

## ASCENT OF MOUNT CARMEL

*Treats of how the soul may prepare itself in order to attain in a short time to Divine union. Gives very profitable counsels and instruction, both to beginners and to proficients, that they may know how to disencumber themselves of all that is temporal and not to encumber themselves with the spiritual, and to remain in complete detachment and liberty of spirit, as is necessary for Divine union.*

### ARGUMENT

ALL the doctrine whereof I intend to treat in this *Ascent of Mount Carmel* is included in the following stanzas, and in them is also described the manner of ascending to the summit of the Mount, which is the high estate of perfection which we here call union of the soul with God. And because I must continually base upon them that which I shall say, I have desired to set them down here together, to the end that all the substance of that which is to be written may be seen and comprehended together; although it will be fitting to set down each stanza separately before expounding it, and likewise the lines of each stanza, according as the matter and the exposition require. The poem, then, runs as follows:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [*Lit.*: 'It says, then, thus.']

## STANZAS<sup>2</sup>

Wherein the soul sings of the happy chance which it had in passing through the dark night of faith, in detachment and purgation of itself, to union with the Beloved.

1. *On a dark night, Kindled<sup>3</sup> in love with yearnings -- oh, happy chance! --  
I went forth without being observed, My house being now at rest.<sup>4</sup>*
2. *In darkness and secure, By the secret ladder, disguised -- oh, happy chance! --  
In darkness and in concealment, My house being now at rest.*
3. *In the happy night, In secret, when none saw me,  
Nor I beheld aught, Without light or guide, save that which burned in my heart.*
4. *This light guided me More surely than the light of noonday,  
To the place where he (well I knew who!) was awaiting me -- A place where none  
appeared.*
5. *Oh, night that guided me, Oh, night more lovely than the dawn,  
Oh, night that joined Beloved with lover, Lover transformed in the Beloved!*
6. *Upon my flowery breast, Kept wholly for himself alone,  
There he stayed sleeping, and I caressed him, And the fanning of the cedars made  
a breeze.*
7. *The breeze blew from the turret As I parted his locks;  
With his gentle hand he wounded my neck And caused all my senses to be  
suspended.*
8. *I remained, lost in oblivion;<sup>5</sup> My face I reclined on the Beloved.  
All ceased and I abandoned myself, Leaving my cares forgotten among the lilies.*

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<sup>2</sup> For a verse translation in the metre of the original, see Vol. II.

<sup>3</sup> [The adjectives are feminine throughout.]

<sup>4</sup> [The word translated 'at rest' is a past participle: more literally, 'stilled.']

<sup>5</sup> [*Lit.*: 'I remained and forgot.']

## PROLOGUE

1. IN order to expound and describe this dark night, through which the soul passes in order to attain to the Divine light of the perfect union of the love of God, as far as is possible in this life, it would be necessary to have illumination of knowledge and experience other and far greater than mine; for this darkness and these trials, both spiritual and temporal, through which happy souls are wont to pass in order to be able to attain to this high estate of perfection, are so numerous and so profound that neither does human knowledge suffice for the understanding of them, nor experience for the description of them; for only he that passes this way can understand it, and even he cannot describe it.

2. Therefore, in order to say a little about this dark night, I shall trust neither to experience nor to knowledge, since both may fail and deceive; but, while not omitting to make such use as I can of these two things, I shall avail myself, in all that, with the Divine favour, I have to say, or at the least, in that which is most important and dark to the understanding, of Divine Scripture; for, if we guide ourselves by this, we shall be unable to stray, since He Who speaks therein is the Holy Spirit. And if aught I stray, whether through my imperfect understanding of that which is said in it or of matters uncollected with it, it is not my intention to depart from the sound sense and doctrine of our Holy Mother the Catholic Church; for in such a case I submit and resign myself wholly, not only to her command, but to whatever better judgment she may pronounce concerning it.

3. To this end I have been moved, not by any possibility that I see in myself of accomplishing so arduous a task, but by the confidence which I have in the Lord that He will help me to say something to relieve the great necessity which is experienced by many souls, who, when they set out upon the road of virtue, and Our Lord desires to bring them into this dark night that they may pass through it to Divine union, make no progress. At times this is because they have no desire to enter it or to allow themselves to be led into it; at other times, because they understand not themselves and lack competent and alert directors<sup>6</sup> who will guide them to the summit. And so it is sad to see many souls to whom God gives both aptitude and favour with which to make progress (and who, if they would take courage, could attain to this high estate), remaining in an elementary stage<sup>7</sup> of communion with God, for want of will, or knowledge