

him, but, take care of him. So the Apostles with most earnest affection

preached first to the Jews, though they foresaw that in the end they

would be forced to leave them as an unfruitful soil, and betake

themselves to the Gentiles. It is our part to plant and water

carefully, but to give increase--that belongs only to God.

The great Psalmist makes this prayer to our Saviour as by an

exclamation of joy and with presage of victory: O Lord in thy

comeliness and thy beauty, bend thy bow, proceed prosperously and mount

thy horse. [410] As though he would say that by the arrows of his

heavenly love shot into human hearts, he made himself master of men,

and then handled them at his pleasure, not unlike to a horse well

trained. O Lord thou art the royal rider, who turnest the hearts of thy

faithful lovers every way about: sometimes thou givest them the rein,

and they run at full speed in the courses to which thou impellest them:

and then, when it seems good to thee, thou makest them stop in the

midst of their career and at the height of their speed.

But further, if the enterprise begun by inspiration fail by the fault

of those to whom it was committed, how can it then be said that a man

is to acquiesce in God's will? For, some one will say to me, it is not

God's will that hinders the success, but my fault. This is not caused

by God's will, for God is not author of sin; but yet for all that, it

is God's will that your fault should be followed by the overthrow and

failure of your design, in punishment of your fault; for though his

goodness cannot permit him to will your fault, yet does his justice

make him will the punishment you suffer for it. So God was not the

cause that David offended, yet it was God that inflicted upon him the

pain due to his sin. He was not the cause of Saul's sin, but he was the

cause that in punishment of it the victory fell from his hands.

When therefore it happens that in punishment of our fault our holy

designs have not good success, we must equally detest the fault by a

solid repentance, and accept its punishment; for as the sin is against

the will of God, so the punishment is according to his will.

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[410] Ps. xliv. 6. According to the Septuagint and the Hebrew (Tr.)

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CHAPTER VII.

OF THE INDIFFERENCE WHICH WE ARE TO HAVE AS TO OUR ADVANCEMENT IN

VIRTUES.

God has ordained that we should employ our whole endeavours to obtain

holy virtues, let us then forget nothing which might help our good

success in this pious enterprise. But after we have planted and

watered, let us then know for certain that it is God who must give

increase to the trees of our good inclinations and habits, and

therefore from his Divine Providence we are to expect the fruits of our

desires and labours, and if we find the progress and advancement of our

hearts in devotion not such as we would desire, let us not be troubled,

let us live in peace, let tranquillity always reign in our hearts. It

belongs to us diligently to cultivate our heart, and therefore we must

faithfully attend to it, but as for the plenty of the crop or harvest,

let us leave the care thereof to our Lord and Master. The husbandman

will never be reprehended for not having a good harvest, but only if he

did not carefully till and sow his ground. Let us not be troubled at

finding ourselves always novices in the exercise of virtues, for in the

monastery of a devout life every one considers himself always a novice,

and there the whole of life is meant as a probation; the most evident

argument, not only that we are novices, but also that we are worthy of

expulsion and reprobation, being, to esteem and hold ourselves

professed. For according to the rule of this Order not the solemnity

but the accomplishment of the vows makes the novices professed, nor are

the vows ever fulfilled while there remains yet something to be done

for their observance, and the obligation of serving God and making

progress in his love lasts always until death. But after all, will some

one say, if I know that it is by my own fault my progress in virtue is

so slow, how can I help being grieved and disquieted? I have said this

in the Introduction to a Devout Life, [411] but I willingly say it

again, because it can never be said sufficiently. We must be sorry for

faults with a repentance which is strong, settled, constant, tranquil,

but not troubled, unquiet or fainthearted. Are you sure that your

backwardness in virtue has come from your fault? Well then, humble

yourself before God, implore his mercy, fall prostrate before the face

of his goodness and demand pardon, confess your fault, cry him mercy in

the very ear of your confessor, so as to obtain absolution; but this

being done remain in peace, and having detested the offence, embrace

lovingly the abjection which you feel in yourself by reason of delaying

your advancement in good.

Ah! my Theotimus, the souls in Purgatory are there doubtless for their

sins, and for sins which they have detested and do supremely detest,

but as for the abjection and pain which remain from being detained in

that place, and from being deprived for a space of the enjoyment of the

blessed love which is in Paradise, they endure this lovingly, and they

devoutly pronounce the canticle of the Divine justice; Thou art just, O

Lord, and thy judgment is right. [412] Let us therefore await our

advancement with patience, and instead of disquieting ourselves because

we have so little profited in the time past, let us diligently

endeavour to do better in the time to come.

Behold, I beseech you, this good soul. She has greatly desired and

endeavoured to throw off the slavery of anger; and God has assisted

her, for he has quite delivered her from all the sins which proceed

from anger. She would die rather than utter a single injurious word, or

let any sign of hatred escape her, and yet she is subject to the

assaults and first motions of this passion, that is, to certain

startings, strong movements and sallies of an angry heart, which the

Chaldaic paraphrase calls stirrings (tremoussements), saying: Be

stirred and sin not;--where our sacred version says: Be angry and sin

not. [413] In effect it is the same thing, for the prophet would only

say that if anger surprise us, exciting in our hearts the first

stirrings of sin, we should be careful not to let ourselves be carried

further into this passion, for so we should offend. Now, although these

first movements and stirrings be no sin, yet the poor soul that is

often attacked by them, troubles, afflicts and disquiets herself, and

thinks she does well in being sad, as if it were the love of God that

provoked her to this sadness. And yet, Theotimus, it is not heavenly

love that causes this trouble, for that is never offended except by

sin; it is our self-love that desires to be exempt from the pains and

toils which the assaults of anger draw on us. It is not the offence

that displeases us in these stirrings of anger, there being none at all

committed, it is the pain we are put to in resisting which disquiets

us.

These rebellions of the sensual appetite, as well in anger as in

concupiscence, are left in us for our exercise, to the end that we may

practise spiritual valour in resisting them. This is that Philistine,

whom the true Israelites are ever to fight against but never to put

down; they may weaken him, but never annihilate him. He only dies with

us, and always lives with us. He is truly accursed, and detestable, as

springing from sin, and tending towards sin: wherefore, as we are

termed earth, because we are formed of earth and shall return to earth,

so this rebellion is named sin by the great Apostle, as having sprung

from sin and tending to sin, though it never makes us guilty unless we

second and obey it. Whereupon he exhorts us that we permit it not to

reign in our mortal body to obey the concupiscence thereof. [414] He

prohibits not the sentiment of sin, but the consenting to it. He does

not order us to hinder sin from coming into us and being in us, but he

commands that it should not reign in us. It is in us when we feel the

rebellion of the sensual appetite, but it does not reign in us unless

we give consent unto it. The physician will never order his feverish

patient not to be athirst, for that would be too great a folly; but he

will tell him that though he be thirsty he must abstain from drinking.

No one will tell a woman with child not to have a longing for

extravagant things, for this is not under her control, but she may well

be told to discover her longings, to the end that if she longs for

hurtful things one may divert her imagination, and not let such a fancy

get a hold on her brain.

The sting of the flesh, an angel of Satan, roughly attacked the great

S. Paul, in order to make him fall into sin. The poor Apostle endured

this as a shameful and infamous wrong, and on this account called it a

buffeting and ignominious treatment, and petitioned God to deliver him

from it, but God answered him: Paul, my grace is sufficient for thee,

for virtue is made perfect in infirmity. [415] Thereupon this great

holy man said in acquiescence:--Gladly will I glory in my infirmities

that the power of Christ may dwell in me. But take notice, I beseech

you, that there is sensual rebellion even in this admirable vessel of

election, who in running to the remedy of prayer teaches us that we are

to use the same arms against the temptations we feel. Note further that

Our Lord does not always permit these terrible revolts in man for the

punishment of sin, but to manifest the strength and virtue of the

Divine assistance and grace. Finally, note that we are not only not to

be disquieted in our temptations and infirmities, but we are even to

glory in our infirmity that thereby God's virtue may appear in us,

sustaining our weakness against the force of the suggestion and

temptation: for the glorious Apostle calls the stings and attacks of

impurity which he endured his infirmities, and says that he glories in

them, because, though he had the sense of them by his misery, yet

through God's mercy he did not give consent to them.

Indeed, as I have said above, the church condemned the error of certain

solitaries, who held that we might be perfectly delivered even in this

world from the passions of anger, concupiscence, fear, and the like.

God wills us to have enemies, and it is also his will that we should

repulse them. Let us then behave ourselves courageously between the one

and the other will of God, enduring with patience to be assaulted, and

endeavouring with courage by resistance to make head against, and

resist our assailants.

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[411] IV. 11.

[412] Ps. cxviii. 137.

[413] Ps. iv. 5.

[414] Rom. vi. 12.

[415] 2 Cor. xii. 9.

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CHAPTER VIII.

HOW WE ARE TO UNITE OUR WILL WITH GOD'S IN THE PERMISSION OF SINS.

God sovereignly hates sin, and yet he most wisely permits it, in order

to let the reasonable creature act according to the condition of its

nature; and to make the good more worthy of commendation, when having

power to transgress the law they do not transgress it. Let us therefore

adore and bless this holy permission, but since the Providence which

permits sin infinitely hates it, let us also detest and hate it,

desiring with all our power that sin permitted may not be committed,

and according to this desire let us make use of all means possible to

hinder the birth, growth and reign of sin. Let us in this imitate our

Saviour, who never ceases to exhort, promise, threaten, prohibit,

command and inspire us, in order to turn our will from sin, so far

forth as is possible without depriving us of liberty: and when the sin

is once committed let us endeavour what we are able to have it blotted

out, like our Saviour, who assured Carpus, as was said above, that, if

it were requisite, he was ready to suffer death again to deliver a

single soul from sin. But if the sinner grow obstinate, let us weep,

Theotimus, groan, pray for him, before the Saviour of our souls, who

having all his lifetime shed an abundance of tears over sinners and

over those who represented all sinners, died in the end--his eyes full

of tears, his body all steeped in blood--lamenting the ruin of sinners.

This affection touched David so to the quick that he fell into a swoon

over it: A fainting, said he, hath seized me for sinners abandoning thy

law. [416] And the great Apostle protests that he has a continual

sorrow in his heart, [417] for the obstinacy of the Jews.

Meanwhile, however obstinate sinners may be, let us never desist from

aiding and assisting them. How do we know but that they may do penance

and be saved? Happy is he that can say to his neighbour as did S. Paul:

For three years I ceased not with tears to admonish every one of you

night and day. Wherefore I take you to witness this day that I am clear

from the blood of all men. For I have not spared to declare unto you

all the counsel of God. [418] So long as we are within the limits of

hope that the sinner will amend (which limits are always of the same

extent as those of his life), we must never reject him, but pray for

him and assist him as far as his misery will permit.

But, at last, after we have wept over the obstinate, and performed

towards them the good offices of charity in trying to reclaim them from

perdition, we must imitate our Saviour and the Apostles; that is, we

must divert our spirit from thence and place it upon other objects and

employments which are more to the advancement of God's glory. To you it

behoved us first (said the Apostles to the Jews) to speak the word of

God: but because you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of

eternal life, behold we turn to the Gentiles. [419] The kingdom of God

(said our Saviour) shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a

nation yielding the fruits thereof. [420] For we cannot spend too long

time in bewailing some, without losing time fit and necessary for

procuring the salvation of others. The Apostle indeed says that the

loss of the Jews is a continual sorrow to him, but this is said in the

same sense that we say we praise God always; for we mean no other thing

thereby than that we praise him very frequently, and on every occasion;

and in the same manner the glorious St. Paul felt a continual grief in

his heart on account of the reprobation of the Jews, in the sense that

on every occasion he bemoaned their misfortune.

For the rest we must ever adore, love and praise God avenging and

punishing justice as we love his mercy, being both daughters of his

goodness; for by his grace he makes us good, being good, yea,

sovereignly good, himself; by his justice he punishes sin because he

hates it, and he hates it because, being sovereignly good, he hates the

sovereign evil which is iniquity: and, in conclusion, note, that God

never withdraws his mercy from us save by the just vengeance of his

punishing justice, nor do we ever escape the rigour of his justice but

by his justifying mercy: and always, whether punishing or favouring us,

his good-pleasure is worthy of adoration, love and everlasting praise.

So the just man who sings the praises of the mercy of God over such as

shall be saved, will also rejoice when he shall see his vengeance. The

blessed shall with joy approve the sentence of the damnation of the

reprobate, as well as that of the salvation of the elect: and the

angels, having exercised their charity towards those that they had in

keeping, shall remain in peace, when they see them obstinate, yea even

damned. We are therefore to submit ourselves to the Divine will, and

kiss the right hand of his mercy and the left hand of his justice, with

an equal love and reverence.

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[416] Ps. cxviii. 53.

[417] Rom. ix. 2.

[418] Acts xx. 31, 26, 27.

[419] Acts xiii. 46.

[420] Matt. xxi. 43.

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CHAPTER IX.

HOW THE PURITY OF INDIFFERENCE IS TO BE PRACTISED IN THE ACTIONS OF

SACRED LOVE.

One of the most excellent musicians in the world, who played perfectly

upon the lute, became in time so extremely deaf that he entirely lost

the use of his hearing, yet ceased he not for all that to sing and to

handle his lute marvellous delicately, by reason of the great skill he

had acquired, of which his deafness did not deprive him. But because he

had no pleasure in his song, nor yet in the sound of his lute, inasmuch

as, being deprived of his hearing he could not perceive its sweetness

and beauty,--he no longer sang or played save only to content a prince

whose native subject he was, and whom he had an extreme inclination, as

well as an infinite obligation, to please, because brought up in his

palace from childhood. Hence he took an incomparable delight in

pleasing him, and when his prince showed that he was pleased with his

music he was ravished with delight. But it happened sometimes that the

prince, to make trial of this loving musician's love, gave him an order

to sing, and then immediately leaving him there in his chamber, went to

the chase. The desire which this singer had to accomplish his master's

will, made him continue his music as attentively as though his prince

had been present, though in very deed he had no content in singing. For

he neither had the pleasure of the melody, whereof his deafness

deprived him, nor the content of pleasing his prince, who being absent

could not enjoy the sweetness of the beautiful airs he sang.

My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready: I will sing and rehearse a

psalm. Arise, O my glory! Arise psaltery and harp: I will arise early.

[421] Man's heart is the true chaunter of the canticle of sacred love,

himself the harp and the psaltery. Now ordinarily this chaunter hears

his own voice, and takes a great pleasure in the melody of his song. I

mean that our heart, loving God, relishes the delights of this love,

and takes an incomparable contentment in loving so lovely an object.

Notice, I pray you, Theotimus, what I mean. The young nightingales do

first essay a beginning of song to imitate the old ones; but having got

skill and become masters, they sing for the pleasure which they take in

warbling, and they so passionately addict themselves to this delight,

as I have said in another place, that by force of straining their

voice, their throat bursts and they die. So our hearts in the beginning

of their devotion love God that they may be united and become agreeable

unto him, and imitate him in that he hath loved us for all eternity;

but by little and little being formed and exercised in holy love, they

are imperceptibly changed. In lieu of loving God in order to please

God, they begin to love him for the pleasure they take in the exercises

of holy love; and instead of falling in love with God they fall in love

with the love they bear him, and stand affected to their own

affections. They no longer take pleasure in God, but in the pleasure

they find in his love. They content themselves with this love as being

their own, in their spirit and proceeding from it; for though this

sacred love be called the love of God because God is loved by it, yet

it is also ours, because we are the lovers that love. And it is thus we

make the change; for instead of loving this holy love because it tends

to God who is the beloved, we love it because it proceeds from us who

are the lovers. Now who does not see that in so doing we do not seek

God, but turn home to ourselves, loving the love instead of loving the

beloved? Loving, I say, the love, not by reason of God's good-pleasure

and liking, but for the pleasure and content we draw from it. This

chaunter who in the beginning sang to God and for God, now rather sings

to himself and for himself than for God; and the pleasure he takes in

singing is not so much to please God's ear as his own. And forasmuch as

the canticle of Divine love is of all the most excellent, he also loves

it better, not by reason of the Divine excellence which is exalted

therein, but because its music is more delicious and agreeable.

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[421] Ps. lvi. 8, 9.

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CHAPTER X.

MEANS TO DISCOVER WHEN WE CHANGE IN THE MATTER OF THIS HOLY LOVE.

You may easily discover this, Theotimus; for if this mystical

nightingale sing to please God, she will sing the song which she knows

to be most grateful to the Divine Providence, but if she sing for the

delight which she herself takes in her melodious song, she will not

sing the canticle which is most agreeable to the heavenly goodness, but

that which she herself likes best, and from which she expects to draw

the most contentment. Of two canticles which are both divine, it may

well be that one may be sung because it is divine, and the other

because it is pleasing. Rachel and Lia are equally wife of Jacob, but

he loves one only in the quality of wife, the other in quality of

beautiful. The canticle is divine, but the motive which moves us to

sing it is the spiritual delectation which we expect from it.

Do you not see, we may say to a bishop, that God wills you to sing the

pastoral song of his love among your flock, which, in virtue of holy

love, he thrice commands you (in the person of S. Peter, the first of

pastors) to feed? What is your answer? That at Rome or Paris there are

more spiritual pleasures, and that there one may practise Divine love

with more sweetness. O God! it is not then to please thee that this man

desires to sing, it is for the pleasure he takes in it; it is not thou

he seeks in his love, but the contentment which he receives in the

exercises of this holy love. Religious men would sing the pastors'

song, and married people that of religious, in order, as they say, to

be able to love and serve God better. Ah! you deceive yourselves my

dear friends: do not say that it is to love and serve God better: Oh

no, no, indeed! It is to serve your own satisfaction better, you prefer

this before God's. God's will is as much in sickness as in health, and

ordinarily almost more so; wherefore if we love health better, let us

never say that this is in order to serve God the better, for who sees

not that it is health that we look for in God's will, not God's will in

health.

It is hard, I confess, to behold long together and with delight the

beauty of a mirror without casting an eye upon ourself, yea, without

taking a complacency in ourself; yet there is a difference between the

pleasure which we take in beholding the beauty of the mirror, and the

complacency we take in seeing ourself in it. It is also without doubt

very hard to love God and not withal love the pleasure which we take in

his love, yet there is a notable difference between the pleasure which

we take in loving God because he is beautiful, and that which we take

in loving him because his love is agreeable to us. Now our task must be

to seek in God only the love of his beauty, not the pleasure which is

in the beauty of his love. He who in praying to God notices that he is

praying, is not perfectly attentive to his prayer, for he diverts his

attention from God to whom he prays, and turns it upon the prayer by

which he prays. The very solicitude we have not to be distracted causes

oftentimes a very great distraction; simplicity in spiritual actions is

most to be commended. If you wish to contemplate God, contemplate him

then, and that attentively: if you reflect and bring your eyes

backwards upon yourself, to see how you look when you look upon him, it

is not now he that you behold but your own behaviour--your self. He who

prays fervently knows not whether he prays or not, for he is not

thinking of the prayer which he makes but of God to whom he makes it.

He that is in the heat of sacred love, does not turn his heart back

upon himself to see what he is doing, but keeps it set and bent upon

God to whom he applies his love. The heavenly chaunter takes such

pleasure in pleasing God, that he has no pleasure in the melody of his

voice, except in so far as God is pleased by it.

Why, Theotimus, did Amnon the son of David love Thamar so desperately

that he even thought he should die of love? Do you think that it was

she herself that he loved? You soon see it was not. Look at this man

who prays, apparently, with such great devotion, and is so ardent in

the practice of heavenly love. But stay a little, and you will discover

whether it be God indeed whom he loves. Alas! as soon as the delight

and satisfaction which he took in love departs, and dryness comes, he

will stop short, and only casually pray. If it had been God indeed whom

he loved, why should he cease loving him, since God is ever God? It was

therefore the consolations of God that he loved, not the God of

consolation. In truth there are many who take no delight in divine love

unless it be candied in the sugar of some sensible sweetness, and they

would willingly act like children, who, if they have a little honey

spread upon their bread, lick and suck off the honey, casting the bread

away; for if the delight could be separated from the love, they would

reject love and take the sweetness only. Wherefore as they follow love

for the sake of its sweetness, when they find not this they make no

account of love. But such persons are exposed to a great danger of

either turning back as soon as they miss their relish and consolations,

or else of occupying themselves in vain sweetnesses, far remote from

true love, and of mistaking the honey of Heraclea for that of Narbonne.

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CHAPTER XI.

OF THE PERPLEXITY OF A HEART WHICH LOVES WITHOUT KNOWING WHETHER IT

PLEASES THE BELOVED.

The musician of whom I have spoken having become deaf, had no delight

in his singing, save only that now and then he perceived his prince

attentive to it and enjoying it. O how happy is the heart that loves

God without pretence of any other pleasure than what it takes in

pleasing God! For what more pure and perfect pleasure can a soul ever

take than that which is taken in pleasing the Divinity? Yet this

pleasure of pleasing God is not properly Divine love, but the fruit

thereof; which may be separated from it as the lemon from the

lemon-tree. For, as I have said, our musician always sang without

reaping any contentment from his song, because his deafness made him

incapable of it: and often also did he sing without having the pleasure

of pleasing his prince, who, after he had given him order to begin,

would withdraw, or go hunting, neither taking leisure nor pleasure to

hear him.

While, O God, I see thy sweet face, which testifies unto me that thou

art pleased in the song of my love, ah! how am I comforted. For is

there any pleasure comparable to the pleasure of truly pleasing our

God? But when thou turnest thine eyes from me, and I no longer perceive

the sweet savour of the complacency which thou takest in my song--good

God! what pangs my soul endures! But it ceases not, for all that, to

love thee faithfully, or continually to sing the hymn of its dilection,

not for any delight it finds therein, for it finds none at all, but for

the pure love of thy will.

One may have seen a sick child bravely eat what his mother presents him

(though with an incredible loathing) from the pure desire of giving her

content. In this case he eats without taking any pleasure in his food,

yet not without a pleasure of a higher order and value, which is the

pleasure of pleasing his mother and of perceiving her content. But

another who, without seeing his mother, from the mere knowledge he has

of her desire, takes all that is sent him by her, eats without any

pleasure at all. For he has neither the pleasure of eating, nor yet the

contentment of seeing his mother pleased, but he eats purely and simply

to do her will. The contentment of our prince present with us, or of

any one whom we love tenderly, makes watchings, pains and labours

delicious, and begets in us a love of peril: but nothing is so grievous

as to serve a master who knows it not, or, if he know it, yet gives no

sign that he is satisfied: love must be strong in such case, because it

stands of itself, unsupported by any pleasure or any expectation.

So it comes to pass sometimes that we have no consolation in the

exercises of holy love, because, like deaf singers, we hear not our own

voices, nor enjoy the sweetness of our song; but on the contrary,

besides this privation, are oppressed with a thousand fears, and

frightened with a thousand false alarms which the enemy raises round

about our heart; suggesting that perhaps we are not in grace with our

master, and that our love is fruitless, yea, that it is false and vain,

since it brings forth no comfort. And then, Theotimus, we labour not

only without pleasure but with an exceeding distress, being neither

able to discover the profit of our labours, nor the contentment of him

for whom we labour.

But what in this case augments our trouble is that even the spirit and

highest point of the reason cannot give any assuagement at all; for

this poor superior portion of reason being beset round about with the

suggestions of the enemy, is herself all troubled, and is fully engaged

in keeping the guard, lest sin by surprise might get consent, so that

she can make no sally to disengage the inferior part of her spirit, and

although she has not lost heart, yet is she so desperately set at, that

though she be free from fault yet is she not free from pain. Because,

that her distress may be complete, she is deprived of the general

consolation which ordinarily accompanies us through all the other

calamities of this life, namely, the hope that they will not be of long

continuance, but will have an end:--so that the heart in these

spiritual distresses falls into a certain inability of thinking of

their end, and consequently of being eased by hope. Faith indeed which

resides in the supreme point of the spirit assures us that this trouble

will have an end, and that one day we shall enjoy a true repose: but

the loudness of the shouts and outcries which the enemy makes in the

rest of the soul in the inferior reason, will scarcely permit the

advice and remonstrances of faith to be heard; and there remains in the

imagination only this sorrowful presage: Alas! joy I shall never have.

O God! my dear Theotimus, now it is that we are to show an invincible

courage towards our Saviour, serving him purely for the love of his

will, not only without pleasure, but amid this deluge of sorrows,

horrors, distresses and assaults, as did his glorious Mother and St.

John upon the day of his Passion. Amongst so many blasphemies, sorrows

and deadly distresses, they remained constant in love, yea, even in

that instant in which our Saviour, having withdrawn all his holy joy

into the very summit of his spirit, left no joy or consolation at all

in his Divine countenance, and when his eyes, languishing and covered

with the dark veil of death, did only cast looks of sorrow, as the sun

also shot forth rays of horror and frightful darkness.

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CHAPTER XII.

HOW THE SOUL AMIDST THESE INTERIOR ANGUISHES KNOWS NOT THE LOVE SHE

BEARS TO GOD: AND OF THE MOST LOVE-FULL DEATH OF THE WILL.

The night before the great S. Peter was to suffer martyrdom, an angel

came to the prison and filled it with splendour, awoke S. Peter, made

him arise, made him gird himself, and put on his shoes and clothes,

freed him from his bonds and shackles, drew him out of prison, and led

him through the first and second guard, till he came to the iron gate

which gave on the town; this of itself flew open before them, and

having passed through one street, the angel left the glorious S. Peter

there in full liberty. Behold a great variety of very corporeal

actions, and yet S. Peter, who was awake from the beginning, did not

apprehend that what was done by the angel was done in deed, but

esteemed it a vision of the imagination. He was awake and yet did not

think so, he put on his clothes and shoes not knowing that he had done

it, he walked and yet thought he walked not, he was delivered and

believed it not, and all this because the wonder of his deliverance was

so great, and it engaged his heart in such sort, that though he had

sense and knowledge enough to do what he did, yet had he not enough to

discover that he did it really and in good earnest. He saw indeed the

angel, but he did not discern that it was with a true and natural

vision, wherefore he took no consolation in his delivery till such time

as, coming to himself: Now, said he, I know in very deed that the Lord

hath sent his Angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod,

and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. [422]

Now, Theotimus, after the same manner it fares with a soul which is

overcharged with interior anguishes; for although she has the power to

believe, to trust, and to love her God, and in reality does so, yet she

has not the strength to see properly whether she believes, hopes and

loves, because her distress so engages her, and makes head against her

so desperately, that she can get no time to return into her interior

and see what is going on there. And hence she thinks that she has no

faith, nor hope, nor charity, but only the shadows and fruitless

impressions of those virtues, which she feels in a manner without

feeling them, and as if foreign, instead of natural, to her soul. And,

if you notice, you will find our souls always in this state when they

are strongly occupied by some violent passion, for they perform many

actions as though they were in a dream, with so little sense of what

they do that they can scarcely believe the things actually happen.

Hence the sacred Psalmist expresses the greatness of the consolation of

the Israelites on their return from the captivity of Babylon in these

words: When the Lord brought back the captivity of Sion, we became like

men comforted. [423] And as the holy Latin version, following the

Septuagint, has it: facti semis "sicut" consolati: that is our wonder

at the greatness of the good which came to us was so excessive, that it

hindered us from properly feeling the consolation which we received,

and it seemed to us that we were not truly comforted, nor had

consolation in real truth, but only in a figure and a dream.

Such then are the feelings of the soul which is in the midst of

spiritual anguishes. These do exceedingly purify and refine love, for

being deprived of all pleasure by which its love might be attached to

God, it joins and unites us to God immediately, will to will, heart to

heart, without any intervention of satisfaction or desire. Alas!

Theotimus, how the poor heart is afflicted when being as it were

abandoned by love, she seeks everywhere, and yet seems not to find it.

She finds it not in the exterior senses, they not being capable of it;

nor in the imagination, which is cruelly tortured by conflicting

impressions; nor in the understanding, distracted with a thousand

obscurities of strange reasonings and fears; and though at length she

finds it in the top and supreme region of the spirit where it resides,

yet the soul does not recognize it, and thinks it is not love, because

the greatness of the distress and darkness hinders her from perceiving

its sweetness. She sees it without seeing it, meets it but does not

know it, as though all passed in a dream only, or in a type. In this

way Magdalen, having met with her dear Master, received no comfort from

him, because she thought that it was not he indeed, but the gardener

only.

But what is the soul to do that finds herself in this case? Theotimus,

she knows not how to behave herself amidst so much anguish; nor has she

any power save to let her will die in the hands of God's will;

imitating her sweet Jesus, who being arrived at the height of the pains

of the cross which his Father had ordained, and not being able any

further to resist the extremity of his torments, did as the hart does,

which when it is run out of breath, and oppressed by the hounds,

yielding itself up into the huntsman's hands, its eyes filled with

tears, utters its last cries. For so this Divine Saviour, near unto his

death, and giving up his last breath with a loud voice and abundance of

tears--Alas! said he, O Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit:--a

word, Theotimus, which was his very last, and the one by which the

well-beloved Son gave the sovereign testimony of his love towards his

Father. When therefore all fails us, when our troubles have come to

their extremity, this word, this disposition, this rendering up of our

soul into our Saviour's hands, can never fail us. The Son commended his

spirit to his Father in this his last and incomparable anguish, and we,

when the convulsions of spiritual pains shall bereave us of all other

sort of solace and means of resistance, let us commend our spirit into

the hands of this eternal Son who is our true Father, and bowing the

head of our acquiescence in his good pleasure, let us make over our

whole will unto him.

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[422] Acts xii. 11.

[423] Ps. cxxv. 1.

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CHAPTER XIII.

HOW THE WILL BEING DEAD TO ITSELF LIVES ENTIRELY IN GOD'S WILL.

We speak with a singular propriety of a man's death in our French

tongue, for we call it an overpassing (trespas) and the dead the

overpassers, intimating that death amongst men is but a passing over

from one life to another, and that to die is no other thing but to

overpass the confines of this mortal life, to enter the immortal. True

it is, our will can no more die than our soul, yet does it sometimes go

out of the limits of its ordinary life, to live wholly in the Divine

will. This is when it neither wills nor cares to desire any thing at

all, but gives itself over totally and without reserve to the good

pleasure of the Divine Providence, so mingling and saturating itself

with this good pleasure, that itself is seen no more, but is all hidden

with Jesus Christ in God, where it lives, not it, but the will of God

lives in it.

What becomes of the light of the stars when the sun appears on our

horizon? Certainly it perishes not, but it is ravished into and

absorbed in the sun's sovereign light, with which it is happily mingled

and allied; and what becomes of man's will when it is entirely

delivered up to God's pleasure? It does not altogether perish, yet is

it so lost and dispersed in the will of God that it appears not, and

has no other will than the will of God. Consider, Theotimus, the

glorious and never sufficiently praised S. Louis, embarking and setting

sail for beyond seas: and see the queen, his dear wife, embarking with

his majesty. Now if any one had asked of this brave princess: Madam,

whither are you going? She would without doubt have replied, I go

whither the king goes.--And if further asked: But do you know, Madam,

whither the king goes? She would also have made answer: He told me in

general; however, I care not for knowing, I only desire to accompany

him.--And if one had replied: Why then, Madam, you have no design in

this journey? No, would she have said, I have none, except to be with

my dear sovereign and husband.--Well then, it might have been said to

her, he goes into Egypt to pass into Palestine; he will stay at

Damietta, Acre, and many places besides,--do not you intend, Madam, to

go thither also? To this she would have made answer: No, in truth, I

have no intention save only to keep myself near my king; as for the

places whither he goes, they are all indifferent to me, and of no

consideration whatever, except so far as he will be in them; for I have

no affection for anything but the king's presence: it is therefore the

king that goes, it is he that designs the journey, but, as for me, I do

not go, I only follow: I desire not the journey, but solely the

presence of the king; the staying, the journeying, and all their

circumstances being utterly indifferent to me.

Surely if we ask some servant who is in his master's train whither he

is going, he ought not to answer that he is going to such a place, but

simply that he follows his master, for he goes nowhere of his own

accord, but at his master's pleasure only. In like manner, Theotimus, a

will perfectly resigned to God's should have no will of its own, but

simply follow that of God. And as he who is on ship does not move by

his own motion, but leaves himself to be moved by the motion of the

vessel in which he is, so the heart that is embarked in the Divine

pleasure, ought to have no other will than that of permitting itself to

be conducted by the Divine will. And then the heart does not as before

say: Thy will be done, not mine:--for there is now no will to be

renounced; but it utters these words: Lord I commend my will into thy

hands,--even as though it had not its will at its own disposition, but

at the disposition of the Divine Providence. So that it is not exactly

as with servants who follow their masters, for, in their case, although

the journey be undertaken at their master's pleasure, yet their

following comes from their own particular will, though a will following

and serving, submitted and subjected to, that of their master: so that

as the master and servant are two, the will of the master and the will

of the servant are also two. But the will which is dead to herself that

she may live in that of God, is without any particular will, remaining

not only in conformity and subjection, but quite annihilated in

herself, and cemented into God's, as one might speak of a little child

who has not yet got the use of his will to love or desire anything save

the bosom and face of his dear mother. For he does not think of willing

to be on one side or on the other, or of anything else, except only to

be in the arms of his mother, with whom he thinks himself to be one

thing. He never troubles himself as to how he shall conform his will to

his mother's, for he perceives not his own, nor does he think he has

any, leaving all the care to his mother, to go, to do, and to will,

what she judges profitable for him.

It is truly the highest perfection of our will to be thus united to

that of our sovereign good, as was that saint's who said: O Lord, thou

hast conducted and led me at thy will. [424] For what did he mean but

that he had made no use of his will to conduct himself, letting himself

simply be led and guided by that of God.

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[424] Ps. lxxii. 24.

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CHAPTER XIV.

AN EXPLANATION OF WHAT HAS BEEN SAID TOUCHING THE DECEASE OF OUR WILL.

We may well believe that the most sacred Virgin Our Lady received so

much pleasure in carrying her little Jesus in her arms, that delight

beguiled weariness, or at least made it agreeable; for if a branch of

agnus castus can solace and unweary travellers, what solace did not the

glorious Mother receive in carrying the immaculate Lamb of God? And

though she permitted him now and then to run on foot by her, she

holding him by the hand, yet this was not because she would not rather

have had him hanging about her neck and on her breast, but it was to

teach him to form his steps and walk alone. And we ourselves,

Theotimus, as little children of the heavenly Father, may walk with him

in two ways. For we may, in the first place, walk with the steps of our

own will which we conform to his, holding always with the hand of our

obedience the hand of his divine intention, and following it

wheresoever it leads,--which is what God requires from us by the

signification of his will; for since he wills me to do what he ordains,

he wills me to have the will to do it: God has signified that he wills

me to keep holy the day of rest; since he wills me to do it, he wills

then that I will to do it, and that for this end I should have a will

of my own, by which I follow his, conforming myself and corresponding

to his. But we may on other occasions walk with our Saviour without any

will of our own, letting ourselves simply be carried at his divine good

pleasure, as a little child in its mother's arms, by a certain kind of

consent which may be termed union or rather unity of our heart with

God's;--and this is the way that we are to endeavour to comport

ourselves in God's will of good-pleasure, since the effects of this

will of good-pleasure proceed purely from his Providence, and we do not

effect them, but they happen to us. True it is we may will them to come

according to God's will, and this willing is excellent; yet we may also

receive the events of heaven's good pleasure by a most simple

tranquillity of our will, which, willing nothing whatever, simply

acquiesces in all that God would have done in us, on us, or by us.

If one had asked the sweet Jesus when he was carried in his mother's

arms, whither he was going, might he not with good reason have

answered: I go not, 'tis my mother that goes for me: And if one had

said to him: But at least do you not go with your mother? might he not

reasonably have replied: No, I do not go, or if I go whither my mother

carries me, I do not myself walk with her nor by my own steps, but by

my mother's, by her, and in her: But if one had persisted with him,

saying: But at least, O most dear divine child, you really will to let

yourself be carried by your sweet mother? No verily, might he have

said, I will nothing of all this, but as my entirely good mother walks

for me so she wills for me; I leave her the care as well to go as to

will to go for me where she likes best; and as I go not but by her

steps, so I will not but by her will; and from the instant I find

myself in her arms, I give no attention either to willing or not

willing, turning all other cares over to my mother, save only the care

to be on her bosom, to suck her sacred breast, and to keep myself close

clasped to her most beloved neck, that I may most lovingly kiss her

with the kisses of my mouth. And be it known to you that while I am

amidst the delights of these holy caresses which surpass all sweetness,

I consider that my mother is a tree of life, and myself on her as its

fruit; that I am her own heart in her breast, or her soul in the midst

of her heart, so that as her going serves both her and me without my

troubling myself to take a single step, so her will serves us both

without my producing any act of my will about going or coming. Nor do I

ever take notice whether she goes fast or slow, hither or thither, nor

do I inquire whither she means to go, contenting myself with this, that

go whither she please I go still locked in her arms, close laid at her

beloved breasts, where I feed as amongst lilies. O divine child of

Mary! Permit my poor soul these outbursts of love: Go then so, O most

amiable dear little babe, or rather go not but stay, thus holily

fastened to your sweet mother's breast; go always in her and never

without her, while thou remainest a child! O how blessed is the womb

that bore thee, and the breasts that gave thee suck! [425] The Saviour

of our souls had the use of reason from the instant of his conception

in his Mother's womb, and could make all this discourse; so could even

the glorious S. John his forerunner, from the day of the holy

visitation, and though both of them, as well in that time as all

through their infancy, were possessed of liberty to will or not to

will, yet, in what concerned their external conduct, they left to their

mothers the care of doing and willing for them what was requisite.

Thus should we be, Theotimus, pliable and tractable to God's

good-pleasure, as though we were of wax, not giving our thoughts leave

to wander in wishing and willing things, but leaving God to will and do

them for us as he pleases, throwing upon him all our solicitude,

because he hath care of us, [426] as the holy Apostle says: and note

that he says all our solicitude, that is, as well that which concerns

the events, as that which pertains to willing or not willing, for he

will have a care of the issue of our affairs, and of willing that which

is best for us.

Meanwhile let us affectionately give our attention to blessing God in

all his works, after the example of Job, saying: The Lord gave and the

Lord hath taken away, the name of the Lord be blessed! [427] No, Lord;

I will no events, for I leave you to will them for me at your pleasure,

but instead of willing the events I will bless you because you have

willed them. O Theotimus! what an excellent employment of our will is

this, when it gives up the care of willing and choosing the effects of

God's good-pleasure in order to praise and thank this good pleasure for

such effects.

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[425] Luke xi. 27.

[426] 1 Pet. v. 7.

[427] Job i. 21.

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CHAPTER XV.

OF THE MOST EXCELLENT EXERCISE WE CAN MAKE IN THE INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR

TROUBLES OF THIS LIFE, AFTER ATTAINING THE INDIFFERENCE AND DEATH OF

THE WILL.

To bless and thank God in all the events that his providence ordains,

is in very deed a most holy exercise, yet if, while we leave the care

to God of willing and doing in us, on us, and with us, what pleases

him, without attending to what passes--though fully feeling it--we

could divert our heart, and apply our attention to the divine goodness

and sweetness--blessing it not in the effects or events it ordains, but

in itself and in its own excellence--we should certainly practise a far

more eminent exercise. In the time that Demetrius was laying siege to

Rhodes, Protogenes, who was in a little house in the suburbs, ceased

not to work, and that with such assurance and repose of mind that

though the enemies' sword was in a manner always at his throat, yet he

executed the grand masterpiece and admirable representation of a Satyr

amusing himself with playing upon a pipe. O God! how great are those

souls who in all kinds of accidents keep their affections and attention

ever upon the eternal goodness, honouring and loving it at all times.

The daughter of an excellent physician and surgeon, being in a

continual fever, and knowing that her father loved her entirely, said

to one of her friends: I feel very great pain, but I do not think of

remedies, for I do not know what might serve for my cure; I might

desire one thing, and another be necessary for me. Do I not then gain

more by leaving this care to my father, who knows, who can do, and who

wills for me, all that is required for my health? I should do wrong by

willing anything, for he wills all that could be profitable to me. I

will only wait to let him will to do what is expedient, and when he

comes to me I will only look at him, testify my filial love for him,

and show my perfect confidence. And on these words she fell asleep.

Meanwhile her father, judging that it was fit to bleed her, disposed

all that was necessary, and waking her up asked her if she were willing

to suffer the operation. My father, she said, I am yours; I know not

what to will for my cure; it is yours to will and do for me what seems

good to you; it is enough for me to love and honour you with all my

heart, as I do. So her arm is tied, and her father himself opens the

vein. And while the blood flows, this loving daughter looks not at her

arm nor at the spurting blood, but keeping her eyes fixed on her

father's face, she says only, from time to time: My father loves me,

and I, I am entirely his. And when all was done she did not thank him,

but only repeated her words of filial confidence and love.

Now tell me, my friend Theotimus, did not this daughter show a more

attentive and solid love for her father, than if she had taken great

care to ask remedies for her malady, to watch the vein being opened,

and the blood coming, and to say many words of thanks? There is no

doubt whatever about it. What could she have gained save useless

solicitude by thinking for herself, since her father had care enough of

her; what but fear by looking at her arm; and what virtue but gratitude

would she have shown in thanking her father? Did she not do best then

in occupying herself entirely in the demonstration of her filial love,

infinitely more agreeable to her father than every other virtue?

My eyes are ever towards the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of

the snare and the nets. [428] Have you fallen into the net of

adversity? Ah! look not upon your mishap, nor upon the snare in which

you are taken: look upon God and leave all to him, he will have care of

you: Cast thy care upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee. [429] Why

do you trouble yourself with willing or not willing the events and

accidents of this world, since you are ignorant what were best for you

to will, and since God will always will for you, without your putting

yourself in trouble, all you could will for yourself? Await therefore

in peace of mind the effects of the divine pleasure, and let his

willing suffice you, since it is always most good: for so he gave order

to his well-beloved S. Catharine of Siena: Think in me, said he to her,

and I will think for you.

It is very difficult to express exactly this extreme indifference of

the human will, thus absorbed and dead in the will of God. For,

meseems, we must not say it acquiesces in that of God, because

acquiescence is an act of the soul which declares its consent. We must

not say it accepts or receives, because accepting and receiving are a

sort of actions, which we might call in a certain sense passive

actions, by which we embrace and take what happens: we must not say

that it permits, as even permission is an act of the will, and hence is

a certain inactive willing, which does not do and yet lets be done. It

seems to me the soul which is in this indifference, and which wills

nothing, but lets God will what pleases him, should be said to have its

will in a simple and general state of waiting (attente): since waiting

is not a doing or acting, but only the remaining prepared for some

event. And, if you take notice, this waiting of the soul is indeed

voluntary, and yet it is not an action, but a simple disposition to

receive whatsoever shall happen; and as soon as the events come and are

received, the waiting changes into consent or acquiescence, but, before

they happen, the soul is truly in a state of simple waiting,

indifferent to all that it shall please the divine will to ordain.

Our Saviour thus expresses the extreme submission of his human will to

the will of his Eternal Father. The Lord God, he says, hath opened my

ear, that is, he hath declared unto me his pleasure touching the

multitude of the pains which I am to endure, and I, says he afterwards,

do not resist: I have not gone back. [430] What does this mean: I do

not resist: I have not gone back, except this? My will is in a simply

waiting state, and is ready for all that God shall send; wherefore I

have given my body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked

them: I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me and spit

upon me; being prepared to let them exercise their pleasure upon me.

But mark, I pray you, Theotimus, that even as our Saviour, after he had

made his prayer of resignation in the garden of Olives, and after he

was taken, left himself to be handled and dragged about at the will of

them that crucified him, by an admirable surrender made of his body and

life into their hands, so did he resign up his soul and will by a most

perfect indifference into his Eternal Father's hands. For though he

cries out: My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?--yet this was to

let us understand the reality of the anguish and bitternesses of his

soul, and not to detract from the most holy indifference in which it

was; as he showed very soon afterwards, concluding all his life and his

passion with those incomparable words: Father, into Thy hands I commend

my spirit.

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[428] Ps. xxiv. 15.

[429] Ps. liv. 23.

[430] Is. l. 5, 6.

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CHAPTER XVI.

OF THE PERFECT STRIPPING OF THE SOUL WHICH IS UNITED TO GOD'S WILL.

Let us represent to ourselves, Theotimus, the sweet Jesus in Pilate's

house, where for love of us he was divested of all his garments one

after the other, by the soldiers, the ministers of death. And not

content with that, they took his skin from him, tearing it with the

blows of rods and whips; then afterwards his soul was bereft of his

body, and his body of life, by the death which he endured upon the

cross. But three days being run out, his soul, by the most holy

Resurrection, put on again its glorious body, and his body its immortal

skin, wearing sundry garments, now those of a gardener, now of a

pilgrim, or other guise according as the salvation of man and the glory

of God required. Love did all this, Theotimus, and it is love also

which, entering into a soul to make it happily die to itself and live

to God, bereaves it of all human desires, and of self-esteem which is

as closely fixed to the spirit as the skin to the flesh, and strips her

at length of her best beloved affections, such as those which she had

to spiritual consolations, exercises of piety and the perfection of

virtues, which seemed to be the very life of the soul.

Then, Theotimus, the soul may by good right cry out: I have put off my

garment, how shall I find in my heart to put it on? I have washed my

feet, from all sorts of affections, how shall I defile them? [431]

Naked came I out of the hand of God, and naked shall I return thither:

God gave me many desires and God hath taken them away: As it hath

pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord. [432]

Yes, Theotimus, the same God who made us desire virtues in our

beginning, and who makes us practise them on all occurrences, he it is

that takes from us the affection to virtues and all spiritual

exercises, that with more tranquillity, purity and simplicity, we

should care for nothing but the divine Majesty's good pleasure. For as

the fair and chaste Judith reserved indeed her costly festal robes in

her cabinet, and yet placed not her affection upon them, nor yet ever

wore them in the time of her widowhood, save only when by God's

inspiration she went to overthrow Holofernes, so, though we have learnt

the practice of virtue and the exercises of devotion, yet are we not to

give our affection to them nor clothe our heart again with them, save

only as far as we know that such is the good pleasure of God. Judith

always wore mourning weeds except only on this occasion when God's will

was that she should be in pomp; so are we peaceably to remain vested

with our misery and abjection amidst our imperfections and infirmities,

till God shall exalt us to the practice of excellent actions.

We cannot long remain in this nakedness, despoiled of all sorts of

affections. Wherefore, following the advice of the holy Apostle, as

soon as we have put off the garments of the old Adam, we are to put on

the habits of the new man, that is to say of Jesus Christ, for having

renounced all,--yes, even the affection to virtues, neither desiring of

these nor of other things a larger portion than God's will intends,--we

must put on again divers affections, and perhaps the very same which we

have renounced and resigned: but we must now put them on again not

because they are agreeable, profitable, honourable to us, and proper to

content the love we have for ourselves, but because they are agreeable

to God, profitable to his honour, and destined to his glory.

Eliezer carried ear jewels, bracelets and new attire for the maid whom

God had provided for his master's son, and in effect he presented them

to the virgin Rebecca, as soon as he knew it was she. New garments are

required for our Saviour's spouse. If for the love of God she has

stript herself of the ancient affection which she had to parents,

country, home, friends, she must take quite new affections, loving all

this in its order, not now according to human considerations, but

because the heavenly spouse wills, commands, and intends it so, and has

established this order in charity. If we have once put off our old

affection to spiritual consolations, to exercises of devotion, to the

practice of virtues, yea to our own advancement in perfection, we must

put on another affection quite new, by loving all these graces and

heavenly favours, not because they perfect and adorn our spirit, but

because our Saviour's name is sanctified in them, his kingdom advanced,

his good-pleasure glorified.

So did S. Peter vest himself in the prison, not at his own choice but

at the angel's command. He puts on his girdle, then his sandals, and

afterwards the rest of his garments. And the glorious S. Paul, stripped

in a moment of all affections: Lord, said he, what wilt thou have me

do? that is, what is it thy pleasure for me to love, now that throwing

me to the ground thou hast made my own will to die? Ah! Lord, plant thy

good-pleasure in the place of it, and, teach me to do thy will, for

thou art my God. [433] Theotimus, he who has forsaken all for God ought

to resume nothing but according to God's good-pleasure. He feeds not

his body but according to God's ordinance that it may be serviceable to

the spirit; he only engages in studies in order to assist his neighbour

and his own soul, according to the divine intention; he practises

virtues not as being his own choice, but according to God's desire.

God commanded the prophet Isaias to strip himself naked; and he did so,

[434] going and preaching in this way, for three days together as some

hold, or for three years as others think, and then, the time prefixed

by God having expired, he resumed his clothes. Even so are we to strip

ourselves of all affections little and great, as also to make a

frequent examination of our hearts to discover whether it be willing to

divest itself, as Isaias did, of all its garments: then we must take up

again, at proper times, the affections suitable to the service of

charity, to the end that we may die with Our Saviour naked upon the

cross, and rise again with him in newness of life. Love is strong as

death [435] to make us quit all, it is magnificent as the Resurrection,

to adorn us with honour and glory.

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[431] Cant. v. 3.

[432] Job i. 21.

[433] Ps. cxlii. 10

[434] Is. xx. 2.

[435] Cant. viii. 6.

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BOOK X.

OF THE

COMMANDMENT OF LOVING GOD ABOVE ALL THINGS.

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CHAPTER I.

OF THE SWEETNESS OF THE COMMANDMENT WHICH GOD HAS GIVEN US OF LOVING

HIM ABOVE ALL THINGS.

Man is the perfection of the universe; the spirit is the perfection of

man; love, that of the spirit; and charity, that of love. Wherefore the

love of God is the end, the perfection and the excellence of the

universe. In this, Theotimus, consists the greatness and the primacy of

the commandment of divine love, which the Saviour calls the first and

greatest commandment. This commandment is as a sun which gives lustre

and dignity to all the sacred laws, to all the divine ordinances, and

to all the Holy Scriptures. All is done for this heavenly love, and all

has reference to it. From the sacred tree of this commandment grow all

the counsels, exhortations, inspirations, and the other commandments,

as its flowers, and eternal life as its fruit; and all that does not

tend to eternal love tends to eternal death. Grand Commandment, the

perfect fulfilment of which lasts through eternal life, yea, is no

other thing but eternal life!

But look, Theotimus, how amiable is this law of love. Ah! Lord God, was

it not enough for thee to permit us this divine love, as Laban

permitted Jacob that of Rachel, without the necessity of inviting us to

it by exhortations, or driving us to it by commandments? But no, divine

goodness, in order that neither thy greatness, nor our vileness, nor

any pretext whatever should keep us from loving thee, thou dost command

it to us. The poor Apelles, not able to keep from loving the beautiful

Campaspe, yet dared not love her because she belonged to the great

Alexander; but when he had leave to love her, how greatly obliged did

he consider himself to him who gave this leave to him! He knew not

whether he should more love that beautiful Campaspe whom so great an

emperor had given up to him, or that great emperor who had given him so

beautiful a Campaspe. Oh! if we were able to comprehend it, my dear

Theotimus, what obligation should we have to this sovereign good, who

not only permits but even commands us to love him! Ah! my God, I know

not whether I ought more to love thine infinite beauty which so great a

goodness orders me to love, or thy divine goodness which orders me to

love so infinite a beauty! O beauty, how amiable thou art, being

bestowed upon me by a goodness so immense! O goodness, how amiable thou

art, in communicating unto me so eminent a beauty!

God at the Day of Judgment will imprint in the souls of the damned the

knowledge of their loss, in a wondrous manner: for the divine majesty

will make them clearly see the sovereign beauty of his face, and the

treasures of his goodness; and at the sight of this abyss of infinite

delights, the will with an extreme effort will desire to cast itself

upon him, to be united unto him and enjoy his love. But all in vain,

for it shall be as a woman, who in the pangs of childbirth, after

having endured violent pains, cruel convulsions, and intolerable pangs,

dies in the end without being delivered. For as soon as the clear and

fair knowledge of the divine beauty shall have penetrated the

understandings of those unhappy spirits, the divine justice shall in

such sort deprive the will of its strength that it will be in no wise

able to love this object which the understanding purposes to it, and

represents to be so amiable; and the sight which should beget in the

will so great a love, instead thereof shall engender an infinite

sadness. This shall be made eternal by the memory of the sovereign

beauty they saw, which shall for ever live in these lost souls; a

memory void of all good, yea full of trouble, pains, torments and

undying despair, because at the same time there shall be found in the

will an impossibility of loving, yea a frightful and everlasting

aversion and repugnance to loving this excellence so desirable. Thus

the miserable damned shall live for ever in despairing rage--to know so

sovereignly amiable a perfection, without being able ever to have the

enjoyment or the love of it, because while they might have loved it

they would not: they shall burn with a thirst so much the more violent

as the remembrance of this fountain of waters of eternal life shall

more inflame their ardour: they shall die immortally, as dogs, [436] of

a famine as much more vehement, as their memory shall more sharpen its

insatiable cruelty by the remembrance of the banquet of which they are

deprived. The wicked shall see, and shall be angry, he shall gnash with

his teeth and pine away: the desire of the wicked shall perish. [437] I

would not indeed affirm for certain, that the view of God's beauty

which the damned shall have, like a flash of lightning, will be as

bright as that of the Blessed; but still it will be clear enough to let

them see the Son of man in his majesty. [438] They shall look on him

whom they pierced; [439] and by the view of this glory shall learn the

greatness of their loss. Ah! if God had forbidden man to love him, what

a torment would that have been to generous hearts! What efforts would

they not make to obtain permission to love him? David braved the hazard

of a most severe combat to gain the King's daughter,--and what did not

Jacob do to espouse Rachel, and the Prince of Sichem to have Dina in

marriage? The damned would repute themselves blessed if they could

entertain a hope of ever loving God: and the Blessed would esteem

themselves damned, if they thought they could ever be deprived of this

sacred love.

O good God! Theotimus, how delicious is the sweetness of this

commandment, seeing that if it pleased the divine will to give it to

the damned, they would in a moment be delivered from their greatest

misery, and seeing that the Blessed are only blessed by the practice of

it! O heavenly love, how lovely art thou to our souls! And blessed be

the goodness of God for ever, who so earnestly commands us to love him,

though this love is so desirable and so necessary to our happiness that

without it we can but be miserable!

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[436] Ps. lviii.7.

[437] Ps. cxi. 10.

[438] Matt. xxiv. 30.

[439] John xix. 37.

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CHAPTER II.

THAT THIS DIVINE COMMANDMENT OF LOVE TENDS TO HEAVEN, YET IS GIVEN TO

THE FAITHFUL IN THIS WORLD.

If the law is not made for the just man, [440] because, preventing the

law and without the pressure of the law, he performs God's will by the

instinct of charity which reigns in his soul; how free and exempt from

all commandments must we consider the Blessed in Paradise to be, since

from their enjoyment of the sovereign beauty and goodness of the

well-beloved, a most sweet yet inevitable necessity in their spirits of

loving eternally the most holy divinity, flows and proceeds. We shall

love God in heaven, Theotimus, not as being tied and obliged by the

law, but as being allured and ravished by the joy which this object, so

perfectly worthy of love, shall yield to our hearts. Then the force of

the commandment will cease, in order to give place to the force of

contentment, which shall be the fruit and crown of the observance of

the commandment. We are therefore destined to the contentment which is

promised us in the immortal life, by this commandment which is given

unto us in this mortal life, in which truly we are strictly bound to

observe it, because it is the fundamental law which the King Jesus has

given to the citizens of the militant Jerusalem, to make them merit the

citizenship and joy of the triumphant Jerusalem.

There above in heaven we shall indeed have a heart quite free from

passions, a soul purified from all distractions, a spirit liberated

from contradictions, and powers exempt from opposition, and therefore

we shall love God with a perpetual and never interrupted affection, as

it is said of those four living creatures, which, representing the

Evangelists, continually praised the divinity, not resting day or

night. [441] O God! what joy, when, established in those eternal

tabernacles, our spirits shall be in this perpetual movement, in which

they shall enjoy the so much desired repose of their eternal loving.

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord: they shall praise

thee for ever and ever. [442]

But we are not to expect this love so exceedingly perfect in this

mortal life: for as yet we have neither the heart, nor the soul, nor

the spirit, nor the forces of the Blessed. It is sufficient for us to

love with all the heart and all the powers we have. While we are little

children, we are wise like little children, we speak like little

children, we love like little children, but when we shall come to our

perfect growth, there above in heaven, we shall be freed from our state

of infancy, and love God perfectly. Yet are we not for all this,

Theotimus, during this infancy of our mortal life, to omit to do what

in us lies according as we are commanded, since this is not only in our

power, but is also very easy; the whole commandment being of love, and

of the love of God, who as he is sovereignly good, so is he sovereignly

amiable.

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[440] 1 Tim. i. 9.

[441] Apoc. iv.

[442] Ps. lxxxiii. 5.

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CHAPTER III.

HOW, WHILE THE WHOLE HEART IS EMPLOYED IN SACRED LOVE, YET ONE MAY LOVE

GOD IN VARIOUS WAYS, AND ALSO MANY OTHER THINGS TOGETHER WITH HIM.

He who says all, excludes nothing, and yet a man may be wholly God's,

wholly his father's, wholly his mother's, wholly his prince's, wholly

his commonwealth's, his children's, his friends' so that being all to

each, yet he is all to all. This so happens because the duty by which a

man is all to one, is not contrary to the duty by which a man is all to

another.

Man gives himself wholly by love, and gives himself as much as he

loves. He is therefore in a sovereign manner given to God when he loves

the divine goodness sovereignly. And having once made this donation of

himself, he is to love nothing that can remove his heart from God. Now

never does any love take our hearts from God, save that which is

contrary unto him.

Sara is not offended when she sees Ismael about her dear Isaac, so long

as his play does not go on to striking and hurting the boy: and the

divine goodness is not offended by seeing in us other loves besides

his, so long as we preserve for him the reverence and submission due to

him.

In heaven, Theotimus, God will truly give himself to us wholly, and not

in part, since he is a whole that has no parts, yet will he give

himself in different ways, and in as many different ways as there are

blessed souls. This will so happen because, while giving himself all to

all and all to each, he will never give himself wholly either to one in

particular or to all in general. Now we shall give ourselves to him,

according to the measure in which he gives himself to us: for we shall

see him indeed face to face, as he is in his beauty; and shall love him

heart to heart, as he is in his goodness: yet all will not see him with

an equal clearness, nor love him with an equal sweetness: but every one

will see and love him, according to the particular measure of glory

which the divine Providence has prepared for him. We shall all equally

have the fulness of divine love, but still the fulnesses will be

unequal in perfection. The honey of Narbonne is sweet, and so also is

that of Paris: both of them are full of sweetness, but the one of a

better, more delicate and richer sweetness: and though both of them are

entirely sweet, yet neither contains all sweetness. I do homage to my

sovereign prince, as also to my immediate superior: I engage then to

each of them all my fealty, and I do not engage it to either of them

totally: for in that which I give to the sovereign, I do not exclude

that which I pay to the subaltern, and in that of the subaltern, I do

not include that of the sovereign. Wherefore it is no wonder that, if

in heaven (where these words, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all

thy heart, shall be so excellently practised) there are great

differences in love, in this mortal life there should be many.

Theotimus, among those who love God with all their heart not only do

some love him more and some less, but even one and the same person

often exceeds himself in this sovereign exercise of loving God above

all things. Apelles did better one time than another, sometimes he

surpassed himself; for though commonly he gave all his art and all his

attention to painting Alexander the Great, yet he did not always give

them so totally and entirely but that there remained other efforts to

make, in which he used not a greater art or a greater affection but

used them more actively and perfectly. He always employed all his

genius to paint these pictures of Alexander well, because he used it

without reserve, yet sometimes he employed it more effectively and

happily. Who knows not that in this holy love progress is possible, and

that the end of the Saints is crowned with a more perfect love than

their beginning?

Now according to the expression of the holy Scriptures, to do a thing

with all one's heart means simply to do it with good heart and without

reserve. O Lord, says David, I have sought thee with my whole heart. I

have cried with all my heart, O Lord, hear me, [443] and the holy Word

testifies that he had truly followed God with his whole heart; and yet,

notwithstanding this, it affirms also of Ezechias, that after him there

was none like him among all the kings of Judah, [444] neither before

nor after him, that he was united to God and strayed not from him.

Afterwards treating of Josias it says that there was no king before him

like unto him that returned to the Lord with all his heart, and with

all his soul, and with all his strength, according to all the law of

Moses, neither after him did there arise any like him. [445] Mark then,

I pray you, Theotimus, mark how David, Ezechias and Josias, loved God

with all their hearts, and yet not all three equally, because no one of

them had his like in this love, as the sacred text says. All three

loved him, each of them with all his heart; yet, not one nor all

together loved him totally, but each one in his particular way; so that

as all the three were alike in this, that they gave each his whole

heart, so were they unlike in their manner of giving it; yea, there is

no doubt that David, to take him by himself, was far different from

himself in this love; and that with his second heart which God created

pure and clean in him, and with his right spirit which God renewed in

his bowels by most holy penitence, he sang the canticle of his love far

more melodiously than ever he had done with his first heart and his

first spirit.

All true lovers are equal in this, that all give all their heart to

God, and with all their strength, but they are unequal in this, that

they give it diversely and in different manners, whence some give all

their heart, with all their strength, less perfectly than others. This

one gives it all by martyrdom, this, all by virginity, this, all by

poverty, this, all by action, this, all by contemplation, this, all by

the pastoral office; and whilst all give it all by the observance of

the commandments, yet some give it with less perfection than others.

Yea, even Jacob who was called in Daniel the holy one of God, [446] and

whom God declares himself to have loved, protests that he had served

Laban with all his strength, and why did he serve Laban, but to obtain

Rachel, whom he loved with all his strength? He serves Laban with all

his strength, he serves God with all his strength; he loves Rachel with

all his strength, he loves God with all his strength: yet withal he

loves not Rachel as God, nor God as Rachel; he loves God as his God,

above all things and more than himself; he loves Rachel as his wife,

above all other women, and as himself. He loves God with an absolutely

and sovereignly supreme love; and Rachel with a supreme nuptial love.

Nor is the one love contrary to the other, since that of Rachel does

not violate the privileges and sovereign prerogatives of the love of

God.

So that our love to God, Theotimus, takes its worth from the eminence

and excellence of the motive for which, and according to which, we love

him; in that we love him for his sovereign infinite goodness, as God,

and because he is God. Now one drop of this love is worth more, has

more power, and deserves more esteem, than all the other loves that can

ever enter into the hearts of men or amongst the choirs of angels. For

while this love lives, it reigns and bears the sceptre over all the

affections, making God to be preferred in its will before all things,

indifferently, universally, and without reserve.

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[443] Ps. cxviii.

[444] Kings xviii. 5.

[445] Kings xxiii. 25.

[446] Dan. iii. 35.

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CHAPTER IV.

OF TWO DEGREES OF PERFECTION WITH WHICH THIS COMMANDMENT MAY BE KEPT IN

THIS MORTAL LIFE.

While the great King Solomon, possessing as yet the Spirit of God, was

composing the sacred Canticle of Canticles, he had, according to the

permission of those ages, a great variety of ladies and maidens

attached to his service in different conditions and qualities. For 1�.

There was one, his singularly dear and wholly perfect one, most rare,

as a singular dove, with whom the others entered not into comparison,

and for this reason she was called by his own name, Sulamitess. [447]

2�. There were sixty, who, next to her, had the first rank of honour

and estimation, and were called queens. 3�. There were, further,

eighty ladies who were not indeed queens, but were in a recognized and

honourable relation to him. 4�. There were young maidens without

number, kept ready to be put in the place of the foregoing as was

required. Now under the figure of what passed in his palace, he

described the various perfections of souls who in time to come were to

adore, love and serve the great Pacific King Jesus Christ, our Saviour;

amongst whom there are some, who being newly freed from their sins, and

quite resolved to love God, are yet novices, apprentices, tender and

feeble: so that they love indeed the divine sweetness, yet with such

mixture of other affections that their sacred love being still as it

were in its infancy; they love together with our Saviour, many

superfluous, vain and dangerous things. And as a phoenix newly hatched

from out its ashes, having as yet but little, tender feathers and its

first down, can only essay short flights, in which it should be said

rather to leap than to fly; so these tender young souls, newly born

from the ashes of their penance, cannot as yet soar on high, or fly in

the broad air of sacred love, being held captives by the multitude of

bad inclinations and evil habits which the sins of their past life have

left them. Still they are living, they are animated with and possessed

of love, yea and with true love too, else had they never forsaken sin;

yet with a love still feeble and young, which, environed with a number

of other loves, cannot produce fruit in such abundance as it would do

if it had the full possession of the heart.

Such was the prodigal son, when, quitting the infamous company or the

swine, amongst which he had lived, he returned into his father's arms,

half-naked, unclean and bemired, and smelling most offensively of the

filth which he had contracted in the company of those vile beasts. For

what is it to forsake the swine, but to withdraw from sins? And what is

it to return all ragged, tattered and unclean, but to have our

affections engaged in the habits and inclinations which tend to sin?

Yet still was he possessed of the life of the soul which is love; and

as a phoenix rising out of its ashes, he found himself newly raised to

life. He was dead, said his father, and is come to life again, [448] he

has revived. And these souls are called young maidens in the Canticles,

forasmuch as, having perceived the odour of the name of the beloved who

breathes nothing but salvation and mercy, they love him with a true

love, but a love, which is as themselves, in its tender youth. For even

as young girls love their husbands properly if they have one, yet do

not cease to greatly love rings and trifles, or their companions, with

whom they amuse themselves extravagantly in playing, dancing and

silliness, busying themselves with little birds, little dogs, squirrels

and other such playthings;--so these young and novice-souls have truly

an affection for the sacred lover, yet admit they with it a number of

voluntary distractions and diversions: so that loving him above all

things, they yet busy themselves in many things, which they love, not

according to him but besides him, out of him, and without him. In

truth, though little irregularities in words, in gestures, in apparel,

in pastimes and follies, are not, properly speaking, against the will

of God; yet are they not according to it, but out of it and without it.

But there are souls who, having already made some progress in the love

of God, have also cut off all the love they had to dangerous things,

and yet entertain dangerous and superfluous loves: because they love

with excess, and with a love too tender and passionate, what God

ordains they should love. It stood with God's pleasure that Adam should

love Eve tenderly, yet not with such tenderness that, to content her,

he should violate the order given him by his divine majesty. He loved

not then a superfluous thing, nor a thing in itself dangerous, but he

loved it superfluously and with danger. The love of our parents,

friends and benefactors, is in itself according to God, yet we may love

them with excess; as also our vocations, be they never so spiritual:

our exercises also of devotion (which yet we ought so greatly to love)

may be loved inordinately, as when we prefer them before obedience, or

before a more general good; or when we love them as if they were our

last end, while they are only means and furtherances to our final

intention, which is the divine love. And these souls, who love nothing

but what God would have them to love, and yet exceed in the manner of

loving, love indeed the divine goodness above all things, yet not in

all things: for the things, which, not only by permission but even by

command, they are to love according to God, they love not only

according to God, but for other causes and motives, which though indeed

not contrary to God, yet are out of him. So that these souls resemble

the phoenix, when, having got its first feathers and beginning to grow

strong it already soars at large in the air, but has not yet strength

enough to remain long on the wing, and often descends to earth to rest

there. Such was the poor young man, who having from his tender age

observed God's commandments, desired not his neighbour's goods, yet

clung to his own over tenderly: so that when our Saviour counselled him

to give them to the poor, he became sad and melancholy. He loved

nothing but what he might lawfully love, yet he loved it with a

superfluous and too attached a love. It is plain, Theotimus, that these

souls love too ardently and with superfluity; still, as they love not

the superfluities, but only the thing, which may be loved, therefore

they are entitled to the favours of the heavenly Solomon, namely,

unions, recollections, and the repose of love, whereof we spoke in

Books V. and VI.: but they do not enjoy them in quality of spouses,

because the superfluity with which they love good things, hinders them

from a frequent entry into these divine unions with the spouse; they

are engaged in, and distracted by, loving that out of him and without

him, which they ought not to love but in him and for him.

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[447] Spouse of Solomon [Tr.]

[448] Luke xv. 32.

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CHAPTER V.

OF TWO OTHER DEGREES OF GREATER PERFECTION, BY WHICH WE MAY LOVE GOD

ABOVE ALL THINGS.

Now there are other souls who neither love superfluities, nor yet with

superfluity, but love only that which God wills and as he

wills:--blessed souls, who love God, their friends in God, and their

enemies for God; they love many things together with God, but none at

all, save in God and for God: it is God that they love, not only above

all things, but even in all things, and all things in God, resembling

the phoenix when perfectly renewed in youth and strength, which is

never seen but in the air, or upon the tops of mountains that are in

high air: for so these souls love nothing but in God; though indeed

they love many things with God, and God with many things. S. Luke

recounts that our Saviour invited a young man to follow him, who indeed

loved him dearly, but who had also a great affection for his father,

and thereupon had a mind to return home to him. But our Saviour cuts

off this superfluity of love, and excites him to a love more pure, that

he may not only love our Saviour more than his father, but not even

love his father at all, but in our Saviour. Let the dead bury their

dead: but as for thee (who hast met with life), go thou, and preach the

kingdom of God. [449] And these souls, as you see, Theotimus, having so

great a union with the spouse, merit to share his rank, and to be

queens, as he is king; since they are entirely dedicated to him without

any division or separation, having no affections out of him, or without

him, but only in him and for him.

But, at last, above all these souls, there is yet one most only one,

who is the queen of queens, the most loving, the most lovely, and the

most beloved, of all the friends of the divine beloved, who not only

loves God above all things and in all things, but also loves only God

in all things, so that she loves not many things, but one only thing,

which is God himself. And whereas it is God alone whom she loves in all

that she loves, she loves him indifferently in all things, according as

his good-pleasure may require, outside all things and without all

things. If it be only Esther that Assuerus loves, why should he love

her more when perfumed and adorned, than in her ordinary attire? If it

be my Saviour only that I love, why shall I not as much love Mount

Calvary as Mount Thabor, since he is as truly on the one, as on the

other? And why shall I not as affectionately in one as in the other

say: It is good for us to be here. [450] I love my Saviour in Egypt,

without loving Egypt; why shall I not love him at the banquet of Simon

the leper, without loving the banquet? And if I love him amidst the

blasphemies which are poured upon him, not loving the blasphemies, why

shall I not love him perfumed with Magdalen's ointment, without loving

either the ointment or its scent? It is the true sign that we love only

God in all things, when we love him equally in all things, because he

being always equal to himself, the inequality of our love towards him

must needs proceed from the consideration of something that is not

himself. Now this sacred loving one loves no more her God with all the

world, than if he were alone without the world: because all that is out

of God, and is not God, is nothing to her. She is an all-pure soul who

loves not even Paradise but because her beloved is loved there: and he

is so sovereignly beloved in his Paradise that if yet he had no

Paradise to bestow, he would neither appear less amiable, nor be less

beloved of this generous loving heart, who cannot love the Paradise of

her spouse but only her spouse of Paradise, and who puts no less price

on Calvary while her spouse is there crucified, than upon Paradise

where he is glorified. He that weighs one of the little balls of the

heart of S. Clare of Montefalco, finds it as heavy as all the three

together. So does perfect love find God as amiable all alone, as it

finds all creatures together with him, since it loves all creatures

only in God and for God.

Souls in this degree of perfection are so rare that each one is called

the only one of her mother, who is divine Providence; she is called the

one dove, for whom the love of her mate is all; she is termed perfect,

because by love she is made the same thing with the sovereign

Perfection, whence she may say with a most humble truth: I to my

beloved and his turning towards me. [451] Now there is no one save the

most blessed Virgin our Lady, who has perfectly arrived at this height

of excellence in the love of her dearly beloved: for she is a dove so

singularly singular in love, that all the rest being compared to her

are rather to be termed daws than doves. But leaving this peerless

queen in her matchless eminence,--there have yet been other souls who

have been in such estate of pure love that in comparison with others

they might take the rank of queens, of only doves, of perfect friends

of the spouse. For I pray you, Theotimus, what must he needs have been,

who with all his heart sang to God: What have I in heaven, and besides

thee what do I desire upon earth? [452] And he that cried out: I count

all things but as dung that I may gain Christ; [453] --did he not

testify that he loved nothing out of his master, and that he loved his

master without any other things? And what must have been the feelings

of that great lover, who sighed all the night: "My God is to me all

things." Such were S. Augustine, S. Bernard, the two SS. Catharine, of

Siena and of Genoa, and many others, in imitation of whom every one may

aspire to this divine degree of love: rare and singular souls, who

resemble no longer the birds of this world, no not the very phoenix

itself, though so singularly rare; but are only represented by that

bird which, for its excellent beauty and nobleness is said not to be of

this world, but of Paradise, of which it bears the name. For this fair

bird disdaining the earth, never touches it, but lives above in the

air; yea even when it desires to unweary itself, it will only cleave to

the trees by little threads, hanging by them suspended in the air, out

of which, or without which, it can neither fly nor repose. Even so

these great souls do not, properly speaking, love creatures in

themselves, but in their Creator, and their Creator in them. But if

they cleave to any creature by the law of charity, it is only to repose

in God, the single and final aim of their love. So that finding God in

creatures, and creatures in God, they love God, not the creatures; as

pearl-fishers, though they find the pearls in oysters, consider that

they are simply fishing for pearls.

At the same time no mortal creature, as I think, ever loved the

heavenly lover solely with this perfectly pure love, except that Virgin

who was his spouse and mother both together; on the contrary, as

regards the practice of these four differences of love, one can hardly

live without passing from one of them to another. The souls which like

young maidens are still entangled in some vain and dangerous affections

are not, at times, without feelings of a purer and supreme love; but as

these are but momentary and passing flashes, we cannot say that they

raise them from the state of young novice, or apprentice, maidens. It

happens also sometimes, to the souls who are in the degree of singular

and perfect lovers, that they forget themselves and fail very sadly,

even as far as to the committing great imperfections and grievous

venial sins, as we see in various somewhat bitter dissensions which

have occurred between great servants of God, yea even amongst some of

the divine Apostles, who, as we cannot deny, fell into some

imperfections; certainly charity was not violated by them, but the

fervour of it was. Nevertheless, as these great souls ordinarily loved

God with the perfectly pure love, we are not to say that they were not

in the state of perfect love. For as we see that good trees never

produce any hurtful fruit, yet sometimes bear green or defective and

worm-eaten fruit, or mistletoe and moss; so great saints never produce

any mortal sin, but still they produce some useless, immature, harsh,

rough and ill-flavoured actions. In such cases we must allow that these

trees are fruitful, otherwise they would not be good trees; but still

we must not deny that some of their fruits are fruitless. For who will

deny that catkins and the mistletoe of trees are fruitless fruits? And

who also will deny that slight angers and little excesses of joy, of

laughter, of vanity and of other similar passions, are unprofitable and

unlawful movements? Yet the just man brings them forth seven times a

day, that is, very often.

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[449] Luke ix. 60.

[450] Matt. xvii. 4.

[451] Cant. vii. 10.

[452] Ps. lxxii. 25.

[453] Phil. iii. 8.

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CHAPTER VI.

THAT THE LOVE OF GOD ABOVE ALL THINGS IS COMMON TO ALL LOVERS.

Though there are so many degrees of love amongst true lovers, yet is

there but one commandment of love, which universally and equally

obliges every one, with an exactly like and entirely equal obligation,

though it be observed differently and with an infinite variety of

perfections; there being perhaps no souls on earth, as there are no

angels in heaven, who are perfectly equal to one another in their love.

As one star differs from another in brightness, so shall it be with the

Blessed in their resurrection, when each one sings a canticle of glory,

and receives a name which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it.

[454] But what degree of love is it then, to which the divine

commandment equally, universally and continually obliges all?

It is an action of the providence of the Holy Ghost, that in our

ordinary version, which his divine majesty has canonized and sanctified

by the Council of Trent, the heavenly commandment of love is expressed

by the word dilection rather than by the word love; for although

dilection is a kind of love, yet is it not a simple love, but a love of

choice and election, which sense the word itself conveys, as the

glorious S. Thomas notes: for this commandment enjoins us a love chosen

out of thousands, the well-beloved object of this love being chosen out

of thousands, according to that of the beloved Sulamitess in the

Canticles. [455] It is a love which must prevail over all our loves,

and reign over all our passions. And this is what God requires of

us--that among all our loves his be the dearest, holding the first

place in our hearts; the warmest, occupying our whole soul; the most

general, employing all our powers; the highest, filling our whole

spirit; and the strongest, exercising all our strength and vigour. And

inasmuch as by this we choose and elect God for the sovereign object of

our soul, it is a love of sovereign election, or an election of

sovereign love. You are not ignorant, Theotimus, that there are various

species of love, as for example, there is a fatherly love, a brotherly

love, a filial love and a nuptial love; a love of society, of

obligation, of dependence,--and a hundred more, which are all different

in excellence, and are so proportioned to their objects that scarcely

can they be applied or appropriated to any other. He who should love

his father with the love of a brother only, would certainly not love

him enough. He who should love his wife only like his father, would not

love her properly; he who should love his servant with a filial love,

would commit an impropriety. Love is like honour; for as honour is

diversified according to the diversity of the excellences to which the

honour is given, so loves are different according to the difference of

the goodnesses for which we love. Sovereign honour is due to sovereign

excellence, and sovereign love to sovereign goodness. The love of God

is a love without peer, because the goodness of God is a peerless

goodness. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and therefore,

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy

whole soul, and with thy whole strength. [456] For as God is the only

Lord, his goodness is infinitely above all goodness, and he is to be

loved with a love which is eminent, excellent, and mighty beyond all

comparison. It is this supreme love which places God in such esteem in

our souls, and makes us repute it so great a happiness to be agreeable

in his sight, that we prefer him and love him above all things. Now,

Theotimus, do you not plainly see, that he who loves God in this sort

has dedicated his whole soul and strength to God, since ever, and for

ever, and in all occurrences, he will prefer the good grace of God to

all things, and will be ever ready to forsake the whole world, in order

to preserve the love which is due to the divine goodness. And, in a

word, it is the love of excellence, or the excellence of love, which is

commanded to all mortals in general, and to each one of them in

particular as soon as they have the free use of reason: a love

sufficient for each one, and necessary for salvation to all.

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[454] Apoc. ii. 17.

[455] Cant. v. 10.

[456] Deut. vi. 4, 5.

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CHAPTER VII.

EXPLANATION OF THE PRECEDING CHAPTER.

We do not always know, nor ever with perfect certainty (at least with

certainty of faith), whether we have the true love of God which is

required for salvation; still we have many marks of it, amongst which

the most assured and almost infallible appears when some great love of

creatures opposes itself to the designs of God's love; for then, if

divine love is in the soul, it displays the greatness of the credit and

authority which it has over the will, showing effectively, not only

that it has no master, but that it has not even a companion, repressing

and overthrowing all opposition, and making its intentions obeyed. When

the unhappy troop of diabolic spirits, revolting from their Creator,

essayed to draw to their faction the holy company of the blessed

spirits, the glorious S. Michael, animating his comrades to the

fidelity which they owed to their God, cried with loud voice (but in

angelic sort) through the heavenly Jerusalem: "Who is like to God?" And

by this word he overthrew that traitor Lucifer with his rout, who would

have equalled themselves with the divine majesty; and thence, as it is

said, the name was given to S. Michael, since Michael simply means Who

is like to God? And when the loves of created things would draw our

hearts to their party, to make us disobedient to the divine majesty, if

the great divine love be found in the soul, it makes head against it,

as another S. Michael, and establishes the powers and forces of the

soul in God's service by this word of steadfastness: Who is like to

God? What goodness is there in creatures which ought to draw the human

heart into rebellion against the sovereign goodness of its God?

When the holy and noble Joseph perceived that the love of his mistress

tended to the ruin of that which was due to his master: Ah! said he, be

it far from me that I should violate the respect which I owe to my

master, who reposes so much trust in me? How then can I do this wicked

thing, and sin against my God? [457] Mark, Theotimus, how there are

three loves in the heart of this admirable Joseph, for he loves his

mistress, his master, and God; but as soon as his mistress's love rises

up against his master's, he suddenly forsakes it and flies, as he would

also have forsaken his master's, if he had found it contrary to God's.

Amongst all loves, God's is so to be preferred that we must always

stand prepared in mind to forsake them all for that alone.

Abraham loved Sarai and Agar, and until Agar began to despise her

mistress it could not well have been discerned which he loved the

better. But when these two loves came into comparison with one another,

the good Abraham made quite clear which was the stronger. For no sooner

had Sarai complained that she was contemned by Agar, than he told her:

Behold thy handmaid is in thy own hand, use her as it pleaseth thee.

[458] Wherefore Sarai so afflicted the poor Agar that she was driven to

run away. Divine love is willing for us to have other loves; nor can we

easily discover which is the chief love of our heart: for this human

heart often draws most affectionately into its complacency the love of

creatures; yea, on many occasions it makes the acts of its affection

for the creature far more numerous than that of its dilection for its

Creator. Yet all the time sacred dilection ceases not to excel all the

other loves, as the events show when the creature is opposed to the

Creator; for then we take the part of sacred dilection, submitting unto

it all our other affections.

There is often a difference, among created things, between greatness

and goodness. One of Cleopatra's pearls was worth more than our highest

mountain; but the latter is much greater: the one has more bulk, the

other more worth. It is made a question whether the honour which a

prince achieves in war by feats of arms, or that which he merits by

justice in time of peace be greater; and it seems to me that military

glory is grander, and the other better; as, among instruments, drums

and trumpets make more noise, lutes and virginals more melody; the

sound of the one is stronger, of the other sweeter and more spiritual.

An ounce of balm gives not so strong an odour as a pound of oil of

lavender, but at the same time the smell of balm is better and more

agreeable.

Truly, Theotimus, you will see a mother so busy about her child that

she might seem to have no other love but that, having eyes only to see

it, mouth to kiss it, breast to give it suck, care to bring it up; and

one would think that her husband was nothing to her, in respect of her

child; but if she had to make choice which she would lose, then would

be plainly seen that she more values her husband, and that though the

love of her child was more tender, more pressing and passionate, yet

that other was the more excellent, stronger and better. So when a heart

loves God in respect of his infinite goodness, with however little a

portion of this excellent love, it will prefer God's will before all

things, and in all the occasions that present themselves it will

forsake everything, to preserve itself in grace with the sovereign

goodness, and nothing whatever will divert it from this. So that,

though this divine love does not always so sensibly affect and melt the

heart as do the other loves; yet, on occasions, it performs actions so

noble and excellent, that one of them only is better than ten millions

of the others. Rabbits are incomparably fertile, elephants never have

more than one calf; but this little elephant alone is of greater price

than all the rabbits in the world. Our love towards creatures often

abounds in the multitude of productions; but when sacred love acts its

work is so eminent that it surpasses all: for it causes God to be

preferred before all things, without reserve.

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[457] Gen. xxxix. 8.

[458] Gen. xvi. 6.

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CHAPTER VIII.

A MEMORABLE HISTORY TO MAKE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD IN WHAT THE FORCE AND

EXCELLENCE OF HOLY LOVE CONSIST.

How great an extent then, O my dear Theotimus, ought the force of this

sacred love of God above all things to have? It must surpass all

affections, vanquish all difficulties, and prefer the honour of God's

good-will before all things; yea I say, before all things absolutely,

without any exception or reservation; and I speak thus with such great

distinctness, because there are men who would courageously forsake

their goods, honour, and their own life for our Lord, who yet will not

leave for his sake things of much less consideration.

In the reign of the Emperors Valerianus and Gallus, there lived in

Antioch a priest named Sapricius, and a layman named Nicephorus, who by

reason of their long and exceeding great friendship were considered as

brothers: and yet it happened in the end, I know not upon what

occasion, that this friendship failed, and according to custom was

followed with a yet deeper hatred, which reigned for a time between

them, till at length Nicephorus, acknowledging his fault, made three

different attempts to be reconciled with Sapricius, to whom, now by one

of their common friends, now by another, he sent words signifying all

the satisfaction and submission that heart could have wished. But

Sapricius, in no wise answering to his invitations, ever repulsed the

reconciliation with as much contempt as Nicephorus besought it with

humility; insomuch that the poor Nicephorus, thinking that if Sapricius

saw him prostrate at his feet begging pardon he would be more touched

to the heart with it, goes and finds him out and courageously casting

himself down at his feet:--Reverend Father, says he, Ah! pardon me, I

beseech thee by the bowels of our Saviour Jesus; but even this humility

was disdained and rejected, together with his former endeavours.

Meanwhile, behold a hot persecution arose against the Christians, in

which Sapricius with others being apprehended did wonders in suffering

a thousand thousand torments for the confession of his

faith--especially when he was most roughly shaken and rolled in an

instrument made purposely, after the manner of a wine-press--without

ever losing his constancy. At this the Governor of Antioch being

extremely irritated condemned him to death; whereupon he was publicly

led out of prison towards the place where he was to receive the

glorious crown of martyrdom. No sooner had Nicephorus learnt this, than

immediately he ran, and having met Sapricius, throwing himself upon the

ground: Alas! cried he, with a loud voice, O martyr of Jesus Christ,

pardon me, for I have offended thee! But Sapricius taking no notice,

the poor Nicephorus, getting again before him by a shorter way, came to

him anew with the like humility, conjuring him to pardon him in these

words: O martyr of Jesus Christ, pardon the offence which I have

committed against thee, I who am but a man and subject to offend: for

lo! a crown is already bestowed upon thee by our Saviour whom thou has

not denied, yea thou hast confessed his holy name before many

witnesses. But Sapricius continuing in his pride gave him not one word

in answer; until the very executioners, wondering at the perseverance

of Nicephorus, said to him: We have never seen so foolish a man as

thee; this fellow is going even at this moment to die, what dost thou

want with his pardon? To whom Nicephorus answering: Thou knowest not,

said he, what it is I demand of this confessor of Jesus Christ, but God

knows. Meantime Sapricius arrived at the place of execution, where yet

again Nicephorus, casting himself upon the ground before him: I beseech

thee, said he, O martyr of Jesus Christ, that it would please thee to

pardon me, for it is written: Ask and it shall be granted thee: words

which could not in the least bend the caitiff and rebellious heart of

the miserable Sapricius, who, obstinately denying mercy to his

neighbour, was himself deprived by the just judgment of God of the most

glorious palm of martrydom. For the executioners commanding him to put

himself on his knees, in order to behead him, he began to be daunted,

and to parley with them, making in the end this deplorable and shameful

submission: Oh! I pray you, behead me not: I will do what the Emperors

order, and sacrifice to idols. Which the poor good Nicephorus hearing,

with tears in his eyes began to cry: Ah! do not, I beseech thee,

transgress the law and deny Jesus Christ; forsake him not, I beseech

thee, lose not the crown of glory which with so great labours and

torments thou hast obtained! But alas! this miserable priest coming to

the altar of martyrdom there to consecrate his life to the eternal God,

had not called to mind what the Prince of Martyrs had said: If

therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember

that thy brother hath anything against thee; leave there thy offering

before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother: and

then coming thou shalt offer thy gift. [459] Wherefore God rejected his

offering; and withdrawing his mercy from him, permitted him not only to

lose the sovereign happiness of martyrdom, but even to fall headlong

into the misery of idolatry; while the humble and meek Nicephorus,

perceiving this crown of martyrdom vacant by the apostasy of the

obdurate Sapricius, touched with an excellent and extraordinary

inspiration, boldly presses forward to obtain it, saying to the

officers and executioners: I am a Christian, my friends, I am in truth

a Christian, and believe in Jesus Christ, whom this man has denied: put

me, therefore, I beseech you, in his place, and cut off my head. At

which the officers being extremely astonished, carried the tidings to

the governor, who gave orders that Sapricius should be set at liberty,

and that Nicephorus should be put to death, which happened on the 9th

of February, about the year of our salvation 260, as Metaphrastes and

Surius relate. A terrible history, and worthy of the gravest

consideration in the subject we treat of! For did you note, my dear

Theotimus, this courageous Sapricius--how bold and fervent he was in

defence of his faith, how he was in the confession of our Saviour's

name, while he was rolled and crushed in that press-like machine, how

ready he was to receive the death-blow to fulfil the highest point of

the divine law, preferring God's honour before his own life? And yet,

because on the other side he prefers to the divine will the

satisfaction which his cruel haughtiness takes in hating Nicephorus, he

stops short in his course, and when he is on the point of coming up to

and attaining the prize of glory by martyrdom, he miserably falls and

breaks his neck, falling headlong into idolatry.

It is therefore true, my Theotimus, that it is not enough for us to

love God more than our own life, unless we also love him universally,

absolutely, and without reserve, more than all we love or can love. But

you will say to me, did not our Saviour assign the furthest point of

our love towards him, when he said that greater love than this no man

hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends? [460] It is true

indeed, Theotimus, that amongst the particular acts and testimonies of

divine love there is none so great as to undergo death for God's glory,

yet it is also true that this is but one single act, and one single

test; it is indeed the masterpiece of charity, but besides it charity

exacts many things at our hands, and so much more forcibly and

instantly as they are acts more easy, common and ordinary with all

lovers, and more generally necessary to the preservation of sacred

love. O miserable Sapricius! Durst thou be bold to affirm that thou

didst love God as was fitting, whilst thou didst not prefer the will of

God before the passion of hatred and rancour entertained in thy heart

against the poor Nicephorus? To be willing to die for God is the

greatest but not the only act of love which we owe to God; and to will

this act only, excluding the others,--this is not charity, it is

vanity. Charity is not fanciful, which she would be in the highest

degree, if being resolved to please the beloved in things of greatest

difficulty, she would permit us to displease him in easier matters. How

can he will to die for God who will not live according to God?

A well-ordered mind that is resolved to die for a friend, would also

without doubt undergo all other things; for he that has once despised

death ought to have despised everything. But the human spirit is weak,

inconstant and humoursome, whence men sometimes rather choose to die

than to undergo far slighter pains, and willingly give their life for

extremely frivolous, childish, and vain satisfactions. Agrippina having

learnt that the child she was bringing forth would be Emperor, indeed,

but that he would put her to death: Let him kill me, said she, provided

that he reign. Mark, I pray you, the disorder of this foolishly loving

mother's heart; she preferred her son's dignity before her own life.

Cato and Cleopatra chose death rather than to see their enemies exult

and glory in their capture; and Lucretia chose to put herself cruelly

to death rather than to be unjustly branded with the shame of a deed in

which, it would seem, she was not guilty. How many are there who would

willingly embrace death for their friends, and yet would not live in

their service, or accomplish their other desires? A man exposes his

life, who would not open his purse. And though there may be found many

who engage their life for a friend's defence, yet scarcely is there one

found in a century who will imperil his liberty, or lose an ounce of

the most vain and unprofitable reputation or renown in the world, be it

for never so dear a friend.

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[459] Matt. v. 23, 24.

[460] John xv. 13.

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CHAPTER IX.

A CONFIRMATION OF WHAT HAS BEEN SAID BY A NOTEWORTHY COMPARISON.

You know, Theotimus, what was Jacob's love for his Rachel. And what did

not he do to testify its greatness, force and fidelity, from the hour

he had saluted her at the well? For from that time he never ceased to

love her, and to gain her in marriage he served seven whole years with

incredible devotion; yet he considered that all this was nothing, so

much did love sweeten the pains which he supported for his beloved

Rachel. And when he was, after all, disappointed of her, he served yet

other seven years to obtain her; so constant, loyal and courageous was

he in his affection; and having at length obtained her he neglected all

other affections, scarcely even taking any account of the duty he had

to Lia, his first spouse, a woman of great merit and very worthy to be

cherished, whom God himself compassionated for the contempt she

suffered, so remarkable was it.

But after all this, which was enough to bring down the haughtiest woman

in the world to the love of so loyal a lover, it is verily a shame to

see the weakness which Rachel showed in her affection to Jacob. The

poor Lia had no tie of love with Jacob except the fact that she was the

mother of his four sons. Reuben the first of these had gone into the

fields at harvest-time and found some mandrakes, which he brought as a

present to his mother. [461] Rachel asked for some of them, and when

poor Lia said: Dost thou think it a small matter that thou hast taken

my husband from me, unless thou take also my son's mandrakes,--Rachel

sold, as it were, the favours and love of her husband for the

mandrakes. But Jacob was distressed, and his heart sank, when he

understood the weakness and inconstancy of Rachel, who for so trifling

a thing sacrificed for a time the honour and pleasure of his special

love. For, tell me truly, Theotimus--was it not a strange and most

fickle levity in Rachel, to prefer a heap of little apples to the

chaste company of so amiable a husband? If it had been for kingdoms,

for monarchies!--but for a miserable handful of mandrakes!--Theotimus,

what think you of it?

And yet, returning to ourselves, good God! how often do we make

elections infinitely more shameful and wretched? The great S. Augustine

upon a time took pleasure in leisurely viewing and contemplating

mandrakes, the better to discern the cause why Rachel had so

passionately coveted them, and he found that they were indeed pleasing

to the sight, and of a delightful smell, yet altogether insipid and

without flavour. Now Pliny relates that when the surgeons bring the

juice of them to be drunk by those on whom they wish to make an

incision, that they may not feel the operation, it happens often that

the very smell works the effect and puts the patient sufficiently to

sleep. Wherefore the mandrake is a bewitching plant, which enchants the

eyes, and charms away pains, sorrows, and all passions by sleep.

Besides, he who smells the scent of them too long turns mute, and he

who drinks too much of them dies without remedy.

Theotimus, could worldly pomps, riches and delights be better

represented? They have an attractive outside, but he who bites this

apple, that is, he who sounds their nature, finds neither taste nor

contentment in them, nevertheless they enchant us and put us to sleep

by the vanity of their smell; and the renown which the children of the

world attach to them, benumbs and destroys those who give themselves up

to them too intently, or take them too abundantly. And it is for such

mandrakes, chimeras and phantoms of content, that we cast off the love

of the heavenly beloved; and how then can we say that we love him above

all things, since we prefer such empty vanities before his grace?

Is it not a marvel, but one worthy of tears, to see David, so noble in

surmounting hatred, so generous in pardoning injuries, and yet so

furiously unjust in love, that not content with possessing justly a

great multitude of wives, he iniquitously usurps and takes away the

wife of poor Urias, and by an insupportable cruelty causes the husband

to be slain, that he may the better enjoy the love of the wife? Who

would not wonder at the heart of a S. Peter, which was so bold amidst

the armed soldiers that he alone of all his master's company takes

sword in hand and strikes; and yet a little afterwards he is so

cowardly amongst the women, that at the mere word of a maid he denies

and forswears his master? And how can it seem so strange to us that

Rachel could sell the chaste favours of her Jacob for the apples of the

mandrake, since Adam and Eve actually forsook grace for an apple which

a serpent offers them to eat?

In fine, I say to you this word, worthy of note. Heretics are heretics

and bear the name, because out of the articles of faith they choose at

their taste and pleasure those which it seems good to them to believe,

rejecting and denying the others. And Catholics are Catholics, because

without any choice or election they embrace, with an equal assurance

and without exception, all the faith of the Church. Now it is the same

in the articles of charity. It is a heresy in sacred love to make

choice among God's commandments, which to observe, and which to

violate: he who said: Thou shalt not kill, said also: Thou shalt not

commit adultery. If then thou kill not, but commit adultery, it is not

for love for God that thou killest not, but it is from some other

motive, which makes thee rather choose this commandment than the other;

a choice which makes heresy in matter of charity. If a man told me that

he would not cut off my arm on account of his love for me, and yet

proceeded to pluck out my eye, to break my head, to run me

through:--Ah! should I cry, how do you say that it is for love you do

not cut off my arm, since you pluck out my eye which is no less

precious to me, or run my body through with your sword, which is still

more dangerous to me? It is a maxim that good comes from an entirely

sound cause, evil from some defect. To make an act of true charity, it

must proceed from an entire, general and universal love, which extends

to all the divine commandments, and if we fail in any one commandment,

love ceases to be entire and universal, and the heart wherein it is

cannot be called truly loving, nor, consequently, truly good.

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[461] Gen. xxx.

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CHAPTER X.

THAT WE ARE TO LOVE THE DIVINE GOODNESS SOVEREIGNLY ABOVE OURSELVES.

Aristotle was consistent in saying that good is indeed amiable, but to

each one his own good principally, so that the love which we have for

others proceeds from the love of ourselves:--for how could a

philosopher say otherwise who not only did not love God, but hardly

ever even spoke of the love of God? As a fact, however, this love of

God precedes all love of ourselves, even according to the natural

inclination of our will, as I have made clear in the first book.

In truth, the will is so dedicated, and, if we may say it, consecrated

to goodness, that if an infinite goodness be clearly proposed unto it,

it must, unless by miracle, sovereignly love this goodness: yea, the

Blessed are carried away and necessitated, though not forced, to love

God whose sovereign beauty they clearly see; as the Scripture

sufficiently shows in comparing the contentment which fills the hearts

of the glorious inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem to a torrent and

impetuous flood, whose waters cannot be kept from spreading over the

plains it meets with.

But in this mortal life, Theotimus, we are not necessitated to love him

so sovereignly, because we see him not so clearly. In heaven, where we

shall see him face to face, we shall love him heart to heart; that is,

as we shall all see the infinity of his beauty, each in our measure,

with a sovereignly clear sight, so shall we be ravished, with the love

of his infinite goodness in a sovereignly strong rapture, to which we

shall neither desire, nor be able to desire, to make any resistance.

But here below on earth, where we do not see this sovereign goodness in

its beauty, but only have a half-sight of it amid our obscurities, we

are indeed inclined and allured to love him more than ourselves;--yet

we are not necessitated: on the contrary, though we have this holy

natural inclination to love the divinity above all things, yet we have

not the strength to put it in execution, unless the same divinity

infuse its most holy charity supernaturally into our hearts.

Yet true it is that as the clear view of the divinity infallibly

produces the necessity of loving it more than ourselves, so the

half-view, that is, the natural knowledge, of the divinity, infallibly

produces the inclination and tendency to love it more than ourselves;

for, I pray you, Theotimus, since the will is wholly ordained unto the

love of good, how can it know, ever so little, a sovereign good without

being so far inclined to love it sovereignly? Of all goods which are

not infinite, our will always prefers in its love that which is nearest

to it, and chiefly its own; but there is so little proportion between

the infinite and the finite, that our will having knowledge of an

infinite good is without doubt moved, inclined and excited to prefer

the friendship of this abyss of infinite goodness before every other

sort of love, yea even the love of ourselves.

This inclination is strong principally because we are more in God than

in ourselves, we live more in him than in ourselves, and are in such

sort from him, by him, for him and belonging to him, that we cannot

undistractedly consider what we are to him and he is to us, without

being forced to exclaim: I am thine, Lord, and must belong to none but

thee; my soul is thine, and ought not to live but by thee, my will is

thine, and is only to tend to thee, I must love thee as my first

principle since I have my being from thee, I must love thee as my end

and centre since I am for thee, I must love thee more than my own

being, since my being subsists by thee, I must love thee more than

myself, since I am wholly thine and in thee.

And in case there were or could be some sovereign good whereof we were

independent, we should also, supposing that we could unite ourselves

unto it by love, be excited to love this more than ourselves, seeing

that the infinity of its sweetness would be still sovereignly more

powerful to draw our will to its love than all other goods, yea, even

than our own good.

But if, by imagination of a thing impossible, there were an infinite

goodness on which we had no dependence whatever, and with which we

could have no kind of union or communication, we should indeed esteem

it more than ourselves, for we should know that being infinite it would

be more estimable and lovable than we; and consequently we should be

able to make simple desires of being able to love it; yet, properly

speaking, we should not love it, since love aims at union; and much

less could we have charity towards it, since charity is a friendship,

and friendship cannot be unless it be reciprocal, having for its

groundwork communication, and for its end union: I speak thus for the

benefit of certain fantastic and empty spirits, who very often on

baseless imaginations revolve morbid thoughts to their own great

affliction. But as for us, Theotimus, my dear friend, we see plainly

that we cannot be true men without putting this inclination into

effect. Let us love him more than ourselves who is to us more than all

and more than ourselves. Amen, so it is.

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CHAPTER XI.

HOW HOLY CHARITY PRODUCES THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR.

As God created man to his own image and likeness, so did he appoint for

man a love after the image and resemblance of the love which is due to

his own divinity. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole

heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the

greatest, and the first commandment. And the second is like to this:

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. [462] Why do we love God,

Theotimus? "The cause for which we love God," says S. Bernard, "is God

Himself;" as though he had said: we love God because he is the most

sovereign and infinite goodness. And why do we love ourselves in

charity? Surely because we are the image and likeness of God; and

whereas all men are endowed with the same dignity, we love them also as

ourselves, that is, as being holy and living images of the divinity.

For it is on that account that we belong to God by so strict an

alliance and so sweet a dependence of love, that he makes no difficulty

to call himself our father, and to call us his children; it is on that

account that we are capable of being united to his divine essence by

the fruition of his sovereign goodness and felicity; it is on that

account that we receive his grace, that our spirits are associated to

his most Holy Spirit, and made in a manner participant of his divine

nature, as S. Leo says. And therefore the same charity which produces

the acts of the love of God, produces at the same time those of the

love of our neighbour. And even as Jacob saw that one same ladder

touched heaven and earth, serving the angels both for descending and

ascending, so we know that one same charity extends itself to both the

love of God and our neighbour, raising us to the union of our spirit

with God, and bringing us back again to a loving society with our

neighbours; always, however, on the understanding that we love our

neighbour as being after the image and likeness of God, created to have

communication with the divine goodness, to participate in his grace,

and to enjoy his glory.

Theotimus, to love our neighbour in charity is to love God in man, or

man in God; it is to hold God alone dear for his own sake and the

creature for the love of him. The young Tobias, accompanied by the

angel Raphael, having met with Raguel his relative, by whom, however,

he was unknown,--Raguel had no sooner set eyes upon him, says the

Scripture, but turning himself towards his wife: Anna, look, look, said

he, how like is this young man to my cousin? And when he had spoken

these words, he said: whence are ye, young men our brethren? But they

said, we are of the tribe of Nephthali, of the captivity of Ninive. And

Raguel said to them: Do you know Tobias my brother? And they said, we

know him. And when he was speaking many good things of him, the angel

said to Raguel: Tobias concerning whom thou inquirest is this young

man's father. And Raguel went to him, and kissed him with tears, and

weeping upon his neck, said: a blessing be upon thee, my son, because

thou art the son of a virtuous man. And Anna his wife and Sara their

daughter wept, [463] through tenderness of affection. Do you not

observe that Raguel, without knowing the younger Tobias, embraces,

caresses, kisses him, and weeps for joy over him. Whence proceeds this

love but from that which he had for the old Tobias, the father, whom

this child did so much resemble? A blessing be upon thee, said he; but

why? certainly not because thou art a good youth, for that as yet I

know not, but because thou art son, and like, to thy father, a good and

most virtuous man.

Ah! then, Theotimus, when we see a neighbour who is created to the

image and likeness of God, ought we not to say one to another: Observe

and see this creature, how he resembles the Creator? Might we not cast

ourselves upon his neck, to caress him and weep over him with love?

Should we not bless him a thousand and a thousand times? And why? For

the love of him? No verily: for we know not whether he be worthy of

love or hatred in himself; but wherefore then? O Theotimus! for the

love of God, who has made him to his own image and likeness, and

consequently capable of participating in his goodness, in grace and in

glory. For the love of God, I say, from whom he is, whose he is, by

whom he is, in whom he is, for whom he is, and whom he resembles in a

most particular manner. Wherefore the love of God not only oftentimes

commands the love of our neighbour, but itself produces this love and

pours it into man's heart, as its resemblance and image: for even as

man is the image of God, so the sacred love of man towards man, is the

true image of the heavenly love of man towards God. But this subject of

the love of our neighbour requires a treatise apart, which I beseech

the sovereign lover of men to will to inspire into some one of his most

excellent servants, since the supreme love of the divine goodness of

the heavenly Father, consists in the perfection of the love of our

brothers and companions.

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[462] Matt. xxii. 37.

[463] Tobias vii. 2-8

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CHAPTER XII.

HOW LOVE PRODUCES ZEAL.

As love tends towards the good of the thing beloved, either by taking

delight in it if the beloved have it, or in desiring and procuring it

for him if he have it not; so it produces hatred, by which it flies the

evil which is contrary to the thing beloved, either by desiring and

seeking to remove it if it be there, or by keeping it off and

preventing its coming if it be not there. But if evil can neither be

hindered from approaching, nor be removed, love at least fails not to

have it hated and detested. When love therefore is fervent, and is come

to that height that it would take away, remove and divert, what is

opposite to the thing beloved, it is termed zeal. So that, to describe

it properly, zeal is no other thing than love in its ardour, or rather

the ardour that is in love. And therefore, such as the love is, such is

the zeal, which is its ardour. If the love be good its zeal is good, if

the love be bad its zeal is bad. Now when I speak of zeal, I mean to

speak of jealousy too: for jealousy is a species of zeal, and if I am

not mistaken, there is but this difference between them, that zeal

regards the whole good of the thing beloved, with the intention of

removing the contrary evil from it, and jealousy regards the particular

good of the friendship, that it may repulse all that opposes that.

When therefore we ardently love worldly and temporal things, beauty,

honours, riches, rank,--this zeal, that is the ardour of this love,

ends ordinarily in envy: because these base and vile things are so

little, limited, particular, finite and imperfect, that being possessed

by one, another cannot entirely possess them. So that being

communicated to many, each one in particular has a less perfect

communication of them. But when, in particular, we ardently love to be

beloved, the zeal or ardour of this love turns into jealousy; because

human friendship, though otherwise a virtue, has this imperfection by

reason of our weakness, that being divided amongst many, each one's

part is less. Whereupon our ardour or zeal to be beloved will not

permit rivals or companions; and if we imagine we have any, we

immediately enter into the passion of jealousy, which indeed in some

sort resembles envy, but in reality is very different from it. 1�.

Envy is always unjust, but jealousy is sometimes just, if it be

moderate: for have not married people good reason to hinder their

friendship from being diminished by being shared? 2�. Envy makes us

sorry that our neighbour enjoys a greater good than, or a like good

with, ourselves; although he is taking from us nothing that we have;

and here envy is unreasonable, making us consider our neighbour's good

to be our ill. But jealousy is not grieved at our neighbour's having

some good provided that it is not our good: for the jealous man does

not grieve at his fellow's being beloved by other women so long as he

is not loved by the jealous man's wife; indeed, properly speaking, one

is not jealous of a rival until one belives that one has gained the

friendship of the person loved: if there be any passion before that, it

is not jealousy but envy. 3�. We do not presuppose any imperfection in

the person we envy, but on the contrary we consider that he has the

good which we envy in him: but we presuppose that the person of whom we

are jealous is imperfect, fickle, changeable and easily led away. 4�.

Jealousy proceeds from love, envy comes from the defect of love. 5�.

Jealousy never happens but in matter of love, but envy is extended to

all kinds of goods--honours, favours, beauty. And if at any time one be

envious of the affection which is borne to another, it is not for love,

but for the fruits that spring from it. The envious man is little

troubled to see his fellow in favour with his prince, so that he be not

on occasions graced and preferred by him.

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CHAPTER XIII.

HOW GOD IS JEALOUS OF US.

God speaks thus: I am the Lord thy God, a jealous God. [464] The Lord

his name is jealous. [465] God is jealous then, Theotimus, but what is

his jealousy? Truly it seems at first to be a jealousy of cupidity such

as is that of husbands for their wives: for he will have us so to be

his, that he will in no sort have us to be any other's but his. No man,

saith he, can serve two masters. [466] He demands all our heart, all

our soul, all our mind, and all our strength; for this very reason he

calls himself our spouse, and our souls his spouses; and names all

sorts of separations from him, fornication, adultery. And high reason

indeed has this great God, all singularly good, to exact most

rigorously our whole heart: for ours is a little heart, which cannot

supply love enough worthily to love the divine goodness. Is it not

therefore meet, that since we cannot give him such measure of love as

were requisite, that at least we should love him all we can? The good

which is sovereignly lovable, ought it not to be sovereignly loved? Now

to love sovereignly, is to love totally.

However, God's jealousy of us is not truly a jealousy of cupidity, but

of sovereign friendship: for it is not his interest that we should love

him, but ours. Our love is useless to him, but to us a great gain; and

if it be agreeable to him, it is because it is profitable to us: for

being the sovereign good, he takes pleasure in communicating himself by

love, without any kind of profit that can return to him thereby; whence

he cries out making his complaint of sinners by way of jealousy: They

have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to

themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. [467]

Consider a little, Theotimus, I pray you, how delicately this divine

lover expresses the nobility and generosity of his jealousy: They have

left me, says he, who am the fountain of living water. As if he said: I

complain not that they have forsaken me because of any injury their

forsaking can cause me, for what the worse is a living spring if men do

not draw water at it? Will it therefore cease to run, or to flow out on

the earth? But I grieve for their misfortune, that having left me, they

have chosen for themselves wells that have no water. And if, by

supposition of an impossible thing, they could have met with some other

fountain of living water, I would lightly bear their departure from me,

since I aim at nothing in their love, but their own good. But to

forsake me to perish, to fly from me to fall headlong, is what

astonishes and offends me in their folly. It is then for the love of us

that he desires we should love him, because we cannot cease to love him

without beginning to be lost, and whatever part of our affections we

take from him we lose.

Put me, said the divine shepherd to the Sulamitess, as a seal upon thy

heart, as a seal upon thy arm. [468] The Sulamitess had her heart quite

full of the heavenly love of her dear lover, who, though he possess

all, yet is not content with it, but by a holy distrust of jealousy

will be set upon the heart which he possesses, and will seal it with

himself, lest any of the love due to him escape, or anything get entry

which might mingle with it. For he is not satisfied with the love with

which the soul of his Sulamitess is filled, if it be not invariable,

quite pure, quite solely his. And that he may not only enjoy the

affections of our heart, but also the effects and operations of our

hands, he will also be as a seal upon our right arm, that it may not be

stretched out or employed save in the works of his service. And the

reason of the divine lover's demand is, that as death is so strong that

it separates the soul from all things, yea even from her own body, so

sacred love which is come to the degree of zeal, divides and separates

the soul from all other affections, and purifies her from all

admixture; since it is not only strong as death, but it is withal

bitter, inexorable, hard and pitiless in punishing the wrong done unto

it, when rivals are entertained with it, as hell is hard in punishing

the damned. And even as hell, full of horror, rage and cruelty, admits

no mingling of love, so jealous love tolerates no mixture of another

affection, willing that all be for the well-beloved. Nothing is so

gentle as the dove, yet nothing so merciless as he towards his mate,

when he has some feeling of jealousy. If ever you have taken notice,

Theotimus, you will have seen that this mild bird, returning from his

flight, and finding his mate amongst his companions, is not able to

suppress in himself a certain sense of distrust, which makes him

churlish and ill-humoured, so that at their first accosting he circles

about her, murmuring, fretting, treading upon her, and beating her with

his wings, although he knows well that she is faithful, and that he

sees her in the pure white of innocence.

One day S. Catharine of Siena was in a rapture which did not deprive

her of the use of her senses, and while God was showing her wondrous

things, one of her brothers passed by, and with the noise he made

disturbed her attention, so that she turned and looked at him for a

single little moment. This little distraction, so unforeseen and

sudden, was neither sin, nor disloyalty, but only a shadow of sin and

resemblance of disloyalty: and yet the most holy Mother of the heavenly

lover did so earnestly chide her and the glorious S. Paul so put her to

confusion for it, that she thought she should have melted away in

tears. And David, re-established in grace by a perfect love, how was he

treated for the simply venial sin which he had committed in numbering

his people?

But, Theotimus, he who desires to see this jealousy delicately and

excellently described, must read the instructions which the seraphic S.

Catharine of Genoa has made to declare the properties of pure love,

amongst which she inculcates and strongly urges this;--that perfect

love, namely, love which has gone as far as zeal, cannot suffer any

mediation, interposition, or mingling of any other thing, not even of

God's gifts, yea, up to this extreme, that it permits not even the love

of heaven, except with intention to love more perfectly therein the

goodness of him who gives it. So that the lamps of this pure love have

neither oil, wick, nor smoke, but are all fire and flame, which nothing

in the world can extinguish. And those who carry these burning lamps in

their hands, possess the most holy fear of chaste spouses, not the fear

which belongs to adulterous women. Those have fear, and these also, but

differently, says S. Augustine; the chaste spouse fears the absence of

her husband, the adulterous, the presence of hers. The former fears his

departure, the latter his stay: the one is so deeply amorous that she

is extremely jealous; the other is not jealous, because she is not

amorous: the one fears to be punished, and the other fears that she may

not be loved enough;--yet in sooth she does not precisely fear the not

being loved enough, as other jealous persons do, who love themselves

and want to be loved, but her fear is that she loves not him enough

whom she sees so love-worthy that none can love him according to the

greatness of the love which he deserves, as I have but just said.

Wherefore she is not jealous with a jealousy of self-interest, but with

a pure jealousy, which proceeds not from any cupidity, but from a noble

and simple friendship; a jealousy which, with the love whence it

proceeds, extends itself to our neighbour; for since we love our

neighbour as ourselves for God's sake, we are also jealous of him, as

of ourselves, for God's sake, so that we would even die that he may not

perish.

Now as zeal is an inflamed ardour, or an ardent inflaming of love, it

requires to be wisely and prudently practised; otherwise, under the

cloak of it, one would transgress the limits of moderation or

discretion, and it would be easy to pass from zeal into anger, and from

a just affection to an unjust passion; wherefore, this not being the

proper place to put down the conditions of zeal, my Theotimus, I tell

you that for the practice of it you must always have recourse to him

whom God has given you for your direction in the devout life.

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[464] Deut. v. 9.

[465] Exod. xxxiv. 14.

[466] Matt. vi. 24.

[467] Jer. ii. 13.

[468] Cant. viii. 6.

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CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE ZEAL OR JEALOUSY WHICH WE HAVE FOR OUR LORD.

A Gentleman desired a famous painter to paint him a horse running, and

the painter having presented the horse to him on its back, and as it

were rolling in the mire, the gentleman began to storm; whereupon the

painter turning the picture upside down: Be not angry, sir, said he; to

change the position of a horse running into that of a horse rolling on

its back, it is only necessary to reverse the picture. Theotimus, he

who would clearly see what zeal or what jealousy we must have for God,

has only to express properly the jealousy we have in human things, and

then to turn it upside down, for such will that be which God requires

from us for himself.

Imagine, Theotimus, what comparison there is between those who enjoy

the brightness of the sun, and those who have only the paltry light of

a lamp; the former are not jealous of one another, for they know well

that that great light is abundantly sufficiently for all, that the

one's enjoyment does not hinder the other's, and that, although all

possess it in general, each one possesses it none the less than if he

alone possessed it in particular. But as to the light of a lamp, since

it is little, limited, and insufficient for many, each one desires to

have it in his chamber, and he that has it is envied by the rest. The

good of human things is so trifling and beggarly, that when one has it,

another must be deprived of it; and human friendship is so limited and

weak, that in proportion as it communicates itself to the one, it is

weakened for the others: this is why we are jealous and angry when we

have rivals and companions in it. The heart of God is so abounding in

love, his good is so absolutely infinite, that all men may possess him

without lessening each one's possession; this infinity of goodness can

never be drained, though it fill all the hearts of the universe; for

when everything has been filled with it to the brim, his infinity ever

remains to him quite entire, without any diminution whatever. The sun

shines no less upon a rose together with a thousand millions of other

flowers, than though it shone but upon that alone. And God pours his

love no less over one soul, though he loves with it an infinity of

others, than if he loved that one only: the force of his love not

decreasing by the multitude of rays which it spreads, but remaining

ever quite full of his immensity.

But wherein consists the zeal or the jealousy which we ought to have

for the divine goodness? Theotimus, its office is, first, to hate, fly,

hinder, detest, reject, combat and overthrow, if one can, all that is

opposed to God; that is, to his will, to his glory, and the

sanctification of his name. I have hated and abhorred iniquity, [469]

said David, and: Have I not hated them, O Lord, that hated thee: and

pined away because of thy enemies. [470] My zeal hath made me pine away

because my enemies forgot thy words. [471] In the morning I put to

death all the wicked of the land; that I might cut off all the workers

of iniquity from the city of the Lord. [472] See, I pray you,

Theotimus, with what zeal this great king is animated, and how he

employs the passions of his soul in the service of holy jealousy! He

does not simply hate iniquity but abhors it; upon the sight of it he

pines away, he falls into a swoon and a failing of heart, he persecutes

it, overthrows it, and exterminates it. So Phinees transported with a

holy zeal ran his sword through that shameless Israelite and vile

Madianite; so the zeal which consumed our Saviour's heart, made him

cast out and instantly take vengeance on the irreverence and

profanation which those buyers and sellers committed in the temple.

Secondly, zeal makes us ardently jealous of the purity of souls, which

are the spouses of Jesus Christ, according to the word of the holy

Apostle to the Corinthians: I am jealous of you with the jealousy of

God, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as

a chaste virgin to Christ. [473] Eliezer would have been stung with

jealousy, if he had perceived the chaste and fair Rebecca, whom he was

conducting to be espoused to his master's son, in any danger of being

dishonoured; and doubtless he might have said to this holy maiden: I am

jealous of you with the jealousy I have for my master, for I have

espoused you to one man, that I may present you a chaste virgin to the

son of my lord Abraham. So would the great S. Paul say to his

Corinthians: I was sent from God to your souls to arrange the marriage

of an eternal union between his Son our Saviour, and you, and I have

promised you to him to present you as a chaste virgin to this divine

lover; behold why I am jealous, not with my own jealousy, but with the

jealousy of God, in whose behalf I have treated with you. It was this

jealousy, Theotimus, that caused this holy Apostle daily to die and

swoon away; I die daily, said he, I protest by your glory. [474] Who is

weak and I am not weak? Who is scandalized and I am not on fire? [475]

Mark, say the ancients, mark what love, what care, and what jealousy a

mother-hen has for her chickens (for our Saviour esteemed not this

comparison unworthy of his Gospel). The hen is a very hen, that is, a

creature without any courage or nobility, while she is not yet a

mother, but with her mothership she puts on a lion's heart: ever the

head up, the eyes on guard, and darting glances on every side, to espy

the smallest appearance of danger to her little ones. There is no enemy

at whose eyes she will not fly in defence of her dear brood, for which

she has a continual solicitude, making her ever run about clucking and

plaining. And if any of her chickens come to die,--what grief, what

anger! This is the jealousy of parents for their children, of pastors

for their flocks, of brothers for their brethren. What was the zeal of

the children of Jacob when they knew that Dina had been insulted? What

was the zeal of Job from the apprehension and fear he had that his

children might have offended God? What was the zeal of a S. Paul for

his brethren according to the flesh, and for his children according to

God, for whose sake he desired to be cast out as worthy of anathema and

excommunication? What the zeal of Moses for his people, for whom he is

willing, in a certain manner to be struck out of the book of life?

Thirdly, in human jealousy we are afraid lest the thing beloved be

possessed by some other, but our zeal for God makes us on the contrary

fear lest we should not be entirely enough possessed by him. Human

jealousy makes us fear not to be loved enough, Christian jealousy

troubles us with the fear of not loving enough; whence the sacred

Sulamitess cried out: Show me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou

feedest, where thou liest in the midday, lest I begin to wander after

the flocks of thy companions. [476] Her fear is that she is not her

sacred shepherd's own entirely, or that she may be led away, be it

never so little, by those who wished to make themselves his rivals. For

she will by no means permit that worldly pleasures, honours, or

exterior goods shall take up a single particle of her love, which she

has wholly dedicated to her dear Saviour.

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[469] Ps. cxviii. 163.

[470] Ps. cxxxviii. 21.

[471] Ps. cxviii. 139.

[472] Ps. c. 8.

[473] 2 Cor. xi. 2.

[474] 1 Cor. xv. 31.

[475] 2 Cor. xi. 29.

[476] Cant. i. 6.

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CHAPTER XV.

ADVICE FOR THE DIRECTION OF HOLY ZEAL.

As zeal is an ardour and vehemence of love it stands in need of

guidance; otherwise it would exceed the limits of moderation and

discretion. Not indeed that divine love, however vehement, can be

excessive in itself, or in the movements or inclinations which it gives

to our spirit, but, inasmuch as it makes use of the understanding in

the execution of its designs, ordering it to find out the means whereby

they may be effected, and makes use of boldness or anger to surmount

the difficulties which it meets with, the understanding often comes to

propose and make us adopt courses too rough and violent, and anger or

hardihood once aroused, and unable to contain itself within the limits

of reason, carries away the heart into disorder, so that zeal is thus

practised indiscreetly and inordinately; which makes it bad and

blameworthy. David sent Joab with his army, against his disloyal and

rebellious child, Absalom, whom he commanded them above all things not

to injure, ordering that in all events they should take care to save

him. But Joab being engaged, and being hot in the pursuit of the

victory, with his own hand slew the poor Absalom, without regard to

what the king had said to him. Even so, zeal employs anger against the

evil, yet ever with express order, that in destroying wickedness and

sin it should save, if possible, the sinner and the iniquitous: but it,

once in its fury, like a hard-mouthed and wilful horse, runs away with

its rider out of the lists, without stop or stay, while breath lasts.

That good man of the house whom our Saviour describes in the Gospel,

knew well that hot and violent servants are wont to outrun their

master's intention, for his servants presenting themselves unto him to

go and weed his field in order to root out the cockle: No, said he,

lest perhaps gathering up the cockle you root up the wheat also

together with it. [477] It is true, Theotimus, that anger is a servant

who, being strong, courageous and of great undertakings, does also at

first a great deal of work, but withal he is so ardent, so hotheaded,

inconsiderate and impetuous, that he ordinarily does no good things

without at the same time doing many evil. It is not good husbandry, say

our country-folk, to keep peacocks in the house; for though they hunt

spiders and rid the house of them, yet they so spoil the furniture and

the buildings themselves that their usefulness is not comparable to the

harm they do. Anger was given by Nature as a help to reason, and is

employed by grace in the service of zeal, to put in execution its

designs; yet it is a dangerous help, and not greatly to be desired, for

if it gets strength it becomes master, overturning the authority of

reason; and while it does no more than zeal would perform all alone, it

keeps one in a well-founded fear that waxing strong it may take

possession of the heart and of zeal, making them slaves to its tyranny,

like a carefully disposed fire, which in an instant embraces a

building, and which no one can extinguish. It were an act of despair to

put foreign auxiliaries into a fortress, who may make themselves the

strongest.

Self-love often deceives us and leads us away, gratifying its own

passions under the name of zeal. Zeal has once made use of anger, and

now anger in its turn uses the name of zeal, in order to keep its

shameful disorder covered under this. And mark that I say it makes use

of the name of zeal; for it can make no use of zeal itself, since it is

the property of all virtues, but especially of Charity, whereof zeal is

a dependence, to be so good that none can abuse them.

A notorious sinner, once went and threw himself at the feet of a good

and worthy priest, protesting with much submission, that he came to

find a cure for his disease, that is, to receive the holy absolution of

his faults. A certain monk called Demophilus, considering that, in his

opinion, this poor penitent came too nigh the holy altar, fell into so

violent a fit of anger, that throwing himself upon him, he kicked and

pushed him thence with his feet, railing at the good priest in an

outrageous sort, who according to his duty had mildly received this

poor penitent. And then running up to the altar he took off the holy

things which were there, and carried them away, lest, as he would have

men think, the place should have been profaned by the sinner's

approach. Now having finished this fair exploit of zeal, he stayed not

yet there, but made a great rejoicing about the matter to the great S.

Denis the Areopagite in a letter which he wrote about it, to which he

received an excellent answer, worthy of the apostolical spirit

wherewith that great disciple of S. Paul was animated. For he made him

clearly see that his zeal had been at once indiscreet, imprudent and

impudent; because though the zeal for the honour due unto holy things

were good and laudable, yet was it practised against all reason,

without any consideration or judgment, since he had employed kicks,

outrages, railing and reproaches, in a place, under circumstances, and

against persons, whom and which he ought to have honoured, loved and

respected; so that the zeal could not be good, being practised with

such great disorder. But in this same answer, that great saint recounts

another admirable example of a great zeal, proceeding from a very good

soul, which was however spoilt and vitiated by the excess of anger

which it had stirred up.

A pagan had led astray and made return to idolatry a Christian of

Candia, recently converted to the faith. Carpus, a man eminent for

purity and sanctity of life, who, as is very probable, was the bishop

of Candia, conceived such an anger at it as he had never before

entertained, and let himself be so far carried away with this passion,

that having risen at midnight to pray according to his custom, he

concluded with himself that it was not reasonable that the wicked men

should any longer live, with great indignation beseeching the divine

justice to strike down at once with his thunderbolts these two sinners

together, the pagan seducer and the Christian seduced. But hear,

Theotimus, how God corrected the bitterness of the passion which

carried the poor Carpus beyond himself. First he made him, as another

S. Stephen, see the heavens open, and our Saviour Jesus Christ seated

upon a great throne, surrounded with a multitude of angels, who

attended him in human form; then he saw below, the earth gaping as a

horrid and vast gulf; and the two erring ones, to whom he had wished so

much evil, he saw upon the very brink of this precipice, trembling and

well-nigh paralysed with fear, as being about to fall down it; on the

one side they were drawn by a multitude of serpents, which rising out

of the gulf, wrapped themselves about their legs, and with their tails

gradually moved and provoked them to their fall; on the other side,

certain men pushed and beat them to make them tumble in, so that they

seemed on the point of being swallowed up in this abyss. Now consider,

my Theotimus, the violence of the passion of Carpus: for as he himself

afterwards recounted to S. Denis, he never thought of contemplating our

Saviour and the angels, who showed themselves in the heavens, such

pleasure did he take in seeing below them the frightful distress of

those two miserable wretches. His only trouble was that they were so

long perishing, and thereupon he endeavoured himself to precipitate

them down; and seeing he could not do it quite at once he was angry,

and began to curse them, until at length, lifting up his eyes to

heaven, he saw the sweet and most pitiful Saviour, who, moved by an

extreme pity and compassion at what was happening, arising from his

throne and descending to the place where the two miserable beings were,

stretched out to them his helping hand, while the angels also, some on

one side some on another, caught hold of them to hinder them from

falling into that dreadful gulf; and, at last the amiable and mild

Jesus, turning himself to the wrathful Carpus:--Nay, Carpus, said he,

henceforth wreak your anger on me: for I am ready to suffer once more

to save men and it would be a joy to me to do so, if it could be

without sin on man's part: at any rate, think which would be the better

for thee, to be in that gulf with the serpents, or to live with angels

who are such great friends of men. Theotimus, the holy man Carpus had

just reason to enter into zeal concerning these two men, and his zeal

had but rightly raised his anger against them, but anger being once

moved left reason and zeal behind, transgressing all the terms and

limits of holy love and consesequently of zeal, which is its fervour:

anger had changed the hatred of sin into the hatred of the sinner, and

most sweet charity into an outrageous cruelty.

Thus there are persons who think one cannot be very zealous unless one

is very angry, thinking that unless they spoil all they can manage

nothing, whereas on the contrary true zeal most rarely makes use of

anger; for as we never apply the lancet to the sick save when it cannot

possibly be helped, so holy zeal does not employ anger save in extreme

necessities.

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[477] Matt. xiii. 29.

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CHAPTER XVI.

THAT THE EXAMPLE OF CERTAIN SAINTS WHO SEEM TO HAVE EXERCISED THEIR

ZEAL WITH ANGER, MAKES NOTHING AGAINST THE DOCTRINE OF THE PRECEDING

CHAPTER.

It is true, indeed, my friend Theotimus, that Moses, Phinees, Elias,

Mathathias and many great servants of God made use of anger in the

exercise of their zeal, on many remarkable occasions, yet note also, I

pray you, that those were great souls, who could well handle their

passions and regulate their anger; like that brave captain of the

Gospel who said to his soldiers: go, and they went, come, and they

came: [478] but we, who are, all of us, but common little people, have

no such power over our movements; our horse is not so well broken in,

that we can make him gallop or stop at our pleasure. Wise and well

trained hounds run afield or come back according to the huntsman's

call, but untrained young hounds break away and are disobedient. Great

saints who have made their passions tractable, mortifying them by the

exercise of virtue, can also turn about their anger as they like, send

it out and draw it back as seems good to them; but we, who have

unbridled passions, quite young, or at least mistaught, cannot let our

anger go save at peril of great disorder, for being once loose we can

no longer restrain or regulate it.

S. Denis speaking to this Demophilus who would have given the name of

zeal to his rage and fury: "He that would correct others," said he,

"must first have a care that anger do not turn reason out of the empire

and dominion which God has given it in the soul, and that it do not

stir up a revolt, sedition and confusion within ourselves; hence we in

no sort approve your impetuosities (to which an indiscreet zeal urged

you), though you should a thousand times recall Phinees and Elias; for

similar words did not please Jesus Christ, when said to him by his

disciples, who were not yet made partakers of that sweet and benign

Spirit." Phinees, Theotimus, seeing a certain unhappy Israelite offend

God with a Madianitess, slew them both: Elias foretold the death of

Ochozias, who, indignant at this prediction, sent two captains one

after another, each with fifty men, to take him: and the man of God

made fire descend from heaven which devoured them. [479] Now one day

that our Lord was journeying in Samaria, he sent into a town to take

his lodging, but the inhabitants knowing that our Lord was a Jew by

nation, and that he was going to Jerusalem, would not lodge him; which

S. John and S. James seeing, they said unto our Saviour: Wilt thou that

we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them? And our Lord

turning rebuked them, saying: you know not of what spirit you are. The

Son of man came not to destroy souls but to save them. [480] This it is

then, Theotimus, that S. Denis would say to Demophilus, who alleged the

example of Phinees and Elias: for S. John and S. James, who would have

imitated Phinees and Elias in making fire descend from heaven upon men,

were reprehended by our Lord, who gave them to know that his spirit and

his zeal were sweet, mild and gracious, making use of indignation or

wrath but very rarely, when there was no longer hope of doing good any

other way. S. Thomas Aquinas, that great star of theology, being sick

of the disease of which he died, at the Monastery of Fossanuova, of the

order of Citeaux, the religious besought him to make them a short

exposition of the Canticle of Canticles in imitation of S. Bernard, and

he answered them: My dear fathers, give me S. Bernard's spirit and I

will interpret this divine Canticle like S. Bernard. So verily, if it

were said to one of us petty, miserable, imperfect and wretched

Christians:--use anger and indignation in your zeal, as did Phinees,

Elias, Mathathias, S. Peter and S. Paul: we ought to reply: give us the

spirit of perfection and pure zeal, with the interior light which those

great saints had, and we will arm ourselves with anger as they did. It

is not the fortune of every one to know how to be angry when and as he

ought.

Those great saints were immediately inspired by God, and therefore

might boldly employ their anger without peril; for the same Spirit

which animated them to these great acts also held the reins of their

just wrath lest they might transgress the prescribed bounds. Anger

which is inspired or excited by the Holy Ghost is no longer the anger

of man, and it is man's wrath that we are to beware of, because, as S.

James says: The anger of man worketh not the justice of God. [481] And

indeed, when those great servants of God made use of anger, it was on

occurrences so solemn and for crimes so excessive, that there was no

danger that the punishment would exceed the fault.

Are we, do you think, to take the liberty of abusing sinners, of

blaming nations, of taking to task and censuring our directors and

prelates, because S. Paul once calls the Galatians senseless,

represents to the Candiots their bad inclinations, and withstands to

the face the glorious S. Peter his superior? Verily every one is not a

S. Paul, to know how to do these things suitably: but bitter, harsh,

presumptuous and reviling spirits, following their own inclinations,

humours, aversions and arrogance, would throw the mantle of zeal over

their iniquity; and under the name of this sacred fire every man

permits himself to be burnt up with his own passions. It is zeal for

the salvation of souls which makes the prelateship desired, if you will

believe the ambitious man; which makes the monk, who is destined for

the choir, run hither and thither, as the restless soul himself will

tell you; which causes all those censures and murmurings against the

prelates of the Church and temporal princes, if you will give ear to

that arrogant man. You will hear from him of nothing but zeal, and you

will see no zeal, but only opprobrious and railing speeches, anger,

hatred and rancour, disquiet of spirit and of tongue.

Zeal may be practised in three ways. First in performing great actions

of justice to repel evil; and this belongs only to those who have the

public offices of correcting, censuring, and reprehending in quality of

superiors, such as princes, prelates, magistrates, preachers: but since

this office is honourable, every one undertakes it, every one will have

to do with it. Secondly, one may use zeal by doing actions of great

virtue in order to give good example, by suggesting remedies for evils,

and exhorting men to apply them, by effecting the good that is opposite

to the evil which we desire to banish. This belongs to every one, and

yet few will to do it. Finally, the most excellent use of zeal lies in

suffering and enduring much to hinder or divert evil, and scarce any

will have this sort of zeal. A specious zeal is all our ambition; upon

that, each one willingly spends his talent, never attending to the fact

that it is not zeal indeed which is thereby sought but glory, the

satisfaction of our pride, anger, annoyance and other passions.

Certainly our Saviour's zeal principally appeared in his death upon the

cross to destroy death and sin in men: in which he was sovereignly

imitated by that admirable vessel of election and dilection, as the

great S. Gregory Nazianzen, in golden words, represents him; for

speaking of this holy Apostle he says: "He fights for all, he prays for

all, he is passionately jealous about all, he is inflamed for all, yea

he has dared yet more for his brethren according to the flesh, so that

if I may dare also to say it, he desires through charity that they may

have his own place near Our Saviour. O excellence of courage and

incredible fervour of spirit! He imitates Jesus Christ, who for us was

made a curse, [482] who took on himself our infirmities and carried our

diseases. [483] Or, that I may speak a little more soberly, he was the

first after our Saviour who refused not to suffer and to be reputed

wicked for their sake." Even so then, Theotimus, as our Saviour was

whipped, condemned, crucified, as a man devoted, destined and set apart

to bear and support all the reproaches, ignominies and punishments due

to all the sinners in the world, and to be a general sacrifice for

sin,--as he was made an anathema, was cast off and abandoned by his

eternal Father, so, according to the true doctrine of this great

Nazianzen, the glorious Apostle S. Paul desired to be filled with

ignominy, to be crucified, cast off, abandoned and sacrificed for the

sin of the Jews, that the curse and punishment which they deserved

might fall upon him; and as our Saviour took upon him the sins of the

world, and was made a curse, sacrificed for sin and forsaken by his

Father in such sense that he ceased not ever to be the well-beloved Son

in whom his Father was well pleased,--so the holy Apostle desired

indeed to be a curse, and to be separated from his master, to be left

to the mercy of the reproaches and punishments due unto the Jews, yet

he never desired to be deprived of charity and the grace of his Lord,

from which, moreover, nothing could ever separate him; that is to say,

he desired to be treated as a man cast off by God, but he did not

desire actually to be cast off and deprived of his grace, for this

cannot be holily desired. So the heavenly spouse declares, that though

love is strong as death, which makes a separation between the body and

soul, zeal, which is an ardent love, is yet stronger, for it resembles

hell, which separates the soul from the sight of Our Lord; but it is

never said, nor can be said, that love or zeal was like to sin, which

alone separates from the grace of God. And indeed how could the ardour

of love possibly make one desire to be separated from grace, since love

is grace itself, or at least cannot be without grace. And the zeal of

the great S. Paul was in some sort practised by the little S. Paul, I

mean S. Paulinus, who to deliver a slave out of bondage became himself

a slave, sacrificing his own liberty to bestow it upon his neighbour.

"O how happy is he," says S. Ambrose, who knows how to discipline

zeal!" "The devil will easily," says S. Bernard, "delude thy zeal, if

thou neglect knowledge; therefore let thy zeal be inflamed with

charity, adorned with knowledge, established in constancy." True zeal

is the child of charity as being its ardour; wherefore, like to

charity, it is patient, is kind, envieth not, dealeth not perversely,

seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, rejoiceth in the truth.

[484] The ardour of true zeal resembles that of the huntsman, being

diligent, careful, active, industrious, eager in pursuit, but without

passion, anger or disquiet, for if the huntsman's work were done in

anger, bad temper and vexation, it would not be so much loved and

desired. Zeal in like manner has ardours which are extreme, but

constant, solid, sweet, industrious, equally agreeable and untiring;

whereas on the contrary, false zeal is turbulent, troubled, insolent,

arrogant, choleric, transient, equally impetuous and inconstant.

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[478] Matt. viii. 9.

[479] 4 Kings i. 12.

[480] Luke ix.54.

[481] James i. 20.

[482] Gal. iii. 13.

[483] Matt. viii. 17.

[484] 1 Cor. xiii.

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CHAPTER XVII.

HOW OUR LORD PRACTISED ALL THE MOST EXCELLENT ACTS OF LOVE.

Having spoken at large of the sacred acts of divine love, I present

you, that you may more easily and holily preserve the memory of them,

with a collection or abridgment of them. The charity of Jesus Christ

presseth us, [485] says the great apostle. Yea truly, Theotimus, it

forces and carries us away by its in finite sweetness, exercised in the

whole work of our Redemption, in which appeared the benignity and love

of God towards men: for what did not this divine lover do in matter of

love? 1. He loved us with a love of Complacency, for his delights were

to be with the children of men [486] and to draw man to himself, making

himself man. 2. He loved us with a love of Benevolence, bestowing his

own divinity upon man, so that man was God. 3. He united himself unto

us by an incomprehensible Union, whereby he adhered to our nature, and

joined himself so closely, indissolubly and supereminently to it, that

never was anything so strictly joined and bound to humanity as is now

the most holy divinity in the person of the Son of God. 4. He flowed

out into us, and as it were melted his greatness, to bring it to the

form and figure of our littleness, whence he is styled a source of

living water, dew and rain of heaven. 5. He loved us to Ecstasy, not

only because, as S. Denis says, by the excess of his loving goodness he

goes in a certain manner out of himself, extending his Providence to

all things and being in all things, but also because he has in a sort

forsaken and emptied himself, dried up his greatness and glory,

resigned the throne of his incomprehensible majesty, and, if it be

lawful so to say, annihilated himself to stoop down to our humanity, to

fill us with his divinity, to replenish us with his goodness, to raise

us to his dignity, and bestow upon us the divine being of children of

God. And he of whom it is so frequently written: I live, saith the

Lord; could afterwards have said according to his apostle's language: I

live, now not I, but man liveth in me. To me to live is man, and to die

for man is gain. My life is hidden with man in God. [487] He who dwelt

in himself dwells now in us, and he who was living from all eternity in

the bosom of his Eternal Father becomes mortal in the bosom of his

temporal Mother; he who lived eternally by his own divine life, lived

with a human life, and he who from eternity had been only God, shall be

for all eternity man too: so has the love of man ravished God, and

drawn him into an ecstasy! 6. Love often led him to admiration, as of

the Centurion and Chanaanitess. 7. He contemplated the young man who

had till that hour kept the commandments, and desired to be taught

perfection. 8. He took a loving quiet in us, yea even with some

suspension of his senses, in his mother's womb and in his infancy. 9.

He had wondrous movements of Tenderness towards little children, whom

he would take in his arms and lovingly fondle; towards Martha and

Magdalen, towards Lazarus, over whom he wept, as he wept also over the

city of Jerusalem. 10. He was animated with an incomparable Zeal,

which, as S. Denis says, changed into Jealousy, turning away, as much

as possible, all evil from his beloved human nature, with hazard, yea

with the price, of his own life; driving away the devil the prince of

this world, who seemed to be his rival and companion. 11. He had a

thousand thousand Languors of love; for whence could those divine words

proceed: I have a baptism, wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I

straightened until it be accomplished? [488] The hour in which he was

baptized in his blood was not yet come, and he languished after it; the

love which he bore unto us urging him thereunto, that he might by his

death see us delivered from an eternal death. So he was sad, and

sweated the blood of distress in the Garden of Olives, not only by

reason of the exceeding sorrow which his soul felt in the inferior part

of his reason, but also by reason of the singular love which he bore

unto us in the superior portion thereof, sorrow causing in him a horror

of death, and love giving him an extreme desire of the same; so that a

most fierce combat and a cruel agony took place, between the desire and

the dread of death, unto a mighty shedding of blood, which streamed

down upon the earth as from a living spring.

12. Finally, Theotimus, this divine lover died amongst the flames and

ardours of love, by reason of the infinite charity which he had towards

us, and by the force and virtue of love: that is he died in love, by

love, for love, and of love, for though his cruel torments were

sufficient to have killed any one, yet could death never make entry

into his life who keeps the keys of life and death, unless divine love,

which handles those keys, had opened the gates to death, to let it

ravage that divine body and despoil it of life. Love was not content to

have only made him subject to death for us unless it made him dead. It

was by choice, not by force of torment, that he died. No man taketh my

life away from me: but I lay it down of myself, and I have power to lay

it down, and I have power to take it up again. [489] He was offered,

says Isaias, because it was his own will. [490] And therefore it is not

said that his spirit went away, forsook him, or separated itself from

him, but, contrariwise, that he gave up his spirit, breathed it out,

yielded and commended it into the hands of his eternal Father; so that

S. Athanasius remarks that he bowed his head to die, that he might

consent to and bend to death's approach, which otherwise durst not have

come near him; and crying out with a loud voice he gives up his spirit

into his Father's hands, to show that as he had strength and breath

enough not to die, so had he love so great that he could no longer

live, but would by his death revive those who without it could never

escape death, nor have the chance of true life. Wherefore our Saviour's

death was a true sacrifice, and a sacrifice of holocaust, which himself

offered to his Father for our redemption: for though the pains and

dolours of his passion were so great and violent that any but he had

died of them, yet had he never died of them unless he himself had

pleased, and unless the fire of his infinite charity had consumed his

life. He was then the sacrificer himself, who offered himself unto his

Father and immolated himself, dying in love, to love, by love, for

love, and of love.

Yet beware of saying, Theotimus, that this amorous death of the Saviour

took place by manner of rapture, for the object which his charity moved

him to die for was not love-worthy enough to ravish to itself this

divine soul, which departed then from his body by way of ecstasy,

driven and forced on by the abundance and might of love; even as we see

the myrrh tree send forth its first juice by its mere abundance,

without squeezing or drawing in any way; according to that which he

himself said, as we have declared: No man taketh my life away from me

but I lay it down of myself. O God! Theotimus, what burning coals are

cast upon all our hearts to inflame us to the exercise of holy love

towards our all-good Saviour, seeing he has so lovingly practised them

towards us who are so evil! This charity then of Jesus Christ presseth

us!

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[485] 2 Cor. v. 14.

[486] Prov. viii. 31.

[487] Gal. ii. 20.

[488] Luke xii. 50.

[489] John x. 18.

[490] Is. liii. 7.

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BOOK XI.

OF THE

SOVEREIGN AUTHORITY WHICH SACRED LOVE HOLDS OVER ALL THE VIRTUES, ACTIONS AND

PERFECTIONS OF THE SOUL.

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CHAPTER I.

HOW AGREEABLE ALL VIRTUES ARE TO GOD.

Virtue is of its own nature so amiable, that God favours it wheresoever

he finds it. The pagans, though they were enemies of his divine

Majesty, now and then practised certain human and moral virtues, which

were not by their nature placed above the forces of the reasonable

spirit. Now you may guess, Theotimus, how small a matter that was: for

though these virtues made a great show, yet in effect they were of

little worth, by reason of the lowness of the intention of those who

practised them. They laboured for scarcely anything but honour, as S.

Augustine says, or for some other object of light consideration, such

as the upholding the social good, or from some weak inclination they

had to good; which inclination, meeting with no contradiction, carried

them on to trifling acts of virtue--as for example, to mutual courtesy,

to aid their friends, to live with moderation, not to steal, to serve

masters faithfully, to pay hirelings' wages. And nevertheless though

this was so slender, and accompanied with many imperfections, God took

it in good part from those poor people, and recompensed it largely.

The midwives whom Pharaoh commanded to kill all the male children of

the Israelites were without doubt Egyptians and pagans; for in the

excuse they made for not having executed the king's pleasure, they

said: The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian: this would not have

been to the purpose if they had been Hebrews: and it is not credible

that Pharaoh would have granted so cruel a commission against the

Hebrews to Hebrew women, being of the same nation and religion: besides

Josephus testifies that they were in fact Egyptians. Now, Egyptians and

pagans as they were, yet they feared to offend God by so barbarous and

unnatural a cruelty as the massacre of so many little children would

have been. The divine sweetness was so pleased with this that it built

their houses, that is to say, made them fruitful in children and in

temporal riches.

Nabuchodonosor, King of Babylon, had waged a just war against the city

of Tyre, which the divine justice willed to chastise, and God signified

to Ezechiel that in recompense thereof he would deliver up Egypt as a

prey into the hands of Nabuchodonosor and his army, Because, said God,

he hath laboured for me. [491] Hence, adds S. Jerome in the commentary,

we learn that in case the very pagans do some good thing they are not

left unrewarded by God's judgment. So did Daniel exhort Nabuchodonosor,

an infidel, to redeem his sins by alms, [492] that is, to ransom

himself out of the temporal pains due to his sins, which hung over his

head. Do you see then, Theotimus, how true it is that God makes account

of virtues, though practised by persons otherwise wicked? If he had not

approved the mercy of the midwives and the justice of the war of the

Babylonians, would he have taken care, I pray you, to reward them? And

if Daniel had not known that the infidelity of Nabuchodonosor would not

prevent God from being pleased with his alms, why would he have

counselled him to do them? Indeed the Apostle assures us that pagans

who have not the law do by nature those things that are of the law.

[493] And when they do so, who can doubt that they do well, and that

God makes account of it? Pagans understood that marriage was good and

necessary, they saw that it was becoming to have their children brought

up in liberal knowledge, in the love of their country, in the arts of

civil life, and they did so. Now I leave it to your consideration

whether this was not grateful unto God, since to this end he had given

the light of reason and natural instinct.

Natural reason is a good tree which God has planted in us; the fruits

which spring from it cannot but be good. They are fruits which in

comparison with those which spring from grace are indeed of very small

value, yet still, not of no value, since God has valued them, and for

them has given temporal rewards. Thus, according to the great S.

Augustine, he rewarded the moral virtues of the Romans with the grand

extent and magnificent renown of their empire.

Sin unquestionably makes the soul sick, and then she cannot do great

and laborious deeds; yet little ones she can do, for all the actions of

the sick are not sickly: they still speak, they still see, they still

hear, they still drink. The soul in sin can do good works, which, being

natural, are rewarded with natural rewards; being civil, are paid in

civil and human money, that is, with temporal advantages. The sinner is

not in the state of the devils, whose wills are so steeped in and

incorporated with evil that they can will no good at all. No,

Theotimus; the sinner in this world is not in that state. Here, he is

in the way between Jerusalem and Jericho, wounded to death but not yet

dead; for, says the Gospel, he is left half-dead; and as he is

half-alive so he can do half-living actions. 'Tis true he can neither

walk, nor rise, nor cry for aid, no, not so much as speak, save only

languishingly, by reason of the faintness of his heart; yet can he open

his eyes, stir his fingers, sigh, make some word of complaint:--weak

actions, and actions in spite of which he would miserably die of his

wounds, had not the merciful Samaritan poured in the oil and wine, and

carried him to the inn, where he gave charge that at his cost the man

should be dressed and looked to. [494]

Natural reason is deeply wounded, and, as it were, half slain by sin;

whence, being in such sad condition, it cannot observe all the

commandments, which, however, it clearly sees to be good: it knows its

duty but cannot acquit itself thereof; its eyes have more light to

discover the way than its legs have strength to undertake it.

The sinner may indeed occasionally observe some of the commandments,

yea all of them for some short time, so long as no great occasion for

practising virtues commanded, or violent temptation to commit sin

forbidden, present itself. But that a sinner should live long in his

sin without adding to it new ones, is not a thing that can be done but

by God's special protection, for man's enemies are ardent, active, and

perpetually striving to cast him down, and when they see that no

occasion of practising virtues commanded occurs, they excite a thousand

temptations to make him fall into things forbidden; at which time

nature without grace cannot save itself from the precipice: for if we

overcome, God gives us the victory through Jesus Christ, [495] as S.

Paul says. Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation. [496] If

Our Lord had said only watch, we might expect that our own power would

be sufficient, but when he adds pray, he shows that if he keep not our

souls in time of temptation, in vain shall they watch who keep them.

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[491] Ezech. xxix. 20.

[492] Dan. iv. 24.

[493] Rom. ii. 14.

[494] Luke x.

[495] 1 Cor. xv. 57.

[496] Matt. xxvi. 41.

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CHAPTER II.

THAT DIVINE LOVE MAKES THE VIRTUES IMMEASURABLY MORE AGREEABLE TO GOD

THAN THEY ARE OF THEIR OWN NATURE.

The masters of husbandry admire the gracious innocence and purity of

little strawberries, because, though they lie upon the ground and are

continually crept over by serpents, lizards, and other venomous beasts,

they yet receive no impression of poison, nor are infected with any

malign quality; a sign that they have no affinity with poison. Such

then are human virtues, Theotimus; which, though they may be in a heart

that is low, earthly, and largely occupied by sin, yet are not infected

with its malice, being of a nature so noble and innocent that it cannot

be corrupted by the society of iniquity, according to what even

Aristotle has said:--that virtue is a habit which no one can make ill

use of. And though the virtues which are so good in themselves are not

rewarded with an eternal recompense when they are practised by infidels

or by such as are not in the state of grace, this is not surprising,

because the sinful heart from whence they proceed is not capable of an

eternal good (being, as it is, turned away from God), and because no

one can receive the celestial inheritance belonging to the Son of God,

but such as are in him, and are adoptive brothers of his; to say

nothing of this reason, that the covenant by which God promises heaven

refers to such only as are in his grace, while the virtues of sinners

have no worth nor value save that of their nature, which, consequently,

cannot raise them to the merit of supernatural rewards. Indeed these

are for this very cause called supernatural, that nature and all that

belongs thereto can neither give nor merit them.

But the virtues which are found in the friends of God, though they be

only moral and natural in themselves, are yet ennobled, and raised to

the dignity of being holy works, by reason of the excellence of the

heart which produces them. It is one of the properties of friendship to

make the friend and all that is good and honest in him dear to us:

friendship pours out its grace upon all the actions of him who is

loved, however little ground of favour there may be; the bitternesses

of friends are sweets, and the sweets of enemies are bitter. All the

virtuous actions of a heart at friends with God are dedicated to God,

for the heart that has given itself, how has it not given all that

depends on itself? He that gives the tree without reserve, gives he not

also the leaves, flowers and fruit? The just shall flourish like the

palm-tree: he shall grow up like the cedar of Libanus. They that are

planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of the

house of our God. [497] Since the just man is planted in the house of

God, his leaves, his flowers and his fruit grow therein, and are

dedicated to the service of His Majesty. He shall be like a tree which

is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit

in due season. And his leaf shall not fall of: and all whatsoever he

shall do shall prosper. [498] Not only the fruits of charity, and the

flowers of the works which it ordains, but even its very leaves, that

is, the moral and natural virtues, draw a special power and efficacy

from the love of the heart which produces them. If you are grafting a

rose tree, and put a grain of musk in the cleft of the stock, all the

roses that spring from it will smell of musk: cleave then your heart by

holy penitence, and put the love of God in the cleft; then engraft on

it what virtue you please, and the works which spring from it will be

all perfumed with sanctity, without need of any further attention.

When the Spartans had heard an excellent sentence from the mouth of

some wicked man, they never thought it right to receive it till it was

first pronounced by the mouth of some good man: so that to make it

worthy of acceptance they did no more than get it uttered again by a

virtuous man. If you desire to make the human and moral virtue of

Epictetus, Socrates or Demades become holy, cause them to be practised

by a truly Christian soul, that is, by one which has the love of God.

So God first had respect to the good Abel, and then to his offerings,

these taking their favour and worth in the sight of God from the

goodness and piety of him who offered them. Oh the sovereign goodness

of this great God, which so favours its lovers that it cherishes their

least little actions, so long as they have the slightest degree of

goodness, and excellently ennobles them, giving them the title and

quality of holy! Ah! this is in consideration of his beloved Son, whose

adopted children he would honour, sanctifying all there is of good in

them, their bones, the hairs of their head, their garments, their

graves, yea, down to the very shadow [499] of their bodies; their

faith, hope, love, religion, yea even their social life, their

courtesy, the affability of their hearts.

Therefore my beloved brethren, saith the Apostle, be ye steadfast and

immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your

labour is not in vain in the Lord. [500] And mark, Theotimus, that

every virtuous work is to be esteemed the "work of the Lord," yea

though it were even practised by an infidel; for his divine Majesty

said unto Ezechiel that Nabuchodonosor and his army had laboured for

him, [501] because he had waged a lawful and just war against the

Tyrians: sufficiently showing thereby that the justice of the unjust is

God's, and tends and belongs to him, though the unjust who work that

justice are neither his, nor tend nor belong to him: for as the great

prince and prophet Job, though of pagan extraction and an inhabitant of

the land of Hus, did for all that belong to God, so moral virtues,

though they proceed from a sinful heart, do none the less belong to

God. But when these same virtues are found in a truly Christian heart,

that is in a heart endowed with holy love, then they not only belong to

God, but they are not "in vain in the Lord," being rendered fruitful

and precious in the eyes of his goodness. "Add charity to a man," says

S. Augustine, "and everything profits; take charity from him, and what

remains profits him no longer." And: To them that love God all things

work together unto good, [502] says the Apostle.

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[497] Ps. xci. 13, 14.

[498] Ps. i. 3.

[499] Acts v. 15.

[500] 1 Cor. iv. 58.

[501] Ezech. xxix. 20.

[502] Rom. viii. 28.

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CHAPTER III.

THAT THERE ARE SOME VIRTUES WHICH DIVINE LOVE RAISES TO A HIGHER DEGREE

OF EXCELLENCE THAN OTHERS.

But there are some virtues which by reason of their natural alliance

and correspondence with charity are also much more capable of receiving

the precious influence of sacred love, and consequently the

communication of the dignity and worth of it. Such are faith and hope,

which, together with charity, have an immediate reference to God; and

religion, and penitence, and devotion, which are employed to the honour

of his Divine Majesty. For these virtues, of their own nature, have so

close a relation to God, and are so susceptible of the impressions of

heavenly love, that to make them participate in its sanctity they need

only to be with it, that is, in a heart which loves God. So, to make

grapes taste of olives it is but necessary to plant the vine amongst

the olives; for by their neighbourhood alone, without touching one

another at all, these plants will mutually interchange their savours

and properties, so great an inclination and so strict an affinity is

there of one to the other.

Truly all flowers, except those of the tree called Sad (triste), and a

few others that are monsters in Nature, all, I say, rejoice, expand and

put on beauty at the sight of the sun, and the vital heat which they

receive from his rays; but all yellow flowers, and especially that

which the Greeks term Heliotropium, and we sunflower, not only receive

gladness and pleasure from his presence, but by an affectionate turning

movement follow the attractions of his rays, keeping him in sight, and

turning themselves towards him, from his rising to his setting. So all

virtues receive a new lustre and an excellent dignity from the presence

of holy love, but faith, hope, the fear of God, piety, penance, and all

the other virtues which of their own nature particularly tend to God

and to his honour, not only receive the impression of divine love

whereby they are raised to a great value, but they wholly incline

towards it, associating themselves with it, following and serving it on

all occasions. For in fine, my dear Theotimus, the holy Word attributes

a certain saving, sanctifying and glorifying property and force to

faith, to hope, to piety, to the fear of God, to penance: which clearly

shows that those virtues are of great price, and that being practised

by a heart which is in charity they become more excellent, fruitful and

holy than the others, which of their own nature have not so great an

affinity with sacred love. And he who cries out: If I should have all

faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, it

profiteth me nothing, [503] clearly shows that with charity this faith

would greatly profit him. Charity then is a virtue beyond comparison,

which not only adorns the heart in which it is, but by its mere

presence also blesses and sanctifies all the virtues which it meets

there, perfuming and scenting them with its celestial odour, by means

of which they are made of great value in the sight of God; which,

however, it does far more excellently in faith, in hope and in other

virtues, which of themselves naturally tend to piety.

Wherefore, Theotimus, of all virtuous actions we ought most carefully

to practise those of religion and reverence towards divine things,

those of faith, of hope and of the most holy fear of God, taking

occasion often to speak of heavenly things, thinking of and sighing

after eternity, frequenting churches and sacred services, reading

spiritual books, observing the ceremonies of the Christian religion:

for sacred love is fed according to its heart's desire in these

exercises, and in greater abundance spreads its graces and properties

over them than it does over the actions of those virtues which are

purely human; as the lovely rainbow makes all the plants upon which it

lights odoriferous, but the aspalathus incomparably more so than all

the rest.

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[503] 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

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CHAPTER IV.

THAT DIVINE LOVE MORE EXCELLENTLY SANCTIFIES THE VIRTUES WHEN THEY ARE

PRACTISED BY ITS ORDER AND COMMANDMENT.

The fair Rachel had children by Jacob in two ways. She counted as hers

the children of her handmaid Bala, and afterwards she had children of

her own--namely, Joseph and the beloved Benjamin.

Now I say to you, my dear Theotimus, that charity and sacred love, a

hundred times more fair than Rachel, ceaselessly desires to produce

holy operations. She calls the operations of the other virtues her

offspring because they are produced by her order, love being the master

of the heart, and consequently of all the works of the other virtues

done by its consent. But, further, this divine love has two acts which

are her own proper issue and of her extraction. Of these the one is

effective love, which, as another Joseph, using the plenitude of royal

authority, subjects and reduces all the people--her faculties, powers,

passions and affections--to God's will, that it may be loved, obeyed

and served above all things, by this means putting the great celestial

commandment in execution: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy

heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.

The other is affective or affectionate love, which, as a little

Benjamin, is exceedingly delicate, tender, pleasing and amiable, but in

this more happy than Benjamin, that charity its mother dies not in its

bringing forth, but, so to say, gains a new life, by the sweetness she

feels in it.

Thus then, Theotimus, the virtuous actions of the children of God all

belong to charity; some of them because she produces them of her own

nature; others because she sanctifies them by her quickening presence;

and finally others, by the authority and command which she exercises

over the other virtues, whence she makes them spring. And these last,

as indeed they are not so eminent in dignity as the actions which

properly and immediately issue from charity, yet incomparably surpass

those which take their whole sanctity from the mere presence and

society of charity.

A great general of an army having won some important battle, will

without doubt have all the honour of the victory, and not unreasonably;

for he himself will have fought in the very front of the army, doing

many great feats of arms, and for the rest he will have arrayed his

troops, and ordained and commanded all that was done: so that he is

considered to have done all, either by himself, fighting with his own

hand, or by his direction, commanding others. And even if some friendly

troops come unexpectedly and fall in with the army, yet the general is

not deprived of the honour of their work, for though they have not

received his commands, yet they have served him and followed his

intentions. Nevertheless, although we attribute the glory as a whole to

him, we do not fail to give each part of his army due credit for its

own share; we say that the vanguard did this, the main body that, the

rearguard the other; the French behaved thus, the Italians thus, the

Germans and the Spaniards thus: yea we praise the private individuals

who have distinguished themselves in the battle. So, my dear Theotimus,

amongst all the virtues, the glory of our salvation and victory over

hell is ascribed to divine love, which, as prince and general of the

whole army of virtues, does all the exploits by which we gain the

triumph. For sacred love has his proper actions which issue and proceed

from himself, by which he does wonders of arms against our enemy, and

withal he ranges, commands and orders the actions of other virtues,

which are therefore, termed acts commanded or ordained by love. And if,

at last, some virtues perform their operations without his order, yet

if they assist his intention, which is God's honour, he will still

acknowledge them to be his own. Nevertheless, though we say in general,

after the divine Apostle, that Charity beareth all things, believeth

all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, [504] in a word,

that it does all, yet we distribute in particular the praise of the

salvation of the Blessed to other virtues, according as they excelled

in each one; for we say some were saved by faith, others by alms-deeds,

others by temperance, prayer, humility, hope, chastity, because the

acts of these virtues have appeared with lustre in these saints. Yet

again after we have extolled these particular virtues we must

reciprocally refer all their honour to divine love, which to every one

gives all the sanctity which they have. For what else does the glorious

Apostle mean when he teaches that charity is kind, is patient, that it

believes all, hopes all, bears all, save that charity ordains and

commands patience to be patient, hope to hope, faith to believe. And

truly, Theotimus, at the same time the Apostle intimates that love is

the soul and life of all the virtues, as though he would say: patience

is not patient enough, nor faith faithful enough, nor hope confident

enough, nor mildness sweet enough, unless love animate and quicken

them. The same thing this same vessel of election gives us to

understand when he says, that nothing profits him and he is nothing

without charity; for it is as though he had said, that without love a

man is not patient, nor mild, nor constant, nor faithful, nor hopeful,

in the way a servant of God should be, which is the true and desirable

being of man.

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[504] 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

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CHAPTER V.

HOW LOVE SPREADS ITS EXCELLENCE OVER THE OTHER VIRTUES, PERFECTING

THEIR PARTICULAR EXCELLENCE.

I Have seen, says Pliny, a tree at Tivoli grafted in all the fashions

that one can graft, and bearing all sorts of fruit; for upon one branch

there were cherries, on another nuts, on others grapes, figs,

pomegranates, apples, and, in a word, all kinds of fruit. This was

wonderful, Theotimus, yet more so is it to see, in Christian man,

heavenly love, with all virtues grafted thereon; in such sort that, as

one might have said of this tree that it was a cherry tree, an apple, a

nut, a pomegranate, so may one say of charity that it is patient, mild,

valiant, just, or rather that it is patience, mildness and justice

itself.

But the poor tree of Tivoli did not live long, as the same Pliny

records, for this variety of productions dried up its essential sap, so

that it withered away and died; whereas, on the contrary, charity is

fortified and invigorated, so as to produce abundance of fruit in the

exercise of all the virtues; yea, as our holy Fathers have observed, it

is insatiable in its desires of bringing forth fruit, and never ceases

to urge the heart wherein it dwells, as Rachel did her husband, saying:

Give me children, otherwise I shall die. [505]

Now the fruits of grafted trees always follow the graft, for if the

graft be apple it will bear apples, if cherry it will bear cherries;

yet so that these fruits always taste of the stock. In like manner,

Theotimus, our acts take their name and species from the particular

virtues whence they spring, but they draw the taste of their sanctity

from holy charity, which is the root and source of all sanctity in man.

And as the stock communicates its taste to all the fruits which the

grafts produce, yet so that each fruit preserves the natural property

of the graft whence it sprung, even so charity pours out in such sort

her excellence and dignity upon the acts of other virtues, that she

does not deprive them of the particular worth and goodness which they

have by their own natural condition.

All flowers lose their lustre and grace amidst the darkness of night,

but, in the morning, the sun, which makes them again visible and

agreeable, does not however make their beauties and their graces equal,

and its brightness, though equally spread over them all, yet makes them

unequally bright and glorious, according as they are more or less

susceptible of the effects of its splendour. And the light of the sun,

equal as it is on the violet and the rose, yet will never make that so

fair as this, or make a daisy as lovely as a lily. However, if the sun

should shine very clearly upon the violet, and very mistily and faintly

upon the rose, then without doubt it would make the violet more fair to

see than the rose. So, my Theotimus, if one with an equal charity

should suffer death by martyrdom, and another hunger by fasting, who

does not see that the value of this fasting will not therefore be equal

to that of martyrdom? No, Theotimus, for who would dare to affirm that

martyrdom is not more excellent in itself than fasting? And as it is

more excellent, and as superadded charity does not take away but

perfects its excellence, charity will consequently leave to it the

advantage which it naturally had over fasting. Surely no man of good

sense will equal nuptial chastity to virginity, nor the good use of

riches to the entire abnegation of the same. Who again would dare to

say, that charity accompanying these virtues deprives them of their

properties and privileges, since it is not a virtue which destroys and

impoverishes, but betters, quickens and enriches all the good it finds

in the souls which it rules. Yea, so far is charity from bereaving the

other virtues of their natural pre-eminences and dignities, that, on

the contrary, having this quality of perfecting the perfections which

it meets with, it more greatly perfects where it finds greater

perfection. It acts like sugar, which so preserves and so seasons

fruits with its sweetness that, sweetening them all, it leaves them

dissimilar in taste and sweetness, according as their natural taste and

sweetness are dissimilar, nor does it ever make peaches and nut-fruits

as sweet or agreeable as apricots and mirabels.

Still it is true that if love be ardent, powerful and excellent in a

heart, it will also more enrich and perfect all the virtuous works

which may proceed from it. One may suffer death and fire for God

without charity, as S. Paul supposes, [506] and as I explain elsewhere:

by better reason may one suffer them with little charity. Now I say,

Theotimus, that it may come to pass that a very small virtue may be of

greater value in a soul where sacred love fervently reigns, than

martyrdom itself in a soul where love is languishing, feeble and dull.

Thus the little virtues of our Blessed Lady, of S. John, of other great

saints, were of better worth before God than the most exalted of many

inferior saints; as many of the slight movements of love in the

seraphim are more inflamed than the greatest in angels of the last

order; or as the first essays of the nightingale are incomparably more

melodious than the song of the best-trained finch.

Pireicus towards the end of his days painted only miniatures and

trivial subjects, such as barbers' or cobblers' shops, asses laden with

herbs, and similar petty matters; which he did, as Pliny conjectures,

to lessen his great renown, whence in the end he came to be called a

painter of rubbish; and yet the greatness of his art did so appear in

his small works that they were sold at a higher rate than the great

pieces of others. Even so, Theotimus, the little simplicities,

abjections and humiliations in which the great saints so delighted, in

order to hide themselves and put their hearts under shelter against

vainglory, having been practised with a great excellence of the art and

of the ardour of heavenly love, were found more grateful in the sight

of God than the large and illustrious works of many others which were

performed with little charity and devotion.

The sacred spouse wounds her beloved with a single one of her hairs,

[507] of which he makes such great account that he compares them to the

flocks of the goats of Galaad; and he has no sooner commended the eyes

of his devout loving one, which are the most noble parts of the face,

than presently he praises her hair, which is the most frail, worthless

and mean; to teach us that in a soul captivated by divine love,

exercises that seem very trifling are yet highly agreeable to his

Divine Majesty.

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[505] Gen. xxx. 1.

[506] 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

[507] Cant. iv. 9.

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CHAPTER VI.

OF THE EXCELLENT VALUE WHICH SACRED LOVE GIVES TO THE ACTIONS WHICH

ISSUE FROM ITSELF AND TO THOSE WHICH PROCEED FROM THE OTHER VIRTUES.

But you will say to me, what is this value, I pray you, which holy love

gives to our actions? Oh! Theotimus, verily I should not have the

assurance to say it, if the Holy Ghost himself had not declared it in

most express terms by the great Apostle S. Paul, who speaks thus: What

is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us

above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory. [508] For God's

sake, let us ponder these words. Our tribulations, which are so light

that they pass in a moment, work for us the solid and stable weight of

glory. I beseech you, behold these wonders! Tribulation produces glory,

lightness gives weight, and moments work eternity. But what is it that

can give such power to these fleeting moments and light tribulations?

Red purple, or fine crimson violet is a most precious and royal cloth,

yet not by reason of the wool but of the colour. The works of good

Christians are of such worth that heaven is given us for them; but,

Theotimus, it is not because they proceed from us and are the wool of

our hearts, but because they are dyed with the blood of the Son of

God,--I mean because our Saviour sanctifies our works by the merits of

his blood. The vine-sprig, united and joined to the stock, brings forth

fruit not by its own power but in virtue of the stock. Now we are

united by charity unto our Redeemer as members to their head, and hence

it is that our fruits and good works, drawing their worth from him,

merit life everlasting. Aaron's rod was dry, and incapable by itself of

bringing forth fruit; but as soon as the name of that great high priest

was written upon it, in one night it brought out its leaves, its

flowers and its fruits. [509] We of ourselves are withered branches,

unprofitable, fruitless, not sufficient to think anything of ourselves,

as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also hath made us

fit ministers, [510] and able to do his will, and therefore as soon as

by holy love the name of our Saviour, the great bishop of our souls, is

engraven in our hearts, we begin to bear delicious fruits unto life

everlasting. And as seeds which of themselves would only bring forth

insipid melons, would bring forth sugared and musked ones, if they were

steeped in sugared or mucked water; so our souls, which of themselves

are not able to produce one single good thought towards God's service,

being steeped in sacred love by the Holy Ghost who dwells within us,

produce sacred actions, which tend towards and carry us to immortal

glory. Our works as proceeding from ourselves are but frail reeds; but

these reeds become golden by charity, and with the same we measure the

heavenly Jerusalem, which is given us by that measure: [511] for as

well to men as to angels, glory is distributed according to charity and

its actions. So that the measure used by men and that used by angels is

the same, [512] and God has rendered and will render to every man

according to his works, [513] as all the divine Scripture teaches us,

assuring us of the felicity and eternal joys of heaven in reward of the

labours and good works which we have performed on earth.

A magnificent reward, and one that savours of the Master's greatness

whom we serve. He indeed, Theotimus, if so he had pleased, might most

justly have exacted our obedience and service without proposing unto us

any salary or hire at all, because we are his by a thousand most

legitimate titles, and because we can do nothing of worth save what is

in him, by him, for him, and from him. Yet his goodness has not

disposed thus, but, in consideration of his Son, our Saviour, has

willed to treat with us at a set price, receiving us for hire, and

engaging himself by promise to pay us, according to our works, eternal

wages. Nor is it that our service can either be necessary or profitable

unto him, for when we shall have accomplished all his commands, we are

yet to avow with most humble truth or most true humility that indeed we

are most unprofitable servants, and utterly useless to our Master, who

by reason of his essential superabundance of riches can have no profit

by us; but, converting all our works to our own advantage and good, he

ordains that we shall serve him with as little profit to him as there

is much to us, who by such small labours gain such great rewards.

He was not bound to pay us for our service if he had not given his

promise to do so. But do not think, Theotimus, that he would so

manifest his goodness in this promise as to forget to glorify his

wisdom; yea, on the contrary, he most exactly observed the rules of

equity, mingling seemliness (bienseance), with liberality in an

admirable manner; for though our works are indeed very small and in no

wise comparable with glory by their matter, yet in regard to their

quality they are very proportionate thereunto, by reason of the Holy

Ghost, who, by charity dwelling in our hearts, works in us with so

exquisite an art, that the same works which are wholly ours are still

more wholly his, since he produces them in us as we again produce them

in him, he does them for us as we do them for him, he operates them

with us as we co-operate with him.

Now the Holy Ghost dwells in us if we be living members of Jesus

Christ, who therefore said unto his disciples: He that abideth in me,

and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; [514] and this, Theotimus,

is because he that abides in him is made partaker of his divine Spirit,

which is in the midst of man's heart as a fountain of living water

springing up unto life everlasting. [515] So the holy oil which was

poured upon our Saviour as upon the head of the Church militant and

triumphant, spreads itself over the society of the Blessed, who as the

sacred beard of this heavenly Master are continually attached to his

glorious face, and runs down upon the company of the faithful, who as

garments are joined and united by love to his Divine Majesty; and both

companies, as being composed of brethren of the same family, have

reason to cry out: Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren

to dwell together in unity: like the precious ointment on the head,

that ran down upon the beard, the beard of Aaron, which ran down to the

skirt of his garments. [516]

Our works, therefore, as a little grain of mustard-seed, are in no sort

comparable in greatness to the tree of glory which they produce, yet

they have the vigour and virtue to produce it, because they proceed

from the Holy Spirit, who by an admirable infusion of his grace into

our hearts makes our works his, and yet withal leaves them our own,

since we are members of a head of which he is the Spirit, and ingrafted

in a tree whereof he is the divine sap. And as he thus acts in our

works, and we after a certain manner operate or co-operate in his

action, he leaves us for our part all the merit and profit of our

services and good works, and we again leave him all the honour and

praise thereof, acknowledging that the commencement, the progress, and

the end of all the good we do depends on his mercy, by which he has

come unto us and prevented us, has come into us and assisted us, has

come with us and conducted us, finishing what he had begun. But, O God!

Theotimus, how merciful is his goodness to us in thus distributing his

bounty! We give him the glory of our praise, forsooth! and he gives us

the glory of possessing him. In fine, by these light and passing

labours we obtain goods which endure for all eternity. Amen.

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[508] 2 Cor. iv. 17.

[509] Numb. xvii. 8.

[510] 2 Cor. iii. 5.

[511] Apoc. xxi. 15.

[512] Apoc. xxi. 17.

[513] Apoc. xxii. 12.

[514] John xv. 5.

[515] John iv. 14.

[516] Ps. cxxxii. 1, 2.

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CHAPTER VII.

THAT PERFECT VIRTUES ARE NEVER ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER.

It is said that the heart is the first part of a man which receives

life by the infusion of the soul, and the eye the last, as,

contrariwise, in a natural death the eye begins first to die, and the

heart is the last. Now when the heart begins to live, before the other

parts are animated, life is certainly very feeble, frail and imperfect,

but ever as it establishes itself more thoroughly in the rest of the

body, it is also more vigorous in each part and particularly in the

heart, and we see that when life is injured in any one of the members

it is weakened in all the rest. If a man's foot or arm be hurt all the

body is troubled, excited, disturbed and affected; if the stomach is

disordered, the eyes, the voice and the whole countenance show the

effects of it, so great is the sympathy amongst the organs of man's

natural life.

All the virtues are not acquired together, in an instant, but one after

another, in proportion as reason, which is like the soul of our heart,

takes possession, first of one passion then of another, to moderate and

govern them: and ordinarily this life of our soul begins in the heart

of our passions, which is love, and spreading itself over all the rest

it quickens at last the very understanding by contemplation; as, on the

contrary, moral or spiritual death makes its entry into the soul by the

want of reflection [517] --death enters by the windows, [518] says the

sacred text--and its last effect is to destroy good love, which once

perishing, all our moral life is dead in us. So then, although we may

perhaps possess some virtues without others, yet are they but

languishing, imperfect and weak virtues, since reason, which is the

life of our soul, is never satisfied nor at ease in a soul unless it

occupy and possess all the faculties and passions; and when it is

aggrieved and wounded in some one of our passions or affections, all

the rest lose their force and vigour, and grow exceedingly weak.

You see, Theotimus, all the virtues are virtues by the proportion or

conformity they have with reason, and an action cannot be called

virtuous if it proceed not from the affection which the heart bears to

the excellence and beauty of reason. Now if the love of reason possess

and animate a soul, it will be obedient to reason in all occurrences,

and consequently will practise all the virtues. If Jacob loved Rachel

in consideration of her being Laban's daughter, why did he despise Lia

who was not only the daughter, but the eldest daughter, of the same

Laban? But because he loved Rachel by reason of her beauty, he could

never equally love poor Lia, though a fruitful and wise maid, because

to his mind she was not so fair. He who loves one virtue for the love

of the reason and comeliness which shine in it, will love all the

virtues, since he will find the same motive in them all, and he will

love each of them more or less, as reason shall appear in them more or

less resplendent. He who loves liberality and not chastity, shows

sufficiently that he loves not liberality for reason's sake, because

reason is still more radiant in chastity, and where the cause is more

strong the effects ought also to be more strong. It is, therefore, an

evident sign that such a heart is not moved to liberality by the motive

and consideration of reason; whence it follows that this liberality

which seemed to be virtue is but an appearance of it, since it proceeds

not from reason, which is the true motive of virtues, but from some

other and foreign motive. It is sufficient for a child to be born in

marriage to bear in the world the name, the arms, and the titles of his

mother's husband, but to have his blood and nature he must not only be

born in the marriage but of the marriage. Actions have the name, arms

and badges of the virtues, because being born of a heart endowed with

reason we presume them to be reasonable, yet they have neither the

substance nor vigour of virtue when they proceed from a foreign and

illegitimate motive, and not from reason. It may happen then, that a

man may have some virtues and lack others; but they will either be

virtues newly springing and as yet tender, like flowers in blossom; or

else perishing and dying virtues, like fading flowers: for, in

conclusion, virtues cannot have their true integrity and sufficiency

unless they be all together, as all philosophy and divinity assure us.

What prudence, I pray you, Theotimus, can an intemperate, unjust and

cowardly man have, since he makes choice of vice and forsakes virtue?

And how can one be just without being prudent, strong, and temperate,

since justice is no other thing than a perpetual, strong and constant

will to render to every one his own, and since the science by which

right is done is called jurisprudence, and since, to give each one his

own, we must live wisely and moderately, and hinder the disorders of

intemperance in ourselves so as to give ourselves what belongs to us?

And the word virtue, does it not signify a force and vigour belonging

to the soul as a quality, even as we say that herbs and precious stones

have such and such a virtue or property?

But is not prudence itself imprudent in an intemperate man? Fortitude,

without prudence, justice and temperance, is not fortitude, but folly;

and justice is unjust in the weak man who dares not do it, in the

intemperate man who permits himself to be carried away with passion,

and in the imprudent man who is not able to discern between the right

and the wrong. Justice is not justice unless it be strong, prudent and

temperate; nor is prudence prudence unless it be temperate, just and

strong; nor fortitude fortitude unless it be just, prudent and

temperate; nor temperance temperance unless it be prudent, strong and

just. In fine, a virtue is not perfect virtue, unless it be accompanied

by all the rest.

It is true, Theotimus, that one cannot exercise all the virtues at

once, because the occasions are not all presented at once; yea, there

are virtues which some of God's greatest saints had never occasion to

practise: for S. Paul, the first hermit, for example, what occasion

could he have to exercise the pardoning of injuries, affability,

magnificence, and mildness? Nevertheless, such souls stand so affected

to the rectitude of reason, that though they have not all the virtues

in effect, yet they have them all in affection, being ready and

prepared to follow and obey reason in all occurences, without exception

or reservation.

There are certain inclinations which are esteemed virtues and are not

so, but favours and advantages of nature. How many are there who are

naturally sober, mild, silent, chaste and modest? Now all these seem to

be virtues, and yet have no more the merit thereof than bad

inclinations are blameworthy before we have given free and voluntary

consent to such natural dispositions. It is no virtue to be by nature a

man of little meat, yet to abstain by choice is a virtue. It is no

virtue to be silent by nature, though it is a virtue to bridle one's

tongue by reason. Many consider they have the virtues as long as they

do not practise the contrary vices. One that has never been assaulted

may truly boast that he was never a runaway, yet he has no ground to

boast of his valour. He that has never been afflicted may boast of not

being impatient, but not of being patient. In like manner, some think

they have virtues who have only good inclinations, and as those

inclinations are some without others, they suppose that virtues may be

so too.

In truth the great S. Augustine shows, in an epistle which he wrote to

S. Jerome, that we may have some sort of virtue without having the

rest, but that we cannot have perfect ones without having them all;

whilst, as for vices, we may have some without having others, yea, it

is even impossible to have them all together: so that it does not

follow that he who has lost all the virtues has by consequence all the

vices, since almost every virtue has two opposite vices, which are not

only contrary to the virtue but also to one another. He who has

forfeited valour by rashness cannot at the same time be taxed with

cowardice; nor can he who has lost liberality by prodigality, be at the

same time reproached with niggardliness. Catiline, says S. Augustine,

was sober, vigilant, patient in suffering cold, heat and hunger; so

that both himself and his accomplices deemed him marvellously constant;

but this constancy wanted prudence, since it made choice of bad instead

of good; it was not temperate, for it gave the bridle to repulsive

uncleanness; it was not just, since he conspired against his country:

it was not then constancy but obstinacy, which to deceive fools bore

the name of constancy.

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[517] L'inconsideration--i.e., failure of the spiritual eye (Tr.)

[518] Jer. ix. 21.

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CHAPTER VIII.

HOW CHARITY COMPREHENDS ALL THE VIRTUES.

There flowed a river out of the place of delights to water Paradise,

and thence it was divided into four heads. [519] Now, in man there is a

place of delights, whence God makes the river of reason and natural

light stream out to water all the paradise of our heart, and this river

branches out into four heads; that is, it makes four streams according

to the four regions of the soul. For 1�. Over what is called the

practical understanding, that is to say the part of the intelligence

which discerns the actions we should do or avoid, natural light spreads

prudence, which inclines our mind wisely to judge of the evil that we

are to avoid and drive away, and of the good we are to do and pursue.

2�. Over our will it makes justice stream out, which is a continual and

firm will to render to every one his own. 3�. Over the concupiscible

appetite it makes temperance flow, moderating the passions which are

therein. 4�. Over the irascible appetite or anger it sends out

fortitude, which stays and controls all the motions of anger. Now these

four rivers, thus separated, afterwards divide themselves into several

others, in order that all human actions may be duly fashioned to

natural honesty and felicity. But besides all this, God, to enrich

Christians with a special favour, makes spring up on the very top of

the superior part of their spirit a supernatural fountain which is

called grace, and which comprehends indeed faith and hope, yet consists

in charity. It purifies the soul from all sins, and then adorns and

embellishes it with a most delightful beauty; and finally spreads its

waters over all the faculties and operations thereof, to give the

understanding a celestial prudence, the will a holy justice, the

concupiscible appetite a sacred temperance, and the irascible appetite

a devout fortitude, to the end that man's whole heart may tend to the

supernatural honesty and felicity which consist in union with God. And

if these four streams and rivers of charity meet with any one of the

four natural virtues in the soul, they bring it to their obedience,

mingling themselves therewith to perfect it, as perfumed water perfects

natural water when they are mixed together. But if holy charity, spread

out in this manner, find not the natural virtues in the soul, then it

alone does all their operations as occasion requires.

Thus heavenly love finding certain virtues in S. Paul, S. Ambrose, S.

Denis, S. Pachomius, shed upon them an agreeable brightness, reducing

them all to its service. But in Magdalen, in S. Mary of Egypt, the Good

Thief, and a hundred other such penitents who had been great offenders,

divine love, finding no virtue, did the office and work of all the

virtues, making itself patient, gentle, humble, and liberal in them. We

sow great variety of seeds in gardens, and cover them, as if burying

them, till the sun's greater heat makes them rise, and, as one would

say, resuscitates them, when they produce their leaves and their

flowers, with new seeds each one in its kind; so that one sole heat

from heaven causes all the diversity of these productions, by means of

the seed which it finds hidden in the bosom of the earth. Verily, my

Theotimus, God has sown in our hearts the seeds of all virtues, which,

however, are so covered with our imperfections and weakness that they

do not appear, or appear very slightly, till the vital heat of holy

love comes to quicken and resuscitate them, producing by them the

actions of all virtues. So that as the manna contained in itself the

variety of the tastes of all meats, and left a relish thereof in the

mouths of the Israelites, even so, heavenly love comprehends in itself

the diversity of the perfections of all the virtues in so excellent and

sublime a manner, that it produces all their actions in time and place

according to the occasions. Josue indeed valiantly defeated God's

enemies by his good handling of the armies which were under his charge;

but Samson defeated them yet more gloriously, references, who by his

own hand slew them by thousands with the jawbone of an ass. Josue by

his command and good order making use of the valour of his troops did

wonders, but Samson by his own force alone wrought miracles. Josue had

the strength of many soldiers under him, but Samson had it in him, and

could alone perform as much as Josue with many soldiers. Holy love is

excellent in both these ways, for finding some virtue in a soul (and

ordinarily it finds at least faith, hope and penitence) it animates,

commands, and happily employs them in God's service, and for the rest

of the virtues which it finds not, it does their work itself, having

more strength by itself than they have all together.

The great Apostle not only says that Charity gives us patience,

kindness, constancy, simplicity, but he says that charity is patient,

is kind, [520] is constant: and it is the property of the supreme

virtues amongst angels and men, not only to order the inferior virtues

to work, but also to be able themselves to do what they command others.

The bishop distributes the charges of all the ecclesiastical

functions:--to open the Church, to read therein, to exorcise, preach,

baptize, sacrifice, give communion and absolve; and he himself can do,

and does, all this, having in himself an eminent virtue, which

comprehends all the inferior virtues. So S. Thomas, on the strength of

S. Paul's assurance that charity is patient, kind, strong, says:

"Charity does and accomplishes the work of all the virtues." And S.

Ambrose, writing to Demetrias, calls patience and the rest of the

virtues members of charity. And the great S. Augustine says that the

love of God comprehends all the virtues and does all their operations

in us. These are his words: "What is said about virtue being divided

into four (he means the four cardinal virtues) is said in my opinion by

reason of the different affections which proceed from love. So that I

do not hesitate to define those four virtues thus: Temperance is a love

which gives itself entirely unto God; Fortitude is a love which

willingly supports all things for God's sake: Justice is a love [521]

which serves God only, and therefore disposes justly of all that is

subject to man: Prudence is a love that makes choice of things proper

to unite itself unto God, and rejects such things as are contrary to

it." He therefore that has charity has his soul invested with a fair

wedding garment, which, as that of Joseph, is wrought with the variety

of all the virtues: or rather he has a perfection which contains the

virtue of all perfections and the perfection of all virtues. And

therefore charity is patient, is kind; [522] she is not envious but

bounteous; she is guilty of no levities but is prudent; she is not

puffed up with pride, but is humble; she is not ambitious or

disdainful, but amiable and affable; she is not eager to exact that

which belongs unto her, but free and condescending; she is not

irritable but peaceable; she thinketh no evil but is meek; she doth not

rejoice in evil but in the truth, and with the truth she beareth all

things; she easily believeth all the good that is said to her without

any obstinacy, contention or distrust; she hopeth all good things for

her neighbour without ever losing the hope of procuring his salvation;

she endureth all things, expecting without disquiet that which is

promised her; and in conclusion, charity is that pure fire-tried gold,

which our Saviour counselled the Bishop of Laodicea to buy, [523] which

contains the virtue of all things, which can do all, and which does

all.

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[519] Gen. ii. 10.

[520] 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

[521] The French has force, but it is clearly and error; S. Augustine's

word is amor, as his argument requires. Se De Morib. Eccl. c. xv. [Tr.]

[522] 1 Cor. xiii.

[523] Apoc. iii. 18.

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CHAPTER IX.

THAT THE VIRTUES HAVE THEIR PERFECTION FROM DIVINE LOVE.

Charity is then the bond of perfection, [524] since in it all the

perfections of the soul are contained and assembled, and since without

it, not only can one not have the whole array of virtues, but one

cannot even have the perfection of any virtue. Without the cement and

mortar which fasten the stones and walls, the whole edifice goes to

rack; were it not for the nerves, muscles and sinews, the whole body

would be undone; and without charity the virtues can never sustain one

another. Our Saviour ever joins the fulfilling of the commandments to

charity. He that hath my commandments, says he, and keepeth them, he it

is that loveth me; he that loveth me not keepeth not my words; If any

one love me, he will keep my word: [525] which the disciple whom our

Saviour loved repeating, says: He that keepeth his word, in him, in

very deed, the charity of God is perfected; [526] and this is the

charity of God, that we keep his commandments. [527] Now he who should

have all virtues, would keep all the commandments: for he that had the

virtue of religion would keep the first three commandments; he that had

piety would observe the fourth; he that had the virtue of mildness and

gentleness would observe the fifth; by the virtue of chastity one would

observe the sixth; by liberality one would avoid the breach of the

seventh; by truth one would effect the eighth; by frugality and purity

one would observe the ninth and tenth. And if without charity we cannot

keep the commandments, much less can we without it have all the

virtues.

True it is, one may have some virtue, and live some small time without

offending God, though wanting in divine love: but even as we sometimes

see uprooted trees produce something, but imperfectly, and only for a

short time, so a heart separated from charity, may indeed bring forth

some acts of virtue but not for long.

All virtues separated from charity are very imperfect, since they are

not able without it to arrive at their end, which is to make us happy.

Bees in their birth are little grubs and worms, without feet, without

wings, and without shape; but in course of time they change, and become

little flies; afterwards waxing strong, and being come to their growth,

they are said to be formed, finished and perfect bees, because they

have all that is wanted for flying and for making honey. The virtues

have their beginning, their progress, and their perfection; and I do

not deny that without charity they may be born and even grow; but that

they should come to their perfection, and bear the name of formed,

fashioned, and accomplished virtues, that depends on charity, which

gives them the strength to fly in God, and to collect from his mercy

the honey of true merit, and of the sanctification of the heart in

which they are found.

Charity is amongst the virtues, as the sun amongst the stars; she

distributes to all their lustre and beauty. Faith, hope, fear and

penitence ordinarily go before her into the soul to prepare her

lodging; and, upon her arrival, they with all the train of virtues obey

and wait upon her, and she with her presence animates, adorns and

quickens them all.

The other virtues can in turn aid and stimulate one another in their

works and exercises: for who knows not that chastity requires and

excites sobriety, and that obedience moves us to liberality, prayer,

and humility? Now by this communication which they have amongst

themselves they participate in one another's perfections: for chastity

kept by obedience has a double dignity, its own and that of obedience;

yea, it has even more of the dignity of obedience than of its own: for,

as Aristotle says that he who stole for the sake of sensuality sinned

rather against purity than against honesty, because all his affections

tended to impurity, and he only used theft as a passage to it; even so

he who keeps chastity through obedience is more obedient than chaste,

since he makes chastity serve obedience. Nevertheless, from the mixture

of chastity and obedience a perfect and accomplished virtue cannot

issue, since they both want the last perfection, which is love; so that

if it were possible that all the virtues were put in one man, and that

he wanted only charity, this union of virtues would indeed be a most

perfect and complete body in all its parts, such as Adam's was when God

with his omnipotent hand formed it of the slime of the earth: yet would

it be a body wanting motion, life and grace, till God should breathe

into it the breath of life, [528] that is, holy charity, without which

nothing profits us.

For the rest, the perfection of divine love is so sovereign that it

perfects all the virtues, and can receive no perfection from them, no

not from obedience itself, which is the one most able to give

perfection to the rest: for although love be commanded, and although in

loving we exercise obedience, yet still love draws not its perfection

from obedience, but from the goodness of him whom it loves; love not

being excellent because it is obedient, but because it loves an

excellent good. Truly in loving we obey, as also in obeying we love;

but if this obedience be so excellently loveable, it is because it

tends to the excellence of love; nor does its excellence consist in

this, that loving we obey, but in this, that obeying we love. So that

even as God is as much the last end as the first beginning of all that

is good, so love, which is the source of every good affection, is

likewise its last end and perfection.

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[524] Col. iii. 14.

[525] John xiv. 23, 23, 24.

[526] 1 John ii. 5.

[527] 1 John v. 3.

[528] Gen. ii. 7.

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CHAPTER X.

A DIGRESSION UPON THE IMPERFECTION OF THE VIRTUES OF THE PAGANS.

Those ancient sages of the world long ago made glorious discourses in

honour of the moral virtues, yea, even in behalf of religion: but what

Plutarch observes of the Stoics suits still better the rest of the

pagans. We see ships, says he, which bear the grandest titles: some are

called the Victory, others the Valour, others the Sun; yet, for all

that, they remain dependent on the winds and waves: so the Stoics boast

of being exempt from passions, without fear, without grief, without

anger, unchanging and unchangeable, yet are they in fact subject to

trouble, disquiet, impetuosity, and other follies.

I earnestly ask you, Theotimus, what virtues could those people have,

who voluntarily, and of set purpose, overthrew all the laws of

religion. Seneca wrote a book against superstitions, wherein he very

freely reprehends pagan impiety. "Now this freedom," says S. Augustine,

"was found in his writings, but not in his life; since he even advised

that a man should reject superstition in his heart but should practise

it in his actions; for these are his words: Which superstitions the

sage shall observe, as being commanded by the law, not as being

grateful to the gods." How could they be virtuous, who, as S. Augustine

relates, were of opinion that the wise man ought to kill himself, when

he could not or would not longer endure the calamities of this life,

and yet were not willing to acknowledge that calamities were miseries

or miseries calamities, but maintained that the wise man was ever

fortunate and his life happy? "O what a happy life," says S. Augustine,

"to avoid which one has even recourse to death? If it be happy, why do

you not remain in it?" Wherefore, that Stoic and commander who, for

having killed himself in Utica to avoid a calamity which he considered

it unworthy to survive, has been so praised by the worldly-minded, did

this action with so little true virtue that, as S. Augustine says, he

did not exhibit a high courage that wished to avoid dishonour, but a

weak soul which had not the strength of mind to await adversity. For if

he reputed it a dishonourable thing to live under victorious C�sar, why

did he tell others to trust to the clemency of C�sar? Why did he not

advise his son to die with him, if death were better and more

honourable than life? He killed himself, then, either because he envied

C�sar the glory he would have gained by sparing his life, or because he

feared the shame of living under a victor whom he hated: wherein he may

have the praise of having a stout, perhaps a great heart, but not of

being a wise, virtuous and constant soul. The cruelty which is

exercised without emotion and in cold blood, is the most cruel of all.

It is the same with despair; for the most slow, deliberate, and

determined is the least excusable and the most desperate. And as for

Lucretia (that we may not forget the valour of the less courageous

sex), either she was chaste under the violence of the son of Tarquin,

or she was not. If Lucretia were not chaste, why is her chastity so

praised? If she were chaste and innocent on that occasion, was not

Lucretia wicked to murder the innocent Lucretia? If unchaste why so

much praised, if honest why was she slain? But she dreaded reproach and

shame on the part of such as might have thought that the treatment she

had suffered through violence while she was in life had been undergone

voluntarily, if after it she had remained in life. She feared to have

been considered an accomplice in the sin, if what was done to her

wickedly were borne by her patiently. But are we then to oppress the

innocent, and kill the just in order to avoid the shame and reproach

which depends upon the opinion of men? Must we maintain honour at the

cost of virtue, and reputation at the hazard of justice? Such were the

virtues of the most virtuous pagans towards God and towards themselves.

As to the virtues that refer to our neighbour, they trod under foot,

and most shamefully, by their very laws, the chief of them, which is

piety. [529] For Aristotle, the greatest intellect amongst them,

pronounced this horrible and most pitiless sentence. "As to the

question of exposing, that is, abandoning children, or of bringing them

up, let this be the law: that nothing is to be kept that is deprived of

any member. And as to other children, if the laws and customs of the

city do not allow the abandoning of them, and the number of any one's

children so increase on him that he has more by half than he can keep,

he is to be beforehand, and procure abortion." Seneca, so praised as a

wise man, says: "We kill monsters:--and if our children are defective,

weakly, imperfect, or monstrous, we cast them off, and abandon them."

So that it is not without cause that Tertullian reproaches the Romans

with exposing their children to the mercy of the waters, to cold, to

famine, to dogs; and this not by the force of poverty; for as he says,

the very chief men and magistrates practised this cruelty. Good God!

Theotimus, what kind of virtuous men were these? And what was their

wisdom, who taught a wisdom so cruel and brutal? Alas! said the great

Apostle, professing themselves to be wise they became fools, and their

foolish heart was darkened, [530] and delivered up to a reprobate

sense. Ah! what horrible counsels that great philosopher Aristotle

gives! and how greatly is he reproached for them by Tertullian and the

great S. Ambrose.

Indeed if the pagans practised some virtues, it was generally for the

sake of worldly glory, and consequently they had nothing of virtue but

the action, and not the motive and intention: now virtue is not true

unless it has a right intention. "Human cupidity has produced the

fortitude of pagans," says the Council of Orange, "and divine charity

that of Christians." "The virtues of pagans," says S. Augustine, "were

not true, but only resembled true ones, because they were not done for

a proper end, but for transitory ends. Fabricius shall be less punished

than Cataline, not because the former was good, but because the latter

was worse; not because Fabricius had any true virtues, but because he

was not so far off true virtues. So that the virtue of the pagans will,

at the day of judgment, be a kind of defence to them; not such as that

they can be saved thereby, but such as that they may be less

condemned." One vice was neutralized by another amongst the pagans,

vices making room for one another, without leaving space for any

virtue: and for this one vice of vain glory they repressed avarice and

many other vices. Yea sometimes through vanity, they despised vanity;

whereupon one of the furthest removed from vanity, treading under his

feet the rich bed of Plato,--What are you doing, Diogenes, said Plato

to him? I trample underfoot Plato's pride, said he; it is true, replied

Plato, but you trample it with another pride. Whether or no Seneca was

vain may be gathered from his last words; for the end crowns the work,

and the last hour judges all: what vanity, I pray you!--being at the

point of death, he said to his friends that he had not been able until

then sufficiently to thank them, and that therefore he would leave them

a legacy of what he had most desirable and most beautiful; which, if

they faithfully kept it, would bring them great praises; adding that

this magnificent legacy was nothing else but the picture of his life.

Do you see, Theotimus, how offensive was the vanity of the last breath

of this man? It was not love of honest virtue, but love of honour which

pricked forward those wise men of this world to the exercise of virtue;

and similarly their virtues were as different from true virtues, as the

love of right and of merit is different from the love of reward. Those

who serve their prince for their own interest, ordinarily perform their

duty with more eagerness, ardour, and outward show; but those who serve

for love, do it more nobly, generously, and therefore more worthily.

Carbuncles and rubies are called by the Greeks two contrary names, for

they name them pyropos and apyropos: that is, fiery and fireless, or

inflamed and flameless. They call them fiery, burning, red coals, or

carbuncles, because in light and splendour they resemble fire: but they

call them fireless, or, so to say, uninflammable, because not only is

their shining without any heat, but they are not even capable of heat,

there being no fire that can heat them. So did our ancient Fathers term

the pagan virtues, virtues and non-virtues both together; virtues,

because they had the lustre and appearance of them, non-virtues,

because they not only lacked the vital heat of the love of God, which

alone could perfect them, but they were not even capable of it, because

they were in persons without faith. "There being in those times," says

S. Augustine, "two Romans great in virtue, C�sar and Cato, Cato's

virtue came much nearer to true virtue than C�sar's did." And having

said somewhere that the philosophers who were destitute of true piety

had shone with the light of virtue, he unsays it in his book of

Retractations, considering this to be too great praise for virtues so

imperfect as those of the pagans were: which in truth are like to

shining fire-worms, which only shine during the night, and day being

come lose their light. For, even so, those pagan virtues are only

virtues in comparison with vices, but in comparison with the virtues of

true Christians, are quite unworthy of the name of virtues.

Yet whereas they contain some good, they may be compared to worm-eaten

apples; for the colour of these, and such little substance as if left

them, are as good as those of entire virtues, but the worm of vanity is

in the core, and spoils them; and therefore he who would use them must

separate the good from the bad. I grant, Theotimus, there was some

firmness of heart in Cato, and that this firmness was praiseworthy, but

he who would rightfully appeal to his example, must do so in a just and

right matter, not inflicting death on himself, but suffering it when

true virtue requires; not for the vanity of glory, but for the glory of

truth: as was the case with our martyrs, who, with invincible hearts,

performed so many miracles of constancy and resolution, that those of

Cato, an Horatius, a Seneca, a Lucretia, an Arria, deserve no

consideration in comparison with them. Witness a Laurence, a Vincent, a

Vitalis, an Erasmus, a Eugenius, a Sebastian, an Agatha, an Agnes, a

Catharine, a Perpetua, a Felicitas, a Symphorosa, a Natalia, and a

thousand others, who make me ever wonder at the admirers of pagan

virtues; not so much because they unreasonably admire the imperfect

virtues of the pagans, as because they do not admire the most perfect

virtues of Christians, virtues a hundred times more worthy of

admiration, and alone worthy of imitation.

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[529] That is, the mutual love of parents and children--pietas (Tr.)

[530] Rom. i. 22, 21.

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CHAPTER XI.

HOW HUMAN ACTIONS ARE WITHOUT WORTH WHEN THEY ARE DONE WITHOUT DIVINE

LOVE.

The great friend of God, Abraham, had by Sara his chief wife a most

dear only son, Isaac, who also was his sole heir: and though he had

Ismael by Agar, and several other children by Cetura, who were wives of

a servile and inferior condition, yet he bestowed upon these only

certain presents and legacies whereby to put them off and disinherit

them, because not being acknowledged by his chief wife, they could not

succeed him: now they were not acknowledged, because, with regard to

the children of Cetura, they were all born after Sara's decease; and as

for Ismael, though his mother Agar had at first acted by the authority

of Sara her mistress, yet afterwards she despised her mistress, and

would not allow Sara's rights over the child. Now, Theotimus, it is

only the children, that is the acts, of most holy charity, and the

children or acts which the other virtues conceive and bring forth under

her commandment and direction, or at least under the wings and favour

of her presence, which are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

[531] But when the moral virtues, or even the supernatural virtues,

produce their actions in the absence of charity, as they do amongst

schismatics, according to S. Augustine, and sometimes amongst bad

Catholics, they are of no value towards Paradise, not even alms-giving,

though it should lead us to distribute all our goods to the poor, nor

yet martyrdom, though we should deliver our body to the flames to be

burnt. No, Theotimus, without charity, says the Apostle, all this

profiteth nothing; as we show more amply elsewhere. Further, when in

the production of moral virtue the will proves disobedient to her

mistress, which is charity (as when by pride, vanity, temporal

interest, or some other bad motive, virtues are turned from their own

nature), then those actions are driven out and banished from Abraham's

house and Sara's society, that is, they are deprived of the fruit and

of the privileges of charity, and consequently are left without worth

or merit. For those actions, thus infected by a bad intention, are in

fact more vicious than virtuous; they have virtue only on their

outside; their interior belongs to vice, which serves them for a

motive; witness the fastings, offerings, and other actions of the

Pharisee.

But finally, besides all this, as the Israelites lived peaceably in

Egypt during the life of Joseph and of Levi, and directly after the

death of Levi were tyrannically reduced to slavery--whence arose that

proverb of the Jews: One of the brothers being deceased, the others are

oppressed: [as is related in the great Chronology of the Hebrews,

published by the learned Archbishop of Aix, Gilbert Genebrard, whom I

name for honour and with consolation, having been his disciple, though

an unworthy one, when he was Royal Reader at Paris, and was explaining

the Canticle of Canticles]--so the merits and fruits, as well of moral

as of Christian virtues, most sweetly and tranquilly subsist in the

soul while sacred love lives and reigns therein; but as soon as divine

love dies, all the merits and fruits of other virtues die at once.

These are the works which divines call killed (mortifi�es), because,

having been born alive under the protection of charity, and, like

Ismael, in the family of Abraham, they afterwards lose life and the

right of inheritance by the disobedience and rebellion of the human

will, which is their mother.

Alas! Theotimus, what an evil! If the just man turn himself away from

his justice, and do iniquity according to all the abominations which

the wicked man useth to work, shall he live? All his justices which he

hath done shall not be remembered: in the prevarication by which he

hath prevaricated, and in the sin which he hath committed, in them he

shall die, says Our Lord in Ezechiel. [532] So that mortal sin ruins

all the merit of virtues: because, as for those which are performed

while sin reigns in the soul, they are born so dead that they are for

ever useless towards eternal bliss; and as for those which were

performed before the sin was committed, that is, while sacred love

lived in the soul, their value and merit perish and die as soon as sin

comes, not being able to preserve their life after the death of charity

which had given it to them. The lake which profane authors commonly

call Asphaltites, and sacred authors the Dead Sea, has so heavy a curse

upon it, that nothing that is put into it can live: when the fish of

the Jordan come near it they die, unless they speedily return against

the stream; the trees upon its shore produce nothing that lives, and

although their fruits are in appearance and outward show like the

fruits of other places, yet when gathered they are found to be only

skins and rinds full of ashes, which are blown away by the wind:--a

sign of the infamous sins, in punishment of which, this country, which

contained four populous cities, was of old converted into an abyss of

corruption and infection: and nothing, methinks, could better represent

the evilness of sin than this abominable lake, which had its origin

from the most execrable crime human flesh can commit. Sin, therefore,

as a dead and mortal sea, kills all that comes near it; nothing has

life of all that is born in the soul which sin possesses, or of all

which grows round about. Alas! Theotimus, nothing. For sin is not only

a lead work, but is moreover so infectious and pestilential, that the

most excellent virtues of the sinful soul produce no action of life:

and although the acts of the sinner have oftentimes a great resemblance

to those of the just man, yet are they in reality but rinds filled with

wind and dust, regarded, indeed, by the divine goodness, and even

rewarded with temporal presents, which are bestowed upon them as upon

the children of servants; but rinds which neither are nor can be of so

agreeable a relish to the divine justice as to be rewarded with eternal

reward. They perish on the trees, and cannot be preserved in the hand

of God, because they are void of true worth, as is said in the

Apocalypse to the Bishop of Sardis, who was considered to be a living

tree by reason of divers virtues which he practised, and yet was dead,

[533] because he was in sin; his virtues were not true living fruits,

but dead rinds and pleasing only to the eye, not savoury apples good

for food. So that we may all utter this true saying, in imitation of

the holy apostle: Without charity I am nothing, nothing profiteth me;

and that of St. Augustine: "Put charity in a heart and everything

profits, take charity away and nothing profits." I mean that nothing

profits for eternal life, for as we say elsewhere, the virtuous works

of sinners are not useless for temporal life. But, my dear Theotimus,

what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world temporally and

suffer the loss of his soul [534] eternally.

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[531] Rom. viii. 17.

[532] xviii. 24

[533] Apoc. iii. 1.

[534] Matth. xvi. 26.

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CHAPTER XII.

HOW HOLY LOVE RETURNING INTO THE SOUL, BRINGS BACK TO LIFE ALL THE

WORKS WHICH SIN HAD DESTROYED.

The works then of a sinner, while he is deprived of holy love, are not

profitable to eternal life, and therefore they are called dead works:

on the contrary the good works of the just man are said to be living,

inasmuch as divine love animates and quickens them with its life. But

if afterwards they lose their life and worth by sin, they are said to

be works in death (amorties), extinguished, or killed, but not dead

works, especially with regard to the elect. For as our Saviour speaking

of the little Talitha, the daughter of Jairus, said she was not dead,

but slept only, [535] because, being about to be raised to life, her

death would be of such short duration that it would resemble sleep

rather than a true death; so the works of the just man (and especially

of the elect) which the commission of sin makes to die, are not called

dead works but only deadlike, killed, stupefied or put into a trance,

because upon the approaching return of holy love, they will, or at

least can, soon revive and return to life again. The return of sin

deprives the heart and all its works of life: the return of grace

restores life to the heart and all its works. A sharp winter makes all

the plants of the earth die down, so that if it always lasted, they

also would always continue in this state of death: sin, that most sad

and dreadful winter of the soul, kills all the holy works which it

finds therein, and if it always continued, never would anything recover

either life or vigour. But as at the return of the fair spring, not

only do the new seeds which are sown under the favour of this beautiful

and fertile season germinate and agreeably bring forth their plants,

each one in its kind, but also the old plants, which the rigour of the

past winter had bitten, withered, and made die down, grow green and

vigorous, and take up again their strength and their life:--so sin

being blotted out, and the grace of divine love returning into the

soul,--not only do the new affections which the return of this sacred

spring brings into the soul blossom and bring forth ample merits and

blessings; but the works also that were dried up and withered by the

rigour of the winter of past sins, delivered from their mortal enemy,

resume their strength, grow vigorous, and, as if risen from the dead,

flourish anew, and bring forth fruit of merits for eternal life. Such

is the omnipotence of heavenly love, or the love of heavenly

omnipotence. When the wicked turneth himself away from his wickedness,

which he hath wrought, and doth judgment and justice, he shall save his

soul alive. Be converted and do penance for all your iniquities; and

iniquity shall not be your ruin, [536] says the Lord Almighty. And what

means--iniquity shall not be your ruin, but that the ruin which it made

shall be repaired? So, besides a thousand endearments which the

prodigal son received from his father, he was re-established, even with

advantage, in all his privileges, and in all the graces, favours and

dignities which he had lost. And Job, that innocent image of a penitent

sinner, in the end received twice as much as he had before. [537] In

truth the most holy Council of Trent desires that we should encourage

penitents who have returned to the sacred love of the eternal God, in

these words of the Apostle: Abound in every good work, knowing that

your labour is not in vain in the Lord. [538] For God is not unjust,

that he should forget your work and the love which you have shewn in

his name. [539] God then does not forget the works of those who having

lost love by sin recover it by penance. Now God forgets works when they

lose their merit and sanctity by sin committed, and he remembers them

when they return to life and vigour by the presence of holy love. So

much so, that for the faithful to be rewarded for their good works, as

well by the increase of grace and future glory, as by the actual

enjoyment of eternal life, it is not necessary that they should never

relapse into sin, but it is enough, according to the Sacred Council,

that they depart this life in the grace of God and charity.

God has promised an eternal reward to the works of a just man. But if

the just man turn himself away from his justice by sin, God will no

more remember his justices and good works which he hath done. [540] But

yet if this poor fallen man afterwards rises and returns into God's

grace by penance, God will no longer remember his sin: and if he do not

remember his sin, he will then remember the former good works, and the

reward which he had promised them; because sin, which alone had blotted

them out of the divine memory, is totally effaced, destroyed and

annihilated. So that then the justice of God obliges his mercy, or

rather the mercy of God obliges his justice, to regard anew the former

good works, even as though he had never forgotten them; otherwise the

holy penitent would never have dared to say to his master: Restore unto

me the joy of thy salvation, and strengthen me with a perfect spirit.

[541] For, as you see, he not only demands a newness of heart and

spirit, but he expects to have the joy given back to him which sin had

bereft him of. Now this joy is nothing but the wine of heavenly love,

which cheers the heart of man. [542]

It is not with sin in this matter as with the works of charity. For the

works of the just man are not effaced, destroyed or annihilated by the

commission of sin, they are only forgotten; but the sin of the wicked

is not only forgotten, but also blotted out, cleansed away, abolished

and annihilated by holy penance. Wherefore the sin that is committed by

the just man, does not cause the sin that was once pardoned to live

again, because it was entirely annihilated: but when love returns into

the penitent soul, it makes her former good works return to life again,

because they were not abolished but only forgotten. And this oblivion

of the good works of the just who have forsaken their justice and

charity consists in this, that they are made unprofitable to us so long

as sin makes us incapable of eternal life, which is their fruit; and

therefore as soon as by the return of charity we are put back in the

ranks of God's children, and consequently made capable of immortal

glory, God recalls to mind our good works of old, and they again become

fruitful. It were not reasonable that sin should have as much power

against charity as charity has against sin; for sin proceeds from our

infirmity, charity proceeds from God's power. If sin abound in malice

to ruin us, grace superabounds to restore us; and God's mercy, by which

he blots out sin, is continually exalted and becomes gloriously

triumphant over the rigour of the judgment, [543] by which God had

forgotten the good works which went before sin. So in the corporal

cures which our Saviour wrought by miracles he not only restored

health, but moreover added new blessings, making the cure far excel the

disease, so bountiful is he to man.

I never saw, read, or heard, that wasps, gadflies, flies, and such

little noxious insects when once dead could come to life and rise

again, but that the dear bees, those virtuous insects, can live again,

every one says, and I have often read it. It is said (these are Pliny's

words) that if one keep the dead bodies of drowned honey-bees all

winter indoors, and expose them to the sunbeams the following spring,

covered over with ashes of the fig tree, they will live again and be as

good as ever. That iniquities and sinful works can return to life,

after they have once been drowned and abolished by penance, truly, my

Theotimus, never did the Scripture, nor, as far as I know, any

theologian, aver it: yea the contrary is authorized by holy Writ, and

by the common consent of all Doctors. But that good works, which, like

sweet bees, compound the honey of merit, being drowned in sin, can

afterwards regain life, when, covered with the ashes of penance, they

are exposed to the sun of grace and charity, is held and clearly taught

by all theologians: nor are we to doubt but that they become profitable

and fruitful as before. When Nabuzardan destroyed Jerusalem, and Israel

was led into captivity, the holy fire of the altar was hidden in a

well, where it was turned into mud, but this mud being drawn out of the

well and exposed to the sun after the return from captivity,--the dead

fire kindled again, and the mud was turned into flames. [544] When the

just man becomes a slave to sin, all the good works which he had done

are miserably forgotten and turned into mud, but being delivered out of

captivity, when by penance he returns into the grace of heavenly

charity, his former good works are drawn out of the well of oblivion,

and touched with the rays of heavenly mercy they return to life, and

are converted into as clear flames as ever, to be replaced on the

sacred altar of the divine approbation, and to have their original

dignity, their first price, and their first value.

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[535] Marc. v. 41.

[536] Ezech. viii. 27, 30.

[537] Job. xlii. 10.

[538] 1 Cor. xv. 58.

[539] Hebr. vi. 10.

[540] Ezech. xviii. 24.

[541] Ps. l. 14.

[542] Ps. ciii. 15.

[543] Rom. v. 20; James ii. 13.

[544] 2 Mac. i. 19.

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CHAPTER XIII.

HOW WE ARE TO REDUCE ALL THE EXERCISE OF THE VIRTUES, AND ALL OUR

ACTIONS TO HOLY LOVE.

Brute beasts, being unable to know the end of their actions, tend

indeed towards their end, but do not aim at it: for to aim at a thing,

is to tend towards it by intention, before tending towards it in

action. They cast, as it were, their actions towards their end, but

they have no forecast, simply following their instinct, without

election or intention. But man is in such sort master over his human

and reasonable actions, that he does them all for some end, and can

direct them to one particular end, or several ends as he pleases: for

he can change the natural end of an action;--as when he swears in order

to deceive another, whereas the end of an oath is, on the contrary, to

hinder deceit. He can also add another end to the natural end of an

action;--as when, besides the intention of succouring the poor to which

almsgiving tends, he adds the intention of inducing the poor man to do

the like.

Now sometimes we add a less perfect end than is that of our action,

sometimes we add an end of equal or like perfection, sometimes again an

end that is more high and eminent. For besides helping a needy man, to

which almsgiving specially tends, one may propose. 1�. to gain his

friendship; 2�. to edify one's neighbour; and 3�. to please God.

There are three differing ends, whereof the first is lower, the second

not much better, and the third much more excellent than the ordinary

end of almsgiving. So that, as you see, we have power to give different

perfections to our actions, according to the variety of motives, ends

and intentions which we have in doing them.

Be good exchangers, [545] says our Saviour. Let us be very careful

then, Theotimus, not to change the motives and ends of our actions

except to profit and advantage; and to do nothing in this matter save

with good order and reason. Now, look at that man who enters on some

office for the public service or to acquire honour: if his design be

rather to honour himself than to serve the commonwealth, or if he be

equally desirous of both, he is wrong, and does not escape being an

ambitious man; for he overthrows the order of reason, in either

preferring or equalizing his own interests to the public good. But if,

proposing as his principal end the public service, he is very glad also

at the same time to advance the honour of his family, truly one cannot

blame him, because his designs are not only honest, but also well

ordered. Another communicates at Easter, in order to escape the

ill-word of his neighbours, and to obey God: no one doubts that he does

well. But if he communicate to avoid blame as much as, or more than, to

obey God, who again can doubt that he acts unreasonably; equalizing or

preferring human respect to the obedience which he owes to God. I may

fast in Lent, either from charity in order to please God; or from

obedience, because it is a precept of the Church; or from sobriety; or

from diligence, in order to study better; or from prudence, to make

some saving which is required; or from chastity, in order to tame the

flesh; or from religion, the better to pray. Now, if I please, I may

make a collection of all these intentions, and fast for them all

together: but in that case there must be good management to place these

motives in proper order. For if I fasted chiefly out of a sparing

humour, rather than from obedience to the Church; if to study well

rather than to please God;--who does not see that I pervert right and

order, preferring my own interest before obedience to the Church and

the pleasure of my God? To fast in order to save is good, to fast in

order to obey the Church is better, to fast in order to please God is

best: but though it may seem that with three goods one cannot make a

bad; yet he who should place them out of order, preferring the less to

the better, would without doubt commit an irregularity deserving of

blame.

He who invites but one of his friends, gives no offence to the rest;

but if he invite them all, and give the chief seats to those of lower

rank, giving the more honourable the bottom places,--does he not offend

both those and these?--these, because he lowers them against reason:

those, because he makes fools of them. So, when we do an action for a

single reasonable motive, however slight it may be, reason is not

offended thereby; but he who will have many motives, must rank them

according to their quality, otherwise he sins: for disorder is a sin,

as sin is a disorder. He who desires to please God and our Blessed Lady

does excellently well, but he who would please our Blessed Lady as much

as God, or more than God, would commit an intolerable irregularity, and

one might say to him, as was said to Cain: If thou hast offered well

but wrongly divided,--stop, thou hast sinned. [546] To each end we must

give its proper rank, and consequently the sovereign rank to that of

pleasing God.

Now the sovereign motive of our actions, which is that of heavenly

love, has this sovereign property, that being more pure, it makes the

actions which proceed from it more pure; so that the angels and saints

of heaven love absolutely nothing for any other end whatever than that

of the love of the divine goodness, and from the motive of desiring to

please him. They all indeed love one another most ardently, they also

love us, they love the virtues, but all this only to please God. They

follow and practise virtues, not inasmuch as they are fair and

delightful, but inasmuch as they are agreeable to God: they love their

own felicity, not because it is theirs, but because it pleases God:

yea, they love the very love with which they love God, not because it

is in them, but because it tends to God; not because it is sweet to

themselves, but because it pleases God; not because they have and

possess it, but because God gives it them, and takes his good-pleasure

in it.

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[545] These words are often quoted by the early Fathers as words of our

Saviour; they are not found in the Bible (Tr.).

[546] Gen. iv. 7. From the Septuagint (Tr.)

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE PRACTICE OF WHAT HAS BEEN SAID IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTER.

Let us purify, then, Theotimus, as far as we can, all our intentions,

and since we are able to spread over all the acts of the virtues the

sacred motive of divine love, why shall we not do it, rejecting, as

occasion requires, all kinds of vicious motives, such as vain-glory,

and self-interest, and considering all the good motives which we may

have for undertaking the action which presents itself, in order to

choose that of holy love, which is the most excellent of all, to pour

it over all the rest, or steep them in it. For example, if I desire

valorously to expose myself to the hazards of war, I can do it,

considering various motives: For the natural motive of this action is

that of strength and valour, which moves us reasonably to undertake

perilous exploits: yet besides this I may have divers other motives; as

that of obeying the prince whom I serve, that of love for the common

weal, that of magnanimity, which makes me rejoice in the greatness of

this action. Now, coming to the action, I enter on the foreseen peril

for all these motives together. But to raise them all to the rank of

divine love, and perfectly to purify them, I will say in my soul with

all my heart: O eternal God, who art the most dear love of my

affections, if valour, obedience to my prince, love of my country, and

magnanimity, were not agreeable unto thee, I would never follow the

movements I now feel, but because these virtues please thee, I embrace

this occasion of putting them in practice, and I will only follow their

instinct and leading, because thou lovest and willest them.

You see plainly, Theotimus, that by this reflection of the spirit, we

perfume all those other motives with the holy sweetness of love, since

we do not follow them as motives simply virtuous, but as motives,

willed, accepted, loved and cherished by God. He who steals in order to

get drunk, is more a drunkard than a thief, according to Aristotle; and

he who practises valour, obedience, love of country, and magnanimity to

please God, is rather a divine lover, than valiant, obedient,

patriotic, and magnanimous, because his whole will in this action comes

to terminate and be absorbed in the love of God, only using all the

other motives to arrive at this end. We are not wont to say we are

going to Lyons but to Paris, when we only go to Lyons in order to get

to Paris: nor that we are going to sing but that we are going to serve

God, when we only go to sing in order to serve God.

And if it chance that sometimes we are touched by some particular

motive, as, for example, if we should love chastity on account of its

lovely and delightful purity, at once we must pour out, over this

motive, that of holy love--in this manner: O most honourable and most

pleasing spotlessness of chastity, how worthy of love art thou, since

thou art so beloved of the divine goodness! Then, turning towards the

Creator: Ah! Lord, I demand only one thing of thee, this is what I aim

at in chastity, to see and effect in it thy good pleasure, and to take

the delight thou takest therein. And when we begin the practice of any

virtue, we should often say with all our heart: Yes, eternal Father, I

will do it, for so hath it seemed good in thy sight. [547] Thus are we

to animate all our actions with this heavenly good-pleasure, loving the

honourableness and beauty of virtue principally because they are

agreeable to God: for, my dear Theotimus, there are some men who

excessively love the beauty of certain virtues, not only without loving

charity, but even with contempt of charity. Origen and Tertullian so

loved the purity of chastity, that for it they violated the great laws

of charity; the one choosing to commit idolatry to preserve it, [548]

the other separating himself from the most chaste Catholic Church, his

mother, to establish the chastity of his wife more according to his own

fancy. Who knows not that there were certain "Poor men of Lyons," who

from praising mendicity excessively, became heretics, and of beggars

became lying vagabonds? Who is ignorant of the folly of the

Enthusiasts, Messalians, Euchites, who forsook charity, to exalt

prayer? And were there not heretics, who to exalt charity towards the

poor, put down charity towards God, ascribing man's whole salvation to

alms-deeds, as S. Augustine witnesses; although the holy Apostle cries

out, if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and have not

charity, it profiteth me nothing? [549]

God has set over me the standard of love, [550] says the sacred

Sulamitess. Love, Theotimus, is the standard in the army of virtues:

they ought all to range themselves by it; it is the only flag under

which our Saviour, who is the true General of the army, makes them

fight. Let us therefore reduce all the virtues to the obedience of

charity: let us love particular virtues, but principally because they

are agreeable to God; let us excellently love the more excellent

virtues, not because they are excellent, but because God loves them

more excellently. Thus will holy love give life to all the virtues,

making all of them full of love, lovable, and lovable above all things.

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[547] Matt. xi. 26.

[548] The only authority for this accusation against Origen is a

statement of S. Epiphanius (de H�r. lxiv. c. 2), which Baronius (ann.

253) rejects as an interpolation, and Tillemont (III. note xxii. on

Origen) proves to be erroneous Tr.).

[549] 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

[550] Cant. ii. 4. From the Septuagint (Tr.).

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CHAPTER XV.

HOW CHARITY CONTAINS IN IT THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

That man's heart may easily follow the motions and instincts of reason,

in order to attain the natural felicity which it can aim at, by living

according to the laws of rectitude, it requires to have:--1�.

Temperance, to repress the rebellious movements of sensuality; 2�.

Justice, to render to God, our neighbour and ourselves what is due;

3�. Fortitude, to vanquish the difficulties which occur in doing good

and avoiding evil; 4�. Counsel, to discern what means are most proper

to attain unto good and virtue; 5�. Knowledge, to know the true good,

to which we are to aspire, and the true evil which we are to fly; 6�.

Understanding, thoroughly to penetrate the first and main grounds or

principles of the beauty and excellence of rectitude; 7�. And finally,

wisdom, to contemplate the divinity, the prime source of all good.

These are the qualities whereby the spirit is rendered gentle,

obedient, and pliable, with regard to the laws of the natural reason

which is in us.

In like manner, the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in us, wishing to make our

soul supple, pliable, and obedient, with regard to his heavenly

movements and divine inspirations, which are the laws of his love, in

the observance of which consists the supernatural felicity of this

present life, bestows upon us seven properties and perfections, nearly

corresponding to those seven which we have just spoken of, and called,

in the Holy Scripture and in the books of theologians, gifts of the

Holy Ghost.

Now they are not only inseparable from charity, but, all things well

considered, and speaking precisely, they are the principal virtues,

properties and qualities of charity. For 1�. Wisdom is in fact no

other thing than the love which relishes, tastes and experiences, how

sweet and delicious God is; 2�. Understanding is nothing else than

love attentive to consider and penetrate the beauty of the truths of

faith, to know thereby God in himself, and then descending from this to

consider him in creatures; 3�. Science, on the other hand, is but the

same love, keeping us attentive to the knowledge of ourselves and

creatures, to make us reascend to a more perfect knowledge of the

service which we owe to God; 4�. Counsel is also love, insomuch as it

makes us careful, attentive, and wise in choosing the means proper to

serve God holily; 5�. Fortitude is love encouraging and animating the

heart, to put in execution that which counsel has determined should be

done; 6�. Piety is the love which sweetens labour, and makes us, with

good heart, with pleasure, and with a filial affection, employ

ourselves in works which please God, our Father; and 7�. to conclude,

Fear is nothing but love insomuch as it makes us fly and avoid what is

displeasing to the divine Majesty.

So, Theotimus, charity will be another Jacob's ladder to us, consisting

of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, as of so many sacred steps, by

which angelic men will ascend from earth to heaven, to be united to the

heart of God Almighty, and by which they will descend from heaven to

earth, to take their neighbour by the hand and lead him to heaven. For,

as we mount the first step, Fear makes us forsake evil; on the second,

Piety excites us to will to do good; upon the third, Knowledge makes us

discern the good we are to do, and the evil we are to fly; upon the

fourth, by Fortitude we take courage against all the difficulties which

occur in our enterprise; upon the fifth, by Counsel we make choice of

suitable means; upon the sixth, we unite our understanding to God to

behold and penetrate the features of his infinite beauty; and upon the

seventh, we join our wills to God, to taste and experience the

sweetness of his incomprehensible goodness; for upon the top of this

ladder, God bending towards us, gives us the kiss of love, and makes us

taste the sacred breasts of his sweetness, better than wine.

But, if after we have deliciously enjoyed these favours of love, we

desire to return to the earth, to gain our neighbour to the same

happiness;--from the first and highest step, where we have filled our

will with a most ardent zeal, and have perfumed our souls with the

perfumes of God's sovereign charity, we must descend to the second

step, where our understanding receives an incomparable light, and makes

provision of the most excellent considerations and maxims, to glorify

the divine beauty and goodness; thence we pass to the third, where, by

the gift of Counsel, we consider by what means we may instil the relish

and esteem of the divine sweetness into our neighbour's heart; upon the

fourth, we take heart, receiving a holy Fortitude, to surmount the

difficulties which might cross this design; upon the fifth, by the gift

of Knowledge, we begin to preach, exhorting souls to follow virtue and

fly vice; upon the sixth, we strive to emplant Piety in them, that

acknowledging God for their loving Father, they may obey him with a

filial fear; upon the last step, we urge them to fear the judgments of

God, so that mingling this fear of being damned with filial reverence,

they may more earnestly forsake the earth to ascend to heaven with us.

Charity, therefore, comprehends the seven Gifts, and is like to a fair

lily, which has six flowers whiter than snow, and in the midst the

beautiful little golden hammers of wisdom, which beat into our hearts

the taste and loving relish of the goodness of the Father our Creator,

of the mercy of the Son our Redeemer, and of the sweetness of the Holy

Ghost our Sanctifier. And I place thus this double fear upon the two

lowest steps, to reconcile all the translations with the holy and

sacred Vulgate edition: for if in the Hebrew, the word fear is twice

said, this is not without mystery, but to show that there is a gift of

filial fear, which is nothing else but the gift of piety, and a gift of

servile fear, which is the beginning of all the progress we make

towards the sovereign wisdom.

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CHAPTER XVI.

OF THE LOVING FEAR OF SPOUSES; A CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

Ah! my brother Jonathan, said David, thou wast amiable to me above the

love of women: [551] as though he had said, thou wast worthy of a

greater love than that of wives for their husbands. All excellent

things are rare. Imagine to yourself, Theotimus, a spouse of dove-like

heart and having the perfection of nuptial love. Her love is

incomparable, not only in excellence, but also in the great variety of

beautiful affections and qualities which accompany it; it is not only

chaste, but modest; it is strong, but gracious withal; it is violent

and yet tender; it is ardent yet respectful, noble yet fearful, bold

yet obedient, and all its fear is mingled with a delicious confidence.

Such truly is the fear of a soul endowed with the excellence of love;

for she has such assurance of the goodness of her spouse that she fears

not the losing of him, but she greatly fears that she will not enjoy

enough of his divine presence, and that some occasion may make him

absent himself, though only for a moment. She is quite confident that

she will never displease him, but she fears she may not love him as

much as love requires: her love is too noble to entertain even the

least suspicion of ever falling into disgrace with him, but still it is

so sensitive that it fears it may not be closely enough united to him;

yea, the soul sometimes arrives at such perfection that she no longer

fears she may not be closely enough united to him, her love assuring

her that she will be so for ever, but she fears that this union may not

be so pure, simple and attentive as her love would desire. Such is that

admirable lover, who would not love spiritual sweetnesses, pleasures,

virtues, consolations, lest she might be diverted, be it ever so

little, from her only love, which is the love she bears to her beloved;

protesting that it is himself, not his gifts, which she seeks, and

crying out to this effect:--Ah! show me, O thou whom my soul loveth,

where thou feedest, where thou liest in the midday, lest I begin to

wander after [552] the pleasures which are outside thee.

With this sacred fear of divine spouses were touched the great souls of

S. Paul, S. Francis, S. Catharine of Genoa, and others, who would not

admit any mixture in their loves, but endeavoured to make them so pure,

so simple, and so perfect, that neither consolations, nor the virtues

themselves, should find any place between their heart and God, so that

they might say: I live, not I, but Jesus Christ lives in me: my God is

all things to me: what is not my God is nothing to me; Jesus Christ is

my life: my love is crucified; and other such words of an ecstatic

heart.

Now the love of beginners or learners proceeds from true love, but from

a love which is as yet young, feeble and only beginning; filial fear

proceeds from a constant and solid love, already tending to perfection;

but the fear of spouses springs from the excellence and perfection of

love already quite possessed: and as to servile and mercenary fears,

they do not truly proceed from love, but ordinarily precede love, and

are its harbingers, as we have already said, and they are oftentimes

very profitable servants. You will see, Theotimus, an honourable lady

who, not willing to eat her bread idle, any more than she did whom

Solomon so much extolled, [553] will lay silk in goodly variety of

colours on fine white satin, which afterwards she will richly embellish

with gold and silver in suitable patterns: the work is wrought with the

needle, which she inserts wherever she would lay her silk, silver, or

gold; yet the needle is not put into the satin to be left there, but

only to draw in after it and make way for, the silk, silver, and gold:

so that when these are once laid upon their grounds, the needle is

drawn out and taken away. Even so the divine goodness, wishing to place

a great variety of virtues in man's soul, and afterwards to embellish

them with his sacred love, makes use of the needle of servile and

mercenary fear, with which our hearts are ordinarily first pricked. But

still this is not left there, but ever as the virtues are drawn into

and laid in the soul, mercenary and servile fear departs, according to

the word of the beloved disciple: Perfect charity casteth out fear.

[554] Yea, verily, Theotimus, for the fear of being damned and of

losing heaven is dreadful and full of anguish: and how can it then

stand with sacred love, which is all agreeable, all sweet?

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[551] 2 Kings i. 26.

[552] Cant. i. 6.

[553] Prov. xxxi. 27.

[554] 1 John iv. 18.

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CHAPTER XVII.

HOW SERVILE FEAR REMAINS TOGETHER WITH HOLY LOVE.

Although, however, the lady we spoke of will not leave her needle in

her work after it is finished, yet as long as there remains anything to

be done in it, if any other occurrence make her stop, she will leave

the needle sticking in the pink, the rose, or the pansy which she is

embroidering, so as to have it more ready when she returns to her work.

In like manner, Theotimus, while the Divine Providence is about the

embroidery of virtues and the work of divine love in our souls, there

is always a mercenary or servile fear left in them, till charity, being

come to perfection, takes out this pricking needle and puts it back, as

it were, in its cushion. In this life, therefore, wherein our charity

will never come to such perfection that it shall be exempt from peril,

fear is always necessary, and even while we thrill with joy by love, we

must tremble with apprehension by fear. Serve ye the Lord with fear,

and rejoice unto him with trembling. [555]

Our great father Abraham sent his servant Eliezer to choose a wife for

his only son Isaac: Eliezer went, and by Divine inspiration made choice

of the fair and chaste Rebecca, whom he took back with him. But this

wise maiden quitted Eliezer as soon as she met Isaac; and being

introduced into the tent of Sara, she remained his spouse for ever. God

often sends servile fear as another Eliezer (and Eliezer is

interpreted, help of God) to arrange the marriage between the soul and

sacred love. But though the soul comes under the conduct of fear, she

does not mean to espouse it; for, in fact, as soon as the soul meets

with love, she unites herself unto it, and quits fear.

Yet as Eliezer after his return remained in the house, in the service

of Isaac and Rebecca, so fear, having led us to holy love, remains

still with us, to serve both love and the loving soul as occasion

requires. For though the soul be just, yet is she oft set upon by

extreme temptations, and love, all courageous as it is, has enough to

do to sustain the assault, by reason of the disadvantage of the place

wherein it is, which is the heart of man, changeable and subject to the

mutiny of the passions. In that case, therefore, Theotimus, love

employs fear in the fight, making use of it to repulse the enemy. The

brave prince Jonathan, when going to attack the Philistines amidst the

obscurity of the night, would have his armour-bearer with him, and

those that he killed not, his armour-bearer killed [556] So love

wishing to carry out some bold enterprise, uses not only its own

motives, but also the motives of servile and mercenary fear; and the

temptations which love does not strike down are overthrown by the fear

of being damned. If a temptation to pride, avarice, or some voluptuous

pleasure attack me:--Ah! I will say, shall it be possible, that for

things so vain, my soul would quit the grace of her well-beloved? But

if this will not serve, love will call fear to its aid:--Ah! dost thou

not see, miserable heart, that if thou give way to this temptation the

horrible flames of hell await thee, and that thou losest the eternal

inheritance of heaven? A man makes use of anything in extreme

necessities, as the same Jonathan did, when passing the sharp rocks,

which were between him and the Philistines, he not only used his feet,

but went scrambling and creeping on hands and feet as best he could.

Even therefore as mariners who sail out with a fair wind and in fair

weather, do yet never forget the cables, anchors, and the other things

required in time of hazard and tempest, in like manner the servant of

God, though he enjoy the sweet repose of holy love, must never be

unprovided with the fear of God's judgments, to help himself therewith

amidst the storms and assaults of temptation. Or, again, as the skin of

an apple, which in itself is of small esteem, is yet very useful for

preserving the apple which it covers; so servile fear, which of its own

nature is of little worth in comparison with love, is yet very

serviceable for preserving it during the dangers of this mortal life.

And as he who gives a pomegranate gives it indeed for the seeds and

juice which are contained in its but yet gives also the skin as a

necessary accompaniment of it; so, although the Holy Ghost amongst his

sacred gifts bestows a loving fear upon the souls which are his, that

they may fear God in piety as their father and their spouse, yet does

he not fail to add mercenary and servile fear, as an accessary to the

other which is more excellent. So Joseph sending to his father many

loads of all the riches of Egypt, gave him not only the treasures, but

withal the asses that bore them.

Now although mercenary and servile fear is very necessary for this

mortal life, yet is it unworthy to have any part in the immortal, where

there will be an assurance void of fear, a peace without apprehension,

a repose free from anxiety. Yet the services which this servile and

mercenary fear shall have done to love will be there rewarded; so that

though these fears, as another Moses and another Aaron, enter not into

the land of promise, yet shall their posterity and works enter: and as

to the fear of children and the fear of spouses, they will hold their

rank and place, not to cause any distrust or trouble in the soul, but

to make her admire and reverence with submission the incomprehensible

Majesty of this omnipotent Father, and this Spouse of Glory. The law of

the Lord is unspotted, converting souls. . . . The fear of the Lord is

holy, enduring for ever and ever. [557]

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[555] Ps. i. 11.

[556] 1 Kings xiv. 1.

[557] Ps. xviii. 8, 10.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW LOVE MAKES USE OF NATURAL, SERVILE AND MERCENARY FEAR.

Lightning, thunder, thunderbolts, tempests, inundations, earthquakes,

and other such unforeseen accidents, excite even the most indevout

persons to fear God, and nature, which goes before reasoning in those

occurrences, drives the heart, the eyes, yea the very hands heavenwards

to invoke the assistance of the most holy Divinity, according to the

common sentiment of mankind, which is, says Titus Livius, that such as

serve the Almighty prosper, and such as contemn him are afflicted. In

the storm which imperilled Jonas, the mariners feared with a great

fear, and immediately each of them turned to his god. They were

ignorant, says S. Jerome, of the truth, yet they knew there was a

Providence, and believed it was by the judgment of heaven that they

were in this danger; as those of Malta, when they saw S. Paul, after

the shipwreck, attacked by the viper, believed that it was from the

divine vengeance. [558] And indeed thunder and lightning, tempests,

thunderbolts, are called by the Psalmist, Voices of the Lord; and he

says further, that they fulfil his word, [559] because they proclaim

his fear, and are as ministers of his justice. And again, desiring that

the divine Majesty should make his enemies tremble, he says: Send forth

lightning and thou shalt scatter them: shoot out thy arrows, and thou

shalt trouble them: [560] where he terms thunderbolts the arrows and

darts of God. And before the Psalmist, Samuel's good mother had already

sung, that even God's enemies would fear him, if he would thunder over

them from heaven. [561] Indeed Plato, in his Gorgias and elsewhere,

testifies that there was some sense of fear among the pagans, not only

concerning the chastisements which the sovereign justice of God

inflicts in this world, but also concerning the punishments which he

inflicts in the other life upon the souls of those who have incurable

sins. So deeply is the instinct of fearing the Divinity graven in man's

nature.

This fear, however, when felt after the manner of a first movement, or

natural feeling, is neither to be praised nor blamed in us, since it

proceeds not from our free-will. Yet it is an effect from a very good

cause, and a cause of a very good effect; for it comes from the natural

knowledge which God has given us of his Providence, and gives us to

understand how closely we depend on the sovereign omnipotence, moving

us to implore his aid; and when this feeling is found in a faithful

soul, it much advances her in goodness. Christians (amidst the dread

which thunder, tempests, and other natural dangers cause in them)

invoke the sacred names of Jesus and of Mary, make the sign of the

Cross, prostrate themselves before God, and make many good acts of

faith, hope and religion. The glorious saint Thomas Aquinas, being

naturally subject to terror when it thundered, was accustomed to say,

as an ejaculatory prayer, the divine words which the church so much

esteems: The Word was made flesh. Upon this fear, then, divine love

frequently makes acts of complacency and benevolence: I will praise

thee, for thou art fearfully magnfied. [562] Let every one fear thee, O

Lord! O ye kings understand: receive instruction, you that judge the

earth. Serve ye the Lord with fear: and rejoice unto him with

trembling. [563]

But there is another fear, taking its origin from faith, which teaches

us that after this mortal life there are punishments fear fully

eternal, or eternally to be feared, prepared for such as in this world

have offended the Divine Majesty and die without being reconciled to

him; that at the hour of death the soul shall be judged by a particular

judgment; and that at the end of the world all shall rise and appear

together to be judged again in the universal judgment. For these

Christian truths, Theotimus, strike with an extreme dread the heart

that deeply ponders them. And indeed how could one represent unto

himself those eternal horrors without shuddering and trembling with

apprehension? Now when these sentiments of fear take such root in our

souls that they drive and banish thence the affection and will to sin,

as the sacred Council of Trent speaks, they are certainly very

wholesome. We have conceived of thy fear, O Lord, and have brought

forth the spirit of salvation, is said in Isaias. [564] That is, thy

wrathful face terrified us, and made us conceive and bring forth the

spirit of penance, which is the spirit of salvation; so did the

Psalmist say: There is no peace for my bones, because of my sins, yea,

they tremble, because of thy wrath. [565]

Our Saviour, who came to establish the law of love amongst us, ceases

not to inculcate this fear: Fear him, he says, that can destroy both

soul and body into hell. [566] The Ninivites did penance upon the

threat of their destruction and damnation, and their repentance was

agreeable to God; and, in a word, this fear is comprised amongst the

gifts of the Holy Ghost, as many ancient Fathers have noted.

But if fear does not exclude the will of sinning and affection for sin,

it is certainly evil, and like to that of the devils, who often cease

to do harm for fear of being tormented by exorcisms, without ceasing to

desire and will evil, which is their meditation for ever; or it is like

to that of the miserable galley-slave, who would like to tear out his

overseer's heart, though he dares not stir from the oar for fear of

being lashed; or like to the fear of that great heresiarch of the last

century, [567] who confessed that he hated a God who punished the

wicked. Truly he who loves sin, and would willingly commit it, in spite

of the will of God, though he will not commit it simply because he

fears to be damned, has a horrible and detestable fear: for though he

has not the will to execute the sin, yet he has the execution of it in

his will, since he would do it if fear held him not back, and since it

is as it were by force that he does not put his will into effect.

To this fear we may add another, less malicious indeed yet equally

useless: such as that of the judge Felix, who, hearing God's judgments

spoken of, was terrified; [568] yet he did not for all that give up his

avarice; and that of Baltassar, who, seeing that miraculous hand which

wrote his condemnation upon the wall, was so struck with dread that his

countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him: and the joints of

his loins were loosed, and his knees struck one against the other:

[569] and yet he did not do penance. Now to what purpose do we fear

evil, if our fear does not make us resolve to avoid it?

The fear, then, of those who as slaves observe the law of God to avoid

hell, is very good; but much more noble and desirable is the fear of

mercenary Christians, who, as hirelings, faithfully labour, yet not

principally for any love they bear their masters but to be paid the

wages promised them. O! if the eye could see, if the ear could hear, or

if it could enter into the heart of man what God hath prepared for

those that serve him--Ah! what a dread would one have of violating

God's commandments, for fear of losing those immortal rewards! what

tears would be shed, what groans would be uttered, when they were lost

by sin! Yet this fear would be blameworthy if it contained in it the

exclusion of holy love; for he who should say: I will not serve God for

any love I intend to have for him, but only to obtain the rewards he

promises,--would commit blasphemy, preferring the reward to the master,

the benefit to the benefactor, the inheritance to the father, and his

own profit to God Almighty, as we have more amply shown in the second

Book.

But, finally, when we are afraid of offending God not to avoid the

pains of hell or the loss of heaven, but only because God being our

good Father we owe him honour, respect, obedience, then our fear is

filial, because a good child does not obey his father on account of the

power he has to punish his disobedience, or because he might disinherit

him, but purely because he is his father; in such sort that though his

father might be old, powerless, and poor, he would not serve him with

less diligence, but rather, like the bird of filial piety, would assist

him with the more care and affection. So Joseph seeing that good man

Jacob his father, old, in want, and brought under his son's government,

ceased not to honour, serve and reverence him with a tenderness more

than filial, and which was so great that his brothers having observed

it, considered that it would even operate after the father's death, and

therefore worked on it to obtain pardon from him, saying: Your father

commanded us before he died, that we should say thus much to thee from

him: I beseech thee to forget the wickedness of thy brethren, and the

sin and malice they practised against thee: we also pray thee, to

forgive the servants of the God of thy father this wickedness. And when

Joseph heard this, he wept, [570] so readily did his filial heart melt

when his deceased father's wishes and will were represented to him.

Those, therefore, fear God with a filial affection who fear to

displease him purely and simply because he is their most sweet, most

benign and most amiable Father.

At the same time, when it happens that this filial fear is joined,

mingled and tempered with the servile fear of eternal damnation, or

with the mercenary fear of losing heaven, it ceases not to be agreeable

to God, and is called a beginning fear, that is a fear of such as are

beginners and learners in the exercises of divine love. For as young

boys when they first begin to ride, feeling their horse curvet a

little, not only cleave close to him with their knees, but also catch

hard hold of the saddle with their hands, but after they have had a

little more practice simply press their saddles close;--even so,

novices and apprentices in God's service, finding themselves in

desperate straits amid the assaults which the enemy delivers at the

beginning, not only make use of filial but also of mercenary and

servile fear, and hold themselves on as they can, that they may not

fall from their design.

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[558] Acts xxviii. 4.

[559] Ps. cxlviii. 8.

[560] Ps. cxliii.

[561] 1 Kings ii. 10.

[562] Ps. cxxxviii. 14.

[563] Ps. ii. 10, 11.

[564] xxvi. 18, according to the Hebrew [Tr.]

[565] Ps. xxxvii. 4

[566] Matt. x. 28.

[567] Luther [Tr.]

[568] Acts xxiv. 25.

[569] Dan. v. 6.

[570] Gen. l. 17.

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CHAPTER XIX.

HOW SACRED LOVE CONTAINS THE TWELVE FRUITS OF THE HOLY GHOST, TOGETHER

WITH THE EIGHT BEATITUDES OF THE GOSPEL.

The glorious S. Paul speaks thus: Now the fruit of the Spirit is

charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity,

mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity. [571] But mark,

Theotimus, how this holy Apostle, counting these twelve fruits of the

Holy Ghost, reckons them as only one fruit; for he does not say the

fruits of the spirit are charity, joy, but the fruit of the spirit is

charity, joy. Now the mystery of this manner of speech is this. The

charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost who is

given to us. [572] charity is truly the only fruit of the Holy Ghost,

but because this one fruit has an infinity of excellent properties, the

Apostle, who wishes to mention some of them by way of example, speaks

of this one fruit as of many, because of the multitude of properties

which it contains in its unity, and conversely speaks of all these

fruits as of one only, by reason of the unity in which is comprised

this variety. So he who should say that the fruit of the vine is

grapes, must, wine, brandy, the drink that rejoices the heart of man,

the beverage that comforts the stomach:--would not mean that they were

fruits of different species, but only that, although it was only one

fruit, yet it had many different properties, according as it was

differently used.

The Apostle, then, simply means to say that the fruit of the Holy Ghost

is charity; which is joyous, peaceable, patient, benign, good,

long-suffering, mild, faithful, modest, continent, chaste; that is to

say, that divine love gives us an inward joy and consolation together

with great peace of heart, which in adversity is preserved by patience,

and which makes us benign and gracious in succouring our neighbour by a

cordial goodness towards him; a goodness which is not variable, but

constant and persevering, and which gives us a noble, long-suffering

heart, by means of which we become mild, affable and condescending to

all, we support their humours and imperfections, we keep perfectly

faithful towards them, testifying a simplicity accompanied with

confidence as well in our words as in our actions, we live modestly and

humbly, cutting off all superfluities and irregularities in meat,

drink, apparel, bed, games, pastimes and other such desires and

pleasures, by a holy continency, repressing, especially, the

inclinations and rebellions of the flesh by a vigilant chastity; so

that our whole man may come to be engaged in holy loving, as well

interiorly by joy, peace, patience, longanimity, goodness and fidelity,

as exteriorly by benignity, mildness, modesty, continency and chastity.

Now charity is called a fruit inasmuch as it delights us, and inasmuch

as we enjoy its delicious sweetness, the sweetness of a true apple of

paradise, gathered from the tree of life, which is the Holy Spirit,

grafted on our human spirits and dwelling in us by his infinite mercy.

But when we not only rejoice in this heavenly love and enjoy its

delicious sweetness, but also place all our glory therein as in the

crown of our honour, then it is not only a fruit, delightful to our

palate, but it is also a most desirable beatitude and felicity, not

only because it assures to us the felicity of the next life, but also

because even in this life it enriches us with a contentment of

inestimable value, a contentment which is so strong that all the waters

of tribulation and the floods of persecution cannot extinguish it. Yea,

it is not only not extinguished, but it waxes rich amidst poverty, it

is glorified by abjections and humiliations, it rejoices in tears, it

gains strength by being forsaken of justice and deprived of the help

thereof when it implores and no one will grant; compassion and

commiseration recreate it, when it is surrounded by the miserable and

suffering; it delights in renouncing all sorts of sensual and earthly

delights to obtain purity and cleanness of heart; it places its valour

in stilling wars, jarrings and dissensions, and in spurning temporal

grandeurs and reputations; it grows strong by enduring all sorts of

sufferings, and holds that its true life consists in dying for the

well-beloved.

So that in a word, Theotimus, most holy charity is a virtue, a gift, a

fruit and a beatitude. As being a virtue, it makes us obedient to the

exterior inspirations which God gives us by his commandments and

counsels, in the execution of which we practise all virtues; whence

love is the virtue of all virtues. As being a gift, charity makes us

docile and tractable to interior inspirations, which are, as it were,

God's secret commandments and counsels, in the execution of which the

seven gifts of the Holy Ghost are employed, so that charity is the gift

of gifts. As being a fruit, it gives us an extreme relish and pleasure

in the practice of the devout life, which is felt in the twelve fruits

of the Holy Ghost, and therefore it is the fruit of fruits. As being a

beatitude, it makes us repute the affronts, calumnies, revilings and

insults which the world heaps upon us as the greatest of favours and a

singular honour; and withal makes us forsake, renounce and reject all

other glory save that which comes from the well-beloved Crucified, for

which glory we glory in the abjection, abnegation and annihilation of

ourselves, desiring no other marks of majesty than the thorn-crown of

the Crucified, the sceptre of His reed, the robe of scorn which was put

upon Him, and the throne of His cross, upon which sacred lovers have

more content, joy, glory and felicity than ever Solomon had on his

throne of ivory.

Thus love is oftentimes represented by the pomegranate, which, as it

takes its properties from the pomegranate-tree, may be said to be the

virtue of this tree; so again it seems to be its gift, which it offers

to man by love; and it is its fruit, since it is eaten to please man's

taste; and finally it is, so to speak, its glory and beatitude, since

it bears the crown and diadem.

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[571] Gal. v. 22.

[572] Rom. v. 5.

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CHAPTER XX.

HOW DIVINE LOVE MAKES USE OF ALL THE PASSIONS AND AFFECTIONS OF THE

SOUL, AND REDUCES THEM TO ITS OBEDIENCE.

Love is the life of our heart, and as the weights give movement to all

the movable parts of a clock, so love gives to the soul all the

movements it has. All our affections follow our love, and according to

it we desire, we rejoice, we hope, we despair, we fear, we take heart,

we hate, we avoid things, we grieve, we get angry, we triumph. Do not

we see that men who have given up their heart as a prey to the base and

abject love of women have no desires but according to this love, take

no pleasure but in it, neither hope nor despair but on this account,

neither dread nor undertake anything but for it, are neither disgusted

nor fly from anything save what diverts them from it, are only troubled

at what deprives them of it, are never angry but from jealousy, never

glory but in this infamy. The like may be said of those who love riches

or are ambitious of honours; for they become slaves to that which they

love, and have neither heart in their breasts, nor soul in their

hearts, nor affections in their souls, save only for that.

When therefore divine love reigns in our hearts, it royally brings to

its empire all the other loves of the will, and consequently all its

affections, because they naturally follow love; this done, it tames

sensual love, and bringing it to obedience, brings also after it all

the sensual passions. For, in a word, this sacred love is the sovereign

water, of which our Saviour said: He that shall drink of the water that

I will give him, shall not thirst for ever. [573] No truly, Theotimus,

he that has love in any abundance, he shall neither have desire, fear,

hope, courage, nor joy but for God, and all his movements shall be at

rest in this one celestial love.

Divine love and self-love are in our hearts as Jacob and Esau in the

womb of Rebecca: they have a very great antipathy and opposition to one

another, and continually struggle in the heart; whence the poor soul

cries out: Alas! wretched that I am, who will deliver me from the body

of this death, that the sole love of my God may peaceably reign in me?

However, we must take courage, putting our trust in our Saviour's word,

who, commanding us to fight, by his command promises victory to his

love; and he seems to say to the soul that which he caused to be said

to Rebecca: Two nations are in thy womb, and two people shall be

divided out of thy womb, and one people shall overcome the other, and

the elder shall serve the younger. [574] For as Rebecca had only two

children in her womb, but because two peoples were to descend from

these was said to have two nations in her womb, so the soul having two

loves in her heart, has consequently two great troops of motions,

affections and passions; and as the two children of Rebecca by the

contrariety of their movements made her suffer great convulsions and

pains, so the two loves of our soul cause great travails to our heart.

And as it was said of her two children that the elder should serve the

younger, so has it been ordained that of these two loves of our heart

the sensual shall serve the spiritual, that is, self-love shall serve

the love of God.

But when was it that the elder of those peoples which were in Rebecca's

womb served the younger? Surely it was only when David overcame the

Idumeans in war, and Solomon ruled over them in peace. Oh! when

therefore shall it be that sensual love shall serve Divine love? It

shall then be, Theotimus, when armed love, having become zeal, shall by

mortification subject our passions; and far better then, when in heaven

above, beatified love shall possess our whole soul in peace.

Now the method by which Divine love is to subject the sensual appetite

is like to that which Jacob used when, for a good presage and beginning

of what was afterwards to come to pass, he at the birth of Esau held

him by the foot, as it were to seize Esau's right, supplant him and

keep him down, or, as it were, to keep him tied up after the manner of

a bird of prey, such as Esau was, being a hunter and a terrible man.

For so holy love perceiving some passion or natural affection rising in

us, must presently take it by the foot and bring it to its service. But

what is meant by taking by the foot? To bind and reduce it to the

service of God. Do you not see how Moses transformed the serpent into a

rod, simply taking it by the tail? Even so, when we give a good end to

our passions they turn into virtues.

But what method are we then to observe in order to bring our affections

and passions into the service of Divine love. The Methodic physicians

have always this aphorism in their mouths,--that contraries are cured

by their contraries; the Spagyrists have another famous sentence

opposed to this--that likes are cured by their likes. Howsoever it be,

we know that two things make the light of the stars disappear,--the

obscurity of the mists of night, and the light of the sun which is

stronger than theirs; and in like manner we fight against passions,

either by opposing to them contrary passions, or by opposing stronger

affections of their own kind. If some vain hope present itself unto me,

my way of resistance may be to oppose to it this just discouragement: O

foolish man! upon what foundation do you build this hope? Do you not

see that this great man in whom you trust is as near to his grave as

thyself? Do you not know the instability, weakness and imbecillity of

the spirit of man? Today this heart from which you expect something is

thine, tomorrow another will carry it away for himself: on what then is

this hope grounded? I can also resist this hope by opposing to it a

more solid one. Hope in God, O my soul! for it is he who delivers thy

feet out of the snare; no man ever hoped in him, and was confounded:

fix thy designs upon eternal and imperishable things. In like manner

one may combat the desire of riches and temporal delights, either by

the contempt they merit or by the desire of immortal ones; and by this

means sensual and earthly love will be destroyed by heavenly love,

either as fire is extinguished by water on account of the contrary

qualities of water, or as it is extinguished by fire from heaven, on

account of the stronger and overpowering qualities of this.

Our Saviour makes use of both these methods in his spiritual cures. He

cures his disciples of worldly fear by imprinting in their hearts a

higher fear: Fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to

kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body

into hell. [575] When he would another time cure them of a lower joy,

he assigned them a nobler one: Rejoice not, said he, in this, that

spirits are subject unto you: but rejoice in this, that your names are

written in heaven: [576] and he himself casts out joy by grief: Woe to

you that now laugh: for you shall mourn and weep. [577] Thus does

Divine love supplant and bring into subjection the affections and

passions, turning them from the end to which self-love would sway them,

and applying them to its spiritual intentions. And as the rainbow

touching the herb aspalathus deprives it of its own smell and gives it

another far more excellent, so sacred love touching our passions takes

from them their earthly end, and bestows a heavenly one in its place.

The appetite for food is made very spiritual if before gratifying it we

give it the motive of love:--Ah! no, Lord! it is not to content this

wretched stomach, nor to allay this appetite that I go to table, but

according to thy Providence to sustain this body which thou hast given

me subject to this misery: yes, Lord! because it hath so pleased thee.

If I hope for a friend's assistance can I not say: O Lord, thou hast so

appointed our life, that we should have to take help, comfort and

consolation from one another; and because so it pleases thee, I will

use this or that man whose friendship thou hast given me to this end.

Is there some just occasion for fear? It is thy will, O Lord, that I

should fear, in order that I may use fit means to avoid this trouble; I

will do so, O Lord, since such is thy good pleasure. If the fear be

excessive: Ah! O God, my eternal Father! what is it that thy children,

or the chickens which live under thy wings can fear? so then, I will

take the means necessary to avoid the evil which I fear, but that

done,--Lord, I am thine, save thou me, if it be thy pleasure, and what

may befall me I will accept, because such will be thy good pleasure. O

holy and sacred alchemy! O heavenly projection-powder! by which all the

metals of our passions, affections and actions are converted into the

most pure gold of heavenly love.

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[573] John iv. 13.

[574] Gen. xxv. 23.

[575] Matt. x. 28.

[576] Luke x. 20.

[577] Luke vi. 25.

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CHAPTER XXI.

THAT SADNESS IS ALMOST ALWAYS USELESS, YEA CONTRARY TO THE SERVICE OF

HOLY LOVE.

One cannot graft an oak upon a pear tree, of so contrary a humour are

those two trees: nor can anger or despair be grafted on charity, at

least it would be very difficult. As for anger, we have seen this in

the discourse upon zeal; as for despair, unless it be reduced to the

legitimate distrust of ourselves, or to a sense of the vanity, weakness

and inconstancy of worldly favours, helps and promises, I see not what

service Divine love can draw from it.

And as for sadness, how can it be profitable to holy charity, seeing

that joy is ranked amongst the fruits of the Holy Ghost, coming next to

charity? Still, the great apostle says: The sorrow that is according to

God worketh penance unto salvation which is lasting: but the sorrow of

the world worketh death. [578] There is then a sorrow or sadness

according to God, which is employed either by sinners in penance, or by

the good in compassion for the temporal miseries of their neighbours,

or by the perfect in deploring, bemoaning and condoling the spiritual

calamities of souls. For David, S. Peter, Magdalen, wept for their

sins; Agar wept when she saw her son almost dead of thirst; Jeremias

over the ruin of Jerusalem; Our Saviour over the Jews; and his great

Apostle sighing says these words: Many walk of whom I have told you

often (and now tell you weeping) that they are enemies of the cross of

Christ. [579]

There is then also a sadness of this world, which likewise proceeds

from three causes. For--1�. It comes sometimes from the infernal enemy,

who by a thousand sad, melancholy and disturbing suggestions obscures

the understanding, weakens the will, and troubles the whole soul: and

as a thick mist fills the head and breast with rheum, and by this means

makes respiration difficult, and greatly incommodes the traveller; so

the evil spirit, filling man's mind with sad thoughts, deprives it of

facility in aspiring to God, and possesses it with an extreme tedium

and discouragement, in order to bring it to despair and perdition. They

say there is a fish called the sea-toad, surnamed the sea-devil, which

stirring and spreading the mud troubles the water round about it so as

to hide itself therein as in an ambush, from whence, as soon as it

perceives poor little fishes, it darts upon them, kills and devours

them: whence perhaps has come the common expression--fishing in

troubled waters. Now it is the same with the devil of hell as with the

devil of the sea; for he makes his ambush in sadness, and then, having

troubled the soul with a multitude of sad thoughts cast hither and

thither in the understanding, he makes a charge upon the affections,

bearing them down with distrust, jealousies, aversions, envies,

superfluous apprehensions of past sins, adding withal a number of vain,

sour and melancholy subtleties of the imagination, that all reasons and

consolations may be rejected.

2�. Sadness sometimes also proceeds from one's natural disposition,

when the melancholy humour predominates in us: and this is not vicious

in itself, yet our enemy makes great use of it to weave and prepare a

thousand temptations in our souls. For as spiders scarcely ever spin

their webs save when the weather is dull and the sky cloudy; so this

malign spirit never finds as much facility in spreading the nets of his

suggestions in sweet, kindly and bright souls, as he has with the

gloomy, sad and melancholy; for these he easily disturbs with

vexations, suspicions, hatreds, murmurings, censures, envies, sloth and

spiritual numbness.

3�. Lastly, there is a sadness which the various accidents of life

bring upon us. What manner of joy shall be to me, said Tobias, who sit

in darkness, and see not the light of heaven [580] Thus was Jacob sad

on the news of the death of his Joseph, and David for that of his

Absalom. Now this sadness is common to the good and the bad; but to the

good it is moderated by acquiescence in and resignation to the will of

God: as we see in Tobias, who gave thanks to the Divine Majesty for all

the adversities which came upon him, and in Job, who blessed the name

of the Lord for them, and in Daniel, who turned his griefs into songs

of joy. As to worldlings, on the contrary, this sadness is an ordinary

thing with them, and spreads out into regrets, despair, and deadness of

soul: for they are like apes and monkeys, which are always sullen, sad

and peevish at the waning of the moon, as, on the contrary, at the new

moon, they leap, dance and play their apish tricks. The worldling is

out of temper, uncivil, bitter and gloomy when temporal prosperity

fails him; and in abundance he is almost always boastful, foolishly

elated and insolent.

Indeed the sadness of true penitence is not so much to be named sadness

as displeasure, or the sense and detestation of evil; a sadness which

is never troubled nor vexed; a sadness which does not dull the spirit,

but makes it active, ready and diligent; a sadness which does not weigh

the heart down, but raises it by prayer and hope, and causes in it the

movements of the fervour of devotion; a sadness which in the heaviest

of its bitternesses ever produces the sweetness of an incomparable

consolation, according to the precept of the great S. Augustine: "Let

the penitent sorrow always, yet always rejoice for his sorrow." "The

sadness," says Cassian, "which works solid penitence, and that

desirable repentance of which one never repents, is obedient, affable,

humble, mild, sweet, patient,--as being a child and scion of charity:

so that spreading over every pain of body and contrition of spirit, and

being in a certain way joyous, courageous, and strengthened by the hope

of doing better, it retains all the sweetness of gentleness and

longanimity, having in itself the Fruits of the Holy Spirit, which the

holy Apostle recounts: Now the Fruits of the Spirit are charity, joy,

peace, longanimity, goodness, benignity, faith, mildness, continency."

Such is true penitence, and such is right sadness, which in good sooth

is not really sad or melancholy, but only attentive and earnest to

detest, reject and hinder the evil of sin for past and for future. And

indeed we often see repentances which are very eager, troubled,

impatient, wet-eyed, bitter, given to groans, very crabbed and

melancholy, which at last turn out fruitless and lack all true

amendment, because they do not proceed from the true motives of the

virtue of penitence, but from selfish and natural love.

The sorrow of the world worketh death, [581] says the Apostle; we must,

therefore, Theotimus, carefully avoid and banish it as much as we can.

If it be from nature, we must repulse it by contradicting its

movements, turning it aside by the practices suitable to that purpose,

and using the remedies and way of life which physicians themselves may

judge best. If it come from temptation, we must clearly open our mind

to our spiritual father, who, will prescribe for us the method of

overcoming it, according as we have said in Part IV. of the

Introduction to the Devout Life. If it arise from circumstances, we

will have recourse to the teaching of Book VIII., in order to see how

grateful tribulations are to the children of God, and how the greatness

of our hopes for eternal life ought to make all the passing events of

the temporal almost unworthy of thinking about.

At last, in all the sadness which may come upon us, we must employ the

authority of the superior will to do all that should be done in favour

of divine love. There are indeed actions which so depend upon the

corporal disposition and constitution that we have not the power to do

them just as we please: for the melancholy-disposed cannot keep their

eyes, or their words, or their faces, in the same good grace and

sweetness as they would do if they were relieved from this bad humour;

but they are quite able, though without this good grace, to say

gracious, kind, and civil words, and, in spite of inclination, to do

what reason requires as to words and works of charity, gentleness and

condescension. We may be excused for not being always bright, for one

is not master of cheerfulness to have it when one will; but we are not

excusable for not being always gracious, yielding and considerate; for

this is always in the power of our will, and we have only to determine

to keep down the contrary humour and inclination.

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[578] 2 Cor. vii. 10.

[579] Phil. iii. 18.

[580] Tob. v. 12.

[581] 2 Cor. vii. 10.

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BOOK XII.

CONTAINING CERTAIN COUNSELS FOR THE PROGRESS OF THE SOUL IN HOLY LOVE.

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CHAPTER I.

THAT OUR PROGRESS IN HOLY LOVE DOES NOT DEPEND ON OUR NATURAL

TEMPERAMENT.

A great religious of our age has written that our natural temperament

much conduces to contemplative love, and that such as are of an

affectionate and loving nature are best adapted for it. Now I suppose

he means not that sacred love is distributed to men or angels according

to, or much less in virtue of, natural conditions; nor would he say

that the distribution of divine love is made to men according to their

natural qualities and abilities: for this were to belie the Scripture,

and to violate the ecclesiastical canon, by which the Pelagians were

declared heretics.

For my part, I speak in this treatise of the supernatural love which

God out of his goodness pours into our hearts, and whose residence is

in the supreme point of the spirit; a point which is above all the rest

of the soul, and independent of all natural disposition. And withal,

though souls inclined to love have on the one hand a certain propensity

which makes them more ready to desire to love God, they are, on the

other hand, so subject to set their affections upon lovable creatures,

that their propensity puts them in as great danger of being diverted

from the purity of sacred love by a mixture of other loves, as they

have facility in wishing to love God; for the danger of loving amiss is

attached to the facility of loving.

It is true that souls of this kind, being once well purified from the

love of creatures, work wonders in holy loving, as love finds a great

facility in diffusing itself throughout all the faculties of the heart:

and thence proceeds a most delightful sweetness, which appears not in

those whose souls are peevish, harsh, melancholy and churlish.

Nevertheless, if two persons, the one of whom is loving and sweet by

nature, the other harsh and sour, have an equal charity, they will love

God equally, but not alike. The heart naturally sweet will love more

easily, more amiably, more sweetly, though not more solidly nor more

perfectly; yea, the love which shall spring amongst the thorns and

repugnances of a harsh and dry nature shall be the more noble and

glorious, as the other shall be more delightsome and lovely.

It imports not much then, whether one have a natural inclination to

love, when it is a question of a love which is supernatural and

exercised supernaturally. Only this, Theotimus, I would gladly cry out

to all men: O mortals, if you have hearts disposed for love, why do you

not devote yourselves to celestial and divine love? But if you be hard

and sour-tempered--since you are wanting in natural love, why do you

not aspire to supernatural love, which shall be lovingly bestowed upon

you by him who calls you to his so holy love?

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CHAPTER II.

THAT WE ARE TO HAVE A CONTINUAL DESIRE TO LOVE.

Lay up treasures in heaven. [582] One treasure is not enough for the

pleasure of this divine, lover, but he desires that we should have so

much treasure that our treasure may be composed of many treasures; that

is to say, Theotimus, that we are to have an insatiable desire of

loving God, adding continually love upon love. What is it that so

strongly urges the bees to increase their honey but the love they bear

to it? O heart of my soul, created to love the infinite good, what love

canst thou desire but this love, which is the most to be desired of all

loves! Ah! O soul of my heart, what desire canst thou love but the most

lovely of all desires! O love of sacred desires! O desires of sacred

love! Oh! how have I coveted to long for thy perfections. [583]

The disgusted sick man has no appetite for eating, yet has he an

appetite to have an appetite; he desires no meat, but he desires to

desire it. Theotimus, to know whether we love God above all things is

not in our power, unless God himself reveal it unto us: yet we may

easily know whether we desire to love him; and perceiving the desire of

holy love in us, we know that we begin to love. It is our sensual and

animal part which covets to eat, but it is our reasonable part which

desires this appetite; and because the sensual part does not always

obey the reasonable part, it frequently happens that we desire appetite

and cannot have it. But the desire of loving and love depend upon the

same will: wherefore as soon as we have framed the true desire of

loving, we begin to have some love; and ever as this desire grows, love

also increases. He who desires love ardently shall shortly love with

ardour. Ah! who will give us the grace, Theotimus, that we may burn

with this desire, which is the desire of the poor, and the preparation

of their heart, which God willingly hears. [584] He who has no

assurance of loving God is a poor man, and if he desire to love him he

is a beggar, but a beggar with the blessed beggary of which Our Saviour

has said: Blessed are the beggars of spirit; for theirs is the kingdom

of heaven. [585]

Such a one was S. Augustine, when he cried out: "O to love! O to run! O

to die to self! O to get to God!" Such S. Francis, saying: "Let me die

of thy love, O thou friend of my heart, who hast deigned to die for my

love." Such S. Catharine of Genoa, and the Blessed Mother (S.) Teresa

when, panting as the hart pants, and dying with the thirst of divine

love, they sighed out this word: Ah Lord! give me this water. [586]

Temporal covetousness, by which we greedily desire earthly treasures,

is the root of all evil; but spiritual avarice, whereby one sighs

incessantly after the pure gold of Divine love, is the root of all

good. He who truly desires love seeks it truly; and he who truly seeks

it, truly finds it; and he who has truly found it has found the

fountain of life, whence he shall draw salvation from the Lord. [587]

Let us cry, night and day, Theotimus: Come, O Holy Spirit! fill the

hearts of thy faithful, and kindle in them the fire of thy love. O

heavenly love, when wilt thou fill my soul?

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[582] Matt. vi. 20.

[583] Ps. cxviii. 20.

[584] Ps. ix. 38.

[585] Matt. v. 3. From the Greek [Tr.]

[586] John iv. 15.

[587] Prov. viii. 35.

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CHAPTER III.

THAT TO HAVE THE DESIRE OF SACRED LOVE WE ARE TO CUT OFF ALL OTHER

DESIRES.

Why do hounds, think you, Theotimus, more ordinarily lose the scent or

strain of their quarry in the spring-time than at other times? It is,

as hunters and philosophers say, because the grass and flowers are then

in their vigour, so that the variety of smells which they send out so

fills the hounds' sense of smelling that they can neither take nor

follow the scent of their game, among so many scents which the earth

exhales. In sooth those souls that ever abound in desires, designs and

projects, never desire holy celestial love as they ought, nor can

perceive the delightful strain and scent of the divine beloved, who is

compared to the roe, and to the little fawn of the doe. [588]

Lilies have no season, but flower soon or late, as they are deeper or

less deep set in the ground: for if they be thrust three fingers only

into the earth they will presently blossom, but if they be put six or

nine, they come up proportionately later. If the heart that aims after

Divine love be deeply engaged in terrene and temporal affairs, it will

bud late and with difficulty; but if it have only so much to do with

the world as its condition requires, you shall see it bloom timely in

love, and send out a delicious odour.

For this cause the Saints betook themselves to deserts, that being

freed from worldly cares they might more ardently apply to heavenly

love. For this the spouse shut one of her eyes, [589] to the end that

she might keep the sight of the other alone more fixedly, and thereby

take better aim at the very midst of her beloved's heart, which she

desires to wound with love. And for this same reason she keeps her hair

so plaited and gathered up in a tress that she seems to have one only

hair which she makes use of as a chain, to bind and bear away her

spouse's heart, whom she makes a slave to her love.

They who desire for good and all to love God, shut up their

understanding from discoursing of worldly things, to employ it more

earnestly in the meditation of divine things, and gather up all their

pretensions under the sole intention which they have of loving only

God. Whosoever desires something which he desires not for God that much

less desires God.

A religious man demanded of the Blessed Giles what he could do most

grateful to God; and he answered him by singing: "One to one, one to

one;" that is, one only soul to one only God. So many desires and loves

in a heart are like many children at one breast, who, as they cannot

all suck at once, struggle each one for his turn, so that at last the

fount dries up. He who aspires to heavenly love, must sedulously

reserve for it his leisure, his spirit and his affections.

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[588] Cant. ii. 9.

[589] Cant. iv. 9.

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CHAPTER IV.

THAT OUR LAWFUL OCCUPATIONS DO NOT HINDER US FROM PRACTICISING DIVINE

LOVE.

Curiosity, ambition, disquiet, the not adverting to, or not

considering, the end for which we are in this world, are the causes why

we have a thousand times more hindrance than business, more worries

than work, more occupation than profit: and these are the

embarrassments, Theotimus, that is, the silly, vain and superfluous

undertakings with which we charge ourselves, that turn us from the love

of God, and not the true and lawful exercises of our vocations. David,

and, after him, S. Louis, in the press of the perils, toils and

travails which they endured, as well in peace as in war, did not cease

to sing in truth: What have I in heaven, and besides thee what do I

desire upon earth? [590] S. Bernard lost none of the progress which he

desired to make in this holy love, though he were in the courts and

armies of great princes, where he laboured to bring matters of state to

the service of God's glory; he changed his habitation, but he changed

not his heart, nor did his heart change its love, nor his love its

object; and, to speak his own language, these changes were made in him

but not of him, since although his employments were very different, yet

he was indifferent to all employment, and different from them all, not

receiving the colour of his affairs and conversations, as the chameleon

does that of the places where it is, but remaining ever wholly united

to God, ever white in purity, ever red with charity, and ever full of

humility. I am not ignorant, Theotimus, what the wise man's counsel is:

He ever flies the court and legal strife

Who seeks to sow the seeds of holy life

Rarely do camps effect the soul's increase,

Virtue and faith are daughters unto peace.

And the Israelites had good reason to excuse themselves to the

Babylonians, who urged them to sing the sacred canticles of Sion: How

shall we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land? [591] But do you

not also mark that those poor people were not only among the

Babylonians but were also their captives. Whoever is a slave to courtly

favours, the prizes of the law, the honours of war,--Alas! all is over

with him, he cannot sing the hymn of heavenly love. But he who is only

at court, in war, at the tribunals, by duty--God helps him, and

heavenly sweetness is as an epithem on his heart, to preserve him from

the plague which reigns in those places.

While the plague afflicted the Milanese, S. Charles never made any

difficulty in frequenting the houses and touching the persons that were

infected. Yet, Theotimus, he only frequented and touched them, so far

forth as the necessity of God's work required, nor would he for the

world have thrust himself into danger without true necessity, lest he

should commit the sin of tempting God. So that he was never touched

with any infection, God's Providence preserving him who had so pure a

confidence in it, that it had no mixture either of fear or rashness. In

like manner God takes care of those who go not to the court, to the

bar, to war, except by the necessity of their duty; and in that case a

man is neither to be so scrupulous as to abandon good and lawful

affairs by not going, nor so overweening and presumptuous as to go

thither or stay there without the express necessity of duty and

affairs.

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[590] Ps. lxxii. 25.

[591] Ps. cxxxvi. 4.

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CHAPTER V.

A VERY SWEET EXAMPLE ON THIS SUBJECT.

God is innocent to the innocent, [592] good to the good, cordial to the

cordial, tender towards the tender, and his love often makes him do

acts of a sacred and holy fondness (mignardise) towards souls who, out

of an amorous purity and simplicity, make themselves as little children

with him.

Upon a day S. Frances was reciting Our Lady's Office, and, as it

commonly happens that if there is but one affair in the whole day, it

presses most at time of prayer, this holy lady was called away by her

husband for some household matter, and four sundry times thinking to

take up again the thread of her Office, she was called from it again,

and constrained to interrupt the same verse, till this blessed affair,

for which they had so importunately interrupted her prayer, being

finished at last, when she returned to her Office she found the verse,

so often left by obedience and so often recommenced by devotion, all

written in fair golden letters, which her devout companion, Madam

Vannocia swore she saw the dear Angel-Guardian of the Saint writing, as

S. Paul afterwards revealed to the Saint herself.

What sweetness, Theotimus, of this heavenly spouse towards this sweet

and faithful lover! But meantime you see that necessary employments,

according to each one's vocation, do not diminish Divine love, but

increase it, and gild, as it were, the work of devotion. The

nightingale loves her melody no less when she makes her pauses than

when she sings; the devout heart loves love no less when she turns to

exterior necessities than when she prays: her silence and her speech,

her action and her contemplation, her employment and her rest, equally

sing in her the hymn of her love.

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[592] Ps. xvii. 26.

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CHAPTER VI.

THAT WE ARE TO EMPLOY IN THE PRACTICE OF DIVINE LOVE ALL THE OCCASIONS

THAT PRESENT THEMSELVES.

There are souls that make great projects to do excellent services for

Our Saviour, by eminent actions and extraordinary sufferings, but

actions and sufferings of which there is no opportunity, and perhaps

never will be, and who upon this apprehend they have done a great

matter in love, in which they are very often deceived:--as appears in

this, that embracing in desire, as seems to them, great future crosses,

they anxiously avoid the burden of such as are present, which are less.

Is it not an extreme temptation to be so valiant in imagination, and so

cowardly in execution?

Ah! God preserve us from those imaginary fervours, which very often

breed a vain and secret self-esteem in the bottom of our hearts. Great

works lie not always in our way, but every moment we may do little ones

with excellence, that is, with a great love. Behold that Saint, I beg

you, who bestows a cup of cold water on the thirsty traveller; he does

but a small matter in outward show, but the intention, the sweetness,

the love, with which he animates his work is so excellent, that it

turns this simple water into water of life, and of eternal life.

The bees gather honey from the lily, the flag, the rose; yet they get

as ample a booty from the little minute rosemary flowers and thyme; yea

they draw not only more honey, but even better honey from these, for in

these little vessels the honey, being more closely locked up, is kept

better. Truly, in the low and little works of devotion, charity is not

only practised more frequently, but ordinarily more humbly too, and

consequently more usefully and more holily.

Those condescensions to the humours of others, that bearing with the

clownish and troublesome actions and ways of our neighbour, those

victories over our own humours and passions, those renouncings of our

lesser inclinations, that effort against our aversions and repugnances,

that heartfelt and sweet acknowledgment of our own imperfections, the

continual pains we take to keep our souls in equality, that love of our

abjection, that gentle and gracious welcome we give to the contempt and

censure of our condition, of our life, of our conversation, of our

actions:--Theotimus, all these things are more profitable to our souls

than we can conceive, if heavenly love have the management of them. But

we have already said this to Philothea. [593]

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[593] Devout Life, iii. 35.

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CHAPTER VII.

THAT WE MUST TAKE PAINS TO DO OUR ACTIONS VERY PERFECTLY.

Our Saviour, as the ancients report, was wont to say to his disciples:

Be good exchangers. If the crown be not good gold, if it want weight,

if it be not struck with the lawful stamp, it is rejected as not

current: if a work be not of a good species, if it be not adorned with

charity, if the intention be not pious, it will not be admitted amongst

the good works. If I fast, but out of sparingness, my fast is not of a

good metal; if it be out of temperance, but I have some mortal sin in

my soul, the work wants weight, for it is charity that gives weight to

all that we do; if it be only through complaisance, and to accommodate

myself to my company, the work is not marked with the stamp of a right

intention: but if I fast out of temperance, and be in the grace of God,

and have an intention to please his Divine majesty by this temperance,

the work shall be current money, fit to augment in me the treasure of

charity.

To do little actions with a great purity of intention and with a strong

will to please God, is to do them excellently, and then they greatly

sanctify us. Some eat much, and yet are ever lean, attenuated and

languid, because their digestive power is not good; there are others

who eat little, and yet are always in good plight, and vigorous,

because their stomach is good. Even so there are some souls that do

many good works, and yet increase but little in charity, because they

do them either coldly and negligently, or by natural instinct and

inclination rather than by Divine inspiration or heavenly fervour; and,

on the contrary, others there are who get through little work, but do

it with so holy a will and inclination, that they make a wonderful

advancement in charity; they have little talent, but they husband it so

faithfully that the Lord largely rewards them for it.

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CHAPTER VIII.

A GENERAL MEANS FOR APPLYING OUR WORKS TO GOD'S SERVICE.

All whatsoever you do in word and in work, do all in the name of Jesus

Christ. [594] Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to

the glory of God. [595] These are the words of the Divine Apostle;

which, as the great S. Thomas says in explaining them, are sufficiently

put in practice when we have the habit of holy charity, whereby, though

we have not an express and set purpose of doing every work for God,

that intention is implicitly contained in the union and communion we

have with God, which dedicates all the good we can do, with ourselves,

to his Divine goodness. It is not necessary that a child, while living

in the house and under the authority of his father, should declare that

all he gets is got for his father; for since his person belongs to his

father, all that depends on it also belongs to him. So it suffices that

we be God's children by love, to make all that we do entirely directed

to his glory.

It is true then, Theotimus, that, as we have said elsewhere, even as

the olive-tree set near unto the vine imparts unto it its savour, so

charity being near the other virtues communicates unto them its

perfection. Yet true it is also that if one engraft a vine upon an

olive, it not only more perfectly communicates its taste but also makes

it share in its sap; so do you not content yourself with having

charity, and together with it the practice of virtues, but endeavour

that it may be by and for it that you practise them, that they may be

rightly ascribed unto it.

When a painter holds and guides a pupil's hand, the stroke that is made

is principally attributed to the painter, because, though the pupil

indeed contributed the motion of his hand and application of the brush,

yet the master also for his part did so mingle his movement with the

pupil's, giving the touch through him, that to the master is specially

attributed the honour of whatever is good in the stroke, though yet the

apprentice is also praised, because of the pliableness with which he

accommodated his movement to the direction of his master. Oh! how

excellent are the actions of the virtues when Divine love impresses its

sacred movement on them, that is, when they are done out of the motive

of love! But this happens in different ways.

The motive of Divine love pours forth a particular influence of

perfection upon the virtuous actions of those who have in a special

manner dedicated themselves to God to serve him for ever. Such are

bishops and priests, who by a sacramental consecration, and by a

spiritual character that cannot be effaced, vow themselves, as branded

and marked serfs, to the perpetual service of God; such are religious,

who by their vows, either solemn or simple, are immolated to God in

quality of living and reasonable sacrifices; such are those who betake

themselves to pious congregations, dedicating themselves for ever to

God's glory; further, such are all those who of set purpose produce

deep and strong resolutions of following the will of God, making for

this end retreats of some days, that they may stir up their souls by

divers spiritual exercises to the entire reformation of their life--a

holy method, and ordinary among the ancient Christians, but since

almost entirely left off till that great servant of God, Ignatius of

Loyola, brought it into use again in the time of our fathers.

I know that some are of opinion, that such a general oblation of

ourselves does not extend its virtue and carry its influence into the

actions which we practise afterwards except so far forth as in the

exercise of them we apply the motive of love in particular, by

dedicating them in a special manner to the glory of God; yet all

confess with S. Bonaventure, quoted by every one in this matter, that

if I have resolved in my heart to give a hundred crowns for God's sake,

though afterwards I make the distribution of this sum at leisure,

having my mind distracted and without attention, yet is all the

distribution made through love, because it proceeds from the first

intention which Divine love made me make of giving it all.

But, prithee, Theotimus, what difference is there between him who

offers a hundred crowns to God, and him who offers all his actions?

Truly none, save that the one offers a sum of money, and the other a

sum of actions. And why, I pray, shall they not equally be considered

to make the distribution of the parts of their sum in virtue of their

first purposes and fundamental resolutions? And if the one,

distributing his crowns without attention, fails not to have the

advantage of that first purpose, why shall not the other, in the

distribution of his actions, enjoy the fruit of the first intention? He

who has deliberately made himself a loving servant of his divine

goodness has, by that act, dedicated to him all his actions.

Grounding himself upon this truth, every one should once in his life

make a good retreat, therein to cleanse his soul from all sin, and

should then make a determined and solid resolution to live wholly to

God, as we have taught in the first part of the Introduction to a

Devout Life; and afterwards, at least once every year, he must make the

review of his conscience and the renewal of the first resolution, which

we have put down in the fifth part of that work, to which on this point

I refer you.

Indeed S. Bonaventure acknowledges that a man who has got so great an

inclination and custom of well-doing as frequently to do it without any

special intention, fails not to merit much by such actions; which are

ennobled by love, because they spring from love as from the root and

original source of this blessed habit, facility and promptitude.

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[594] 1 Cor. x. 31.

[595] Col. iii. 17.

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CHAPTER IX.

OF CERTAIN OTHER MEANS BY WHICH WE MAY APPLY OUR WORKS MORE

PARTICULARLY TO THE LOVE OF GOD.

When pea-hens hatch in very white places their young ones are also

white: and when our intentions are in the love of God whilst we project

some good work, or undertake some vocation, all the actions that issue

thence take their worth and derive their nobility from the love whence

they have their origin; for who does not see that the actions which are

proper to my vocation and requisite to my design depend on this first

election and resolution which I have made?

Yet, Theotimus, one must not stay there; but to make excellent progress

in devotion, we must not only in the beginning of our conversion, and

afterwards every year, address all our life and all our actions to God,

but we must also offer them to him every day following the Morning

Exercise which we have taught Philothea; for in this daily renewing of

our oblation, we spread the vigour and virtue of love upon our actions

by a fresh uniting of our heart with the Divine glory, by means whereof

it is ever more and more sanctified.

Besides this, let us a hundred and a hundred times a day unite our life

to Divine love by the practice of ejaculatory prayers, elevations of

heart and spiritual retirements; for these holy exercises, casting and

lifting our spirits continually into God, bear also up to him all our

actions. And how could it be, I pray you, that a soul who at every

moment darts up unto the Divine goodness, and who incessantly breathes

words of love, in order to keep her heart always lodged in the bosom of

her heavenly Father, should not be considered to do all her works in

God and for God?

She who says: "Ah! Lord, I am thine--My beloved is wholly mine, and I,

I am all his--My God, thou art my all--O Jesus thou art my life--Ah!

who will do me the favour that I may die to myself, that I may live

only to thee--O to love! to advance! to die to self! O to live to God!

O to be in God! O God, whatsoever is not thy very self is nothing to

me!"--she, I say, does she not continually dedicate her actions to her

heavenly spouse? O how blessed is the soul who has once for all made

the offstripping and the perfect resignation of herself in and into the

hands of God, whereof we have spoken above!--for afterwards she will

only need to make one little sigh and one look at God, to renew and

confirm her offstripping, resignation, and oblation, together with the

protestation that she wishes nothing but God and for God, and neither

loves herself nor anything in the world save in God and for the love of

God.

The exercise then of continual aspirations is very useful for vivifying

all our works with love; but especially does it most abundantly suffice

for the small and ordinary actions of our life; for as to heroic works

and matters of consequence, it is expedient, if we intend to make any

great profit, to use the ensuing method, as I have already in brief

declared elsewhere. [596]

Let us in these occurrences elevate our heart and spirit to God; let us

with deep consideration and extended thought ponder on eternity, so

holy and so glorious; let us behold how throughout eternity the Divine

goodness tenderly cherished us, preparing all suitable means for our

salvation and progress in his love, and in particular the chance of

doing the good which now presents itself to us, or suffering the evil

which has come upon us: this done, spreading out, if I may so speak,

and lifting up, the arms of our consent, let us embrace dearly,

fervently and most amorously, the good that presents itself to be done,

or the evil that must be suffered, in consideration of this that it has

been eternally willed by God, to please him and to obey his Providence.

Behold the great S. Charles, when the plague attacked his diocese. He

lifted up his heart to God, and reflected attentively that in the

eternity of Divine Providence, this scourge was prepared and determined

for his flock, and that the same Providence had ordained that in this

their scourge he should take a most tender care to serve, solace and

cordially assist the afflicted, since in this occurrence he found

himself the ghostly father, pastor and bishop of that province.

Whereupon, representing to himself the greatness of the pains, toils

and hazards which it would be incumbent on him to undergo in that

behalf, he immolated himself in spirit to God's good-pleasure, and

tenderly kissing this his cross, he cried from the bottom of his heart,

in imitation of S. Andrew: "I salute thee, O precious cross, I salute

thee, O blessed tribulation! O holy affliction, how delightful thou

art, since thou didst issue from the loving breast of this Father of

eternal mercy, who willed thee from all eternity, and ordained thee for

my dear people and me! O cross, my heart wills thee, since the heart of

my God has willed thee; O cross, my soul cherishes and embraces thee,

with its whole affection!"

In this sort we are to undertake the gravest affairs, and to meet the

sharpest tribulations that can befal us. But if they prove to be of

long continuance, we must from time to time, and very frequently,

repeat this exercise, that we may more profitably continue our union

with God's good will and pleasure, pronouncing this short yet wholly

divine protestation of his Son; Yea, eternal Father, for so it hath

seemed good in thy sight. [597] O God, Theotimus, what treasures are in

this practice!

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[596] Book viii. 14.

[597] Matt. xi. 26.

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CHAPTER X.

AN EXHORTATION TO THE SACRIFICE WHICH WE ARE TO MAKE TO GOD OF OUR

FREE-WILL.

I Add to the sacrifice of S. Charles that of the great patriarch

Abraham, as a lively image of the most strong and loyal love that could

be imagined in any creature.

Certainly he sacrificed all the strongest natural inclinations he could

have had, when, hearing the voice of God saying to him: Go forth out of

thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, and

come into the land which I shall show thee, [598] he went forth at

once, and with speed put himself upon the way, not knowing whither he

went. [599] The dear love of country, the sweetness of the society of

his kindred, the pleasures of his father's house, did not shake his

constancy; he departs boldly and with fervour, and goes whither it

shall please God to conduct him. What abnegation, Theotimus, what

renunciation! One cannot perfectly love God unless one forsake

affections for perishable things.

But this is nothing in comparison with what he did afterwards, when

God, calling him twice, and seeing his promptitude in answering, said

to him: Take thy only-begotten son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go into

the land of vision: and there thou shalt offer him for a holocaust upon

one of the mountains which I will show thee. [600] For behold this

great man, setting out immediately with his so loved and amiable son,

goes three days' journey, comes to the foot of the mountain, leaves

there his servant and ass, loads his son Isaac with the wood necessary

for the holocaust, himself carrying the sword and the fire; and as he

ascends, this dear child says to him: My father; and he answers: What

wilt thou, son. Behold, saith he, fire and wood, but where is the

victim for the holocaust? And Abraham said: God will provide himself a

victim for the holocaust, my son. And meanwhile they arrive at the top

of the appointed mountain, where Abraham now constructs an altar, lays

the wood in order upon it, binds his Isaac, and places him upon the

pile; he extends his right hand, lays hold of and prepares his sword,

lifts his arm, and as he is ready to despatch the blow in order to

immolate the child, the angel calls to him from above: Abraham,

Abraham. And he answered: Here I am. And the angel said to him: Lay not

thy hand upon the boy. It is enough: Now I know that thou fearest God,

and least not spared thy only-begotten son for my sake. Upon this Isaac

is untied, Abraham takes a ram which he finds hanging by the horns in

the brambles, and sacrifices it.

Theotimus, he who looketh on his neighbour's wife, to lust after her,

hath already committed adultery with her in his heart, [601] and he who

bindeth his son in order to immolate him has already sacrificed him in

his heart. Behold then, for God's love, what a holocaust this holy man

offered in his heart! Incomparable sacrifice, which one cannot fully

estimate, nor yet praise to the full! My God! who is able to discern,

which of the two loves was greater--Abraham's, who to please God

sacrifices so amiable a child, or this child's, who to please God is

quite willing to be sacrificed, and to that end permits himself to be

bound, and extended upon the wood, and as a tender little lamb,

peaceably awaits death's blow from the dear hand of his good father?

For my part, I prefer the father in longanimity, yet dare I withal

boldly give the prize of magnanimity to the son: for on the one side it

is indeed a marvel, but not so great a one, that Abraham, already old

and accomplished in the science of loving God, and fortified with the

late vision and word of God, should make this last effort of loyalty

and love towards a master whose sweetness and providence he had so

often tasted and relished; but to see Isaac, in the spring-time of his

age, as yet a mere novice and apprentice in the art of loving his God,

offer himself, upon the simple word of his father, to the sword and the

flame to become a holocaust of obedience to the Divine will, is a thing

that passes all admiration.

Yet, on the other side, do you not see, Theotimus, that Abraham tosses

and turns in his soul, more than three days, the bitter thought and

resolution of this sharp sacrifice? Do you not feel compassion for his

fatherly heart, when, ascending alone with his son, this child, simpler

than a dove, said unto him: Father, where is the victim? and he

answered him: God will provide for that, my son. Do you not think that

the sweetness of this child, carrying the wood upon his shoulders, and

piling it afterwards upon the altar, made his father's bowels melt with

tenderness? O heart which the angels admire and God magnifies! O

Saviour Jesus, when shall it then be, that having sacrificed to thee

all that we have, we shall also offer up to thee all that we are? When

shall we offer unto thee our free-will, the only child of our spirit?

When shall we extend and tie it upon the funeral pile of thy cross, of

thy thorns, of thy lance, that as a little lamb, it may be a grateful

victim of thy good pleasure, to die and to burn with the flame, and by

the sword, of thy holy love?

O free-will of my heart, how good a thing were it for thee to be bound

and extended upon the cross of thy divine Saviour! How desirable a

thing it is to die to thyself, to burn for ever a holocaust to the

Lord! Theotimus, our free-will is never so free as when it is a slave

to the will of God, nor ever so much a slave as when it serves our own

will. It never has so much life as when it dies to itself, nor ever so

much death, as when it lives to itself.

We have freedom to do good or evil; yet to make choice of evil, is not

to use, but to abuse our freedom. Let us renounce this miserable

liberty, and let us for ever subject our free-will to the rule of

heavenly love: let us become slaves of love, whose serfs are more happy

than kings. And if ever our soul should offer to employ her liberty

against our resolutions of serving God eternally and without

reserve,--Oh! in that case, for God's sake, let us sacrifice our

free-will, and make it die to itself that it may live to God! He that

would for self-love keep it in this world shall lose it in the other,

and he that shall lose it in this world for the love of God, shall keep

it, for the same love, in the other. He that gives it liberty in this

world shall find it a serf and slave in the other, and he that shall

make it serve the cross in this world shall have it free in the other,

where being in the fruition of the Divine goodness, liberty will be

converted into love, and love into liberty--a liberty of infinite

sweetness:--without effort, pain, or any repugnance we shall

unchangeably, for ever, love the Creator and Saviour of our souls.

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[598] Gen. xii. 1.

[599] Heb. xi. 8.

[600] Gen. xxii. 1.

[601] Matt. v. 28.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE MOTIVES WE HAVE OF HOLY LOVE.

S. Bonaventure, Father Louis of Granada, Father Louis de Ponte, Father

Diego di Stella, have sufficiently discoursed upon this subject. I will

only sum up those points on which I have touched in this treatise.

The divine goodness considered in itself is not only the first motive

of all, but also the greatest, the most noble and most mighty. For it

is that which ravishes the Blessed, and crowns their felicity. How can

one have a heart, and yet not love so infinite a goodness? This subject

is treated to some extent in chapters i. and ii. of Book II., and from

chapter viii. to the and of Book III., and in chapter ix. of Book X.

The second motive is that of God's natural Providence towards us, of

creation and preservation, as we say in chapter iii. of Book II.

The third motive is that of God's supernatural Providence over us, and

of the Redemption he has prepared for us, as is explained in chapters

iv., v., vi., vii., of Book II.

The fourth motive is to consider how God brings to effect this

Providence and Redemption, giving every one all the graces and

assistances required for salvation; which we handle in Book II., from

chapter viii., and in Book III., from the beginning to chapter vi.

The fifth motive is the eternal glory which the Divine goodness has

provided for us, which is the crown of God's benefits towards us: of

which we have said something from chapter ix. to the end of Book III.

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CHAPTER XII.

A MOST USEFUL METHOD OF EMPLOYING THESE MOTIVES.

Now to receive from these motives a profound and strong heat of love,

it is necessary, 1�, that after having considered one of them in a

general way, we apply it in particular to ourselves. For example: O how

amiable this great God is, who out of his infinite goodness gave his

son for the whole world's redemption! Yes, indeed for all in general,

but in particular for me, who am the first of sinners. [602] Ah! he

hath loved me, yea, I say, he hath loved even me, even me myself, such

as I am, and delivered himself to his Passion for me. [603]

2�. We must consider the Divine benefits in their first and eternal

source. O God! Theotimus, what love can we have sufficiently worthy of

the infinite goodness of our Creator, who from all eternity determined

to create, preserve, govern, redeem, save and glorify all in general

and each in particular? Ah! what was I then when I was not? What was I?

who now being something am yet but a simple and poor worm of the earth?

And still God from the abyss of his eternity thought thoughts of

benediction in my behalf? He considered and designed, yea determined,

the hour of my birth, of my baptism, of all the inspirations that he

would bestow upon me; in a word, all the benefits he would do and offer

me. Ah! is there a sweetness like unto this sweetness?

3�. We must consider the Divine benefits in their second and

meritorious source; for do you not know, Theotimus, that the High

Priest of the Law wore upon his back, and upon his bosom, the names of

the children of Israel, that is, the precious stones upon which the

names of the chiefs of Israel were engraven? Ah! behold Jesus our chief

bishop, and see how, from the instant of his conception, he bore us

upon his shoulders, undertaking the charge of redeeming us by his

death, even the death of the cross. O Theotimus, Theotimus, this soul

of Our Saviour knew us all by name and by surname; but above all in the

day of his Passion, when he offered his tears, his prayers, his blood

and his life for all, he breathed in particular for thee these thoughts

of love: Ah! my eternal Father, I take to myself and charge myself with

all poor Theotimus's sins, to undergo torments and death that he may be

freed from them, and that he may not perish but live. Let me die, so he

may live; let me be crucified so he may be glorified. O sovereign love

of the Heart of Jesus, what heart can ever bless thee as devotedly as

it ought!

Thus within his maternal breast his divine heart foresaw, disposed,

merited and obtained all the benefits we have, not only in general for

all, but also in particular for each one, and his breasts of sweetness

provided for us the milk of his influences, his attractions, his

inspirations, and the sweetnesses by which he draws, conducts and

nourishes our hearts to eternal life. Benefits do not inflame us unless

we behold the eternal will which destines them for us, and the Heart of

Our Saviour who has merited them for us by so many pains, especially in

his death and passion.

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[602] 1 Tim. i. 15.

[603] Gal. ii. 20.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THAT MOUNT CALVARY IS THE ACADEMY OF LOVE.

And at last, as our conclusion,--the death and passion of Our Lord is

the sweetest and most constraining motive that can animate our hearts

in this mortal life: and it is the very truth, that mystical bees make

their most excellent honey within the wounds of this Lion of the tribe

of Judah, slain, rent and torn upon the Mount of Calvary. And the

children of the cross glory in their admirable problem, which the world

understands not: Out of death, the eater of all, has come forth the

meat of our consolation; and out of death, strong above all, has come

forth the sweetness of the honey of our love. [604] O Jesus, my

Saviour, how love-worthy is thy death, since it is the sovereign effect

of thy love!

So, in the glory of heaven above, next to the Divine goodness known and

considered in itself, Our Saviour's death shall most powerfully ravish

the blessed spirits in the loving of God. As a sign whereof, in the

Transfiguration, where we have a glimpse of heaven, Moses and Elias

talked with Our Saviour of the Excess [605] which he was to accomplish

in Jerusalem. But of what excess, if not of that excess of love by

which life was forced from the lover, to be bestowed on the

well-beloved? So that in the eternal canticle I imagine to myself that

this joyous exclamation will be repeated every moment:

Live, Jesus live, whose death doth prove,

The might supreme of heavenly love.

Theotimus, Mount Calvary is the mount of lovers. All love that takes

not its beginning from Our Saviour's Passion is frivolous and

dangerous. Unhappy is death without the love of the Saviour, unhappy is

love without the death of the Saviour! Love and death are so mingled in

the Passion of Our Saviour that we cannot have the one in our heart

without the other. Upon Calvary one cannot have life without love, nor

love without the death of Our Redeemer. But, except there, all is

either eternal death or eternal love: and all Christian wisdom consists

in choosing rightly; and to assist you in that, I have made this

treatise, my Theotimus.

During this mortal life we must choose eternal love or eternal death,

there is no middle choice.

O eternal love, my soul desires and makes choice of thee eternally! Ah!

come, Holy Spirit and inflame our hearts with thy love! To love or to

die! To die and to love! To die to all other love in order to live to

Jesus's love, that we may not die eternally, but that, living in thy

eternal love, O Saviour of our souls we may eternally sing: Vive J�sus!

I love Jesus. Live Jesus whom I love! I love Jesus, who lives and

reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

May these things, Theotimus, which by the grace and help of charity

have been written to your charity, so take root in your heart that this

charity may find in you the fruit of good works, not the leaves of

praises. Amen. Blessed be God! And thus I close this whole treatise in

the words with which S. Augustine ended an admirable sermon on charity,

which he made before an illustrious assembly.

THE END.

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[604] Judges xiv. 14.

[605] Excessum, Luke ix. 31.

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Index of Latin Words and Phrases

\* [593]� fortiori

\* [594]In nobis sine nobis

\* [595]amor,

\* [596]caritas.

\* [597]carus

\* [598]facti semis

\* [599]pietas

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Index of French Words and Phrases

\* [600]Apres ses chevaux toute sa chevance.

\* [601]Instruction pastorale sur les �tats d'oraison.

\* [602]Je desire

\* [603]L'inconsideration

\* [604]La juste reigle de le bien affectionner, c'est de ne point

l'affecter.

\* [605]Levantins

\* [606]Monseigneur

\* [607]Nous ne voyons pas, ains seluement nous entrevoyons.

\* [608]affectionner

\* [609]amorties

\* [610]attente

\* [611]bienseance

\* [612]cause

\* [613]charit�,

\* [614]cher

\* [615]cher, cherement, encherir,

\* [616]contrecoeur

\* [617]convoitise

\* [618]dol

\* [619]esperer et aspirer

\* [620]force,

\* [621]inconsid�ration,

\* [622]je desirerois

\* [623]maintien

\* [624]mignardise

\* [625]mortifi�es

\* [626]ne leve pas mais releve

\* [627]oraison

\* [628]par excellence

\* [629]par imagination de chose impossible.

\* [630]priere

\* [631]remise

\* [632]se pavonnent

\* [633]souhaits

\* [634]souspir

\* [635]suite

\* [636]tremoussements

\* [637]trespas

\* [638]triste

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177. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.v-p3.3

178. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.ix-p5.4

179. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.vi-p2.6

180. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.v-p3.3

181. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.v-p3.3

182. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.i-p5.2

183. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.vii-p3.2

184. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.xiv-p4.6

185. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.xiv-p4.2

186. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.vii-p2.3

187. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.xii-p3.2

188. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.viii-p13.1

189. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.xiii-p5.2

190. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.vi-p5.6

191. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.vi-p5.6

192. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xiii.iv-p7.2

193. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.ix-p5.6

194. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.i-p3.2

195. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.i-p3.2

196. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xviii-p3.2

197. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.xiv-p4.4

198. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.xvi-p6.2

199. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xviii-p2.7

200. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xviii-p2.5

201. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.viii-p2.7

202. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.viii-p2.7

203. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.viii-p2.7

204. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.viii-p2.7

205. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.i-p2.7

206. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.v-p3.4

207. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.xvii-p2.5

208. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xiii.ii-p5.2

209. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.xiii-p4.6

210. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vi.ii-p2.3

211. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.ix-p3.2

212. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xvi-p4.2

213. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.viii-p2.3

214. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.vi-p2.3

215. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.ix-p3.2

216. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.viii-p3.2

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218. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.vi-p5.2

219. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.xv-p7.2

220. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.xvi-p2.3

221. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vi.ii-p5.2

222. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.xii-p4.4

223. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.i-p4.2

224. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.xii-p4.4

225. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.vii-p3.2

226. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.xiii-p6.2

227. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vi.ii-p3.4

228. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vi.ii-p4.2

229. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.ii-p3.2

230. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.ii-p9.10

231. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.iii-p2.5

232. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.xiv-p3.2

233. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.xiv-p6.2

234. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xvi-p2.5

235. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.v-p4.2

236. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vi.iv-p3.4

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241. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vi.iii-p2.3

242. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vi.iii-p2.5

243. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xiv-p5.2

244. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.viii-p3.2

245. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.viii-p5.2

246. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xiii.iii-p2.3

247. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.ii-p5.6

248. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vi.xi-p3.2

249. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.ii-p5.8

250. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.viii-p4.4

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252. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.ii-p9.8

253. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vi.vii-p2.3

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256. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.ix-p3.2

257. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.iii-p4.2

258. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.i-p8.4

259. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.viii-p1.2

260. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.viii-p12.2

261. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.vi-p3.4

262. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.xiv-p2.3

263. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.v-p8.2

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268. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vi.v-p4.2

269. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.i-p7.2

270. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.xvi-p3.2

271. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.xii-p4.2

272. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.vii-p6.4

273. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.xii-p3.4

274. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.xvi-p4.4

275. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.xiii-p4.4

276. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.xiv-p2.5

277. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.xxii-p3.2

278. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.vi-p3.2

279. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.vi-p2.4

280. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vi.i-p3.2

281. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.xii-p3.6

282. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.ii-p6.4

283. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.ii-p9.2

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290. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.xvi-p7.4

291. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.xiii-p4.2

292. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.xv-p7.2

293. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.xv-p7.2

294. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.x-p7.2

295. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.i-p4.6

296. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.xvi-p7.2

297. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xviii-p4.2

298. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.x-p3.2

299. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.ii-p5.2

300. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.ii-p5.10

301. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.iv-p2.3

302. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.vii-p3.12

303. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.xvii-p3.4

304. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.ii-p5.4

305. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.vii-p3.4

306. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.xi-p4.4

307. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.xi-p4.4

308. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.xi-p4.4

309. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.i-p4.2

310. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.xiii-p3.2

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313. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.ix-p2.2

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315. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.xviii-p2.3

316. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.i-p10.8

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318. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.v-p5.2

319. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xii-p2.6

320. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xii-p2.6

321. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.iv-p5.4

322. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xi-p4.2

323. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xii-p3.2

324. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.viii-p4.6

325. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.vii-p3.14

326. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.i-p4.2

327. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.ii-p5.4

328. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.viii-p2.9

329. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.viii-p2.9

330. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.xii-p3.2

331. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.iii-p9.2

332. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.i-p4.4

333. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xviii-p7.4

334. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.xi-p4.2

335. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vi.i-p7.2

336. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.xii-p3.2

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339. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.vii-p3.4

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341. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.xviii-p12.2

342. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xiii.ii-p3.4

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344. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.viii-p4.2

345. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xiii.x-p5.2

346. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.viii-p2.7

347. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.ii-p4.4

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364. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.vi-p7.4

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396. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.v-p3.2

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402. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.iv-p7.2

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409. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.vi-p5.2

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416. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.xiv-p2.7

417. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.xii-p3.2

418. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.ix-p6.2

419. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.vii-p3.6

420. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.ii-p4.2

421. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.xii-p2.3

422. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.xii-p2.3

423. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.vii-p5.2

424. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.viii-p4.2

425. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.viii-p3.2

426. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.viii-p3.2

427. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.viii-p3.2

428. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.xv-p5.2

429. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xviii-p7.2

430. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xviii-p2.3

431. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.xvii-p4.2

432. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.ii-p5.2

433. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.x-p4.4

434. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.x-p4.4

435. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.i-p4.6

436. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.xxii-p3.4

437. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.v-p5.4

438. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xix-p2.5

439. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.v-p4.2

440. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xii-p4.2

441. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.vii-p4.4

442. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.vii-p6.2

443. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.vii-p5.2

444. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.ii-p5.2

445. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.xvii-p6.2

446. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.iii-p7.2

447. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.xiii-p5.4

448. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.xv-p8.4

449. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xi-p2.3

450. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.ii-p5.6

451. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.iv-p6.2

452. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.viii-p2.5

453. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.vii-p6.2

454. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.viii-p6.2

455. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.vii-p5.4

456. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.vii-p5.4

457. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.iv-p4.4

458. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.v-p5.4

459. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.ix-p4.6

460. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.viii-p7.2

461. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.vi-p3.2

462. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.xv-p3.2

463. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.ii-p5.2

464. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.vi-p4.2

465. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.vii-p5.2

466. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.viii-p2.5

467. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.iv-p7.8

468. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.iii-p6.6

469. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.i-p3.6

470. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.i-p2.3

471. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xiii.viii-p2.2

472. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.vi-p7.2

473. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.xvi-p8.2

474. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.viii-p4.7

475. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.v-p5.2

476. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.iii-p3.3

477. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.xix-p5.2

478. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xiv-p4.5

479. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.v-p6.2

480. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.viii-p4.2

481. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.xii-p2.3

482. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.iv-p5.2

483. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.xi-p3.2

484. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.iii-p3.4

485. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.xiv-p5.4

486. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.vii-p4.4

487. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.x-p2.3

488. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.vi-p3.2

489. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.i-p8.2

490. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xii-p2.10

491. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.iv-p7.6

492. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.ix-p4.7

493. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.ix-p7.2

494. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.vi-p2.7

495. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.vi-p2.3

496. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.ii-p11.2

497. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.viii-p2.3

498. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.xvii-p2.3

499. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.xi-p3.2

500. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.iii-p6.2

501. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.v-p2.3

502. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xxi-p3.2

503. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xxi-p8.2

504. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.ii-p3.4

505. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.xiv-p5.2

506. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.xiv-p5.6

507. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.vii-p6.2

508. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.iii-p6.2

509. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.xii-p6.3

510. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.v-p4.2

511. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.vii-p4.2

512. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.xvii-p2.7

513. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xiii.xii-p2.5

514. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.xvi-p7.2

515. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.v-p2.13

516. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xix-p2.3

517. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.vii-p5.2

518. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.iii-p6.4

519. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vi.i-p7.4

520. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.ii-p8.2

521. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.ix-p6.6

522. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.i-p2.9

523. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.i-p2.11

524. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.iii-p7.2

525. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.iv-p4.2

526. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.i-p2.11

527. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.iv-p2.5

528. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.v-p4.6

529. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xxi-p3.4

530. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.v-p3.2

531. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.v-p3.6

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533. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.vi-p6.2

534. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.iii-p9.2

535. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.ix-p2.2

536. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xiii.viii-p2.4

537. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.i-p4.2

538. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.ii-p2.3

539. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.xi-p7.2

540. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xiii.xii-p2.3

541. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.viii-p4.8

542. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.v-p2.11

543. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.viii-p35.2

544. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.ix-p3.2

545. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xii-p2.12

546. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xiii.x-p3.4

547. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.ii-p5.16

548. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.ii-p3.6

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551. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xii-p4.3

552. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vi.iii-p5.2

553. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.xiv-p4.2

554. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.i-p2.7

555. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.v-p2.9

556. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.ii-p4.6

557. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.ix-p2.6

558. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.iii-p4.2

559. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.viii-p2.11

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563. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.ii-p3.2

564. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.iv-p7.4

565. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.vii-p4.2

566. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.i-p8.2

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569. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.i-p2.5

570. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.viii-p4.9

571. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.viii-p3.2

572. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xi.ii-p3.2

573. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.viii-p5.3

574. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vi.x-p3.2

575. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.i-p3.2

576. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.vi-p2.9

577. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.vi-p2.11

578. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.i-p2.3

579. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ix.viii-p2.5

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581. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xxi-p6.2

582. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.ix-p4.2

583. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.xxii-p5.2

584. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.viii-p2.4

585. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.viii-p2.6

586. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.iii-p6.2

587. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xii-p5.2

588. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.vii-p6.4

589. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.v-p2.15

590. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.i-p2.5

591. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.iv-p6.2

592. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.i-p5.2

593. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.v-p26.1

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596. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.xiii-p7.6

597. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.xiii-p7.5

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599. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.x-p4.2

600. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#v.ii-p6.2

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603. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.vii-p3.2

604. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.x-p4.2

605. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.viii-p7.1

606. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.xv-p3.3

607. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.xiv-p2.3

608. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.vi-p7.1

609. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.xii-p2.2

610. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.xv-p6.1

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612. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iii.xi-p5.1

613. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.xiii-p7.4

614. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.xiii-p7.3

615. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.xiii-p7.1

616. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.xi-p7.1

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624. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xiii.v-p2.4

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626. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vi.ii-p6.1

627. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#vii.i-p5.1

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633. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#ii.vii-p10.1

634. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#iv.xiii-p3.1

635. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#viii.ii-p2.2

636. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.vii-p4.1

637. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#x.xiii-p2.2

638. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#xii.iii-p3.1

639. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.i-Page\_i

640. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.ii-Page\_ii

641. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.iii-Page\_iii

642. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.iii-Page\_iv

643. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.iv-Page\_v

644. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.iv-Page\_vi

645. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.v-Page\_vii

646. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.v-Page\_viii

647. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.v-Page\_ix

648. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.v-Page\_x

649. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.v-Page\_xi

650. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.v-Page\_xii

651. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.v-Page\_xiii

652. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.v-Page\_xiv

653. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.v-Page\_xv

654. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.v-Page\_xvi

655. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.v-Page\_xvii

656. file://localhost/ccel/d/desales/love/cache/love.html3#i.v-Page\_xviii

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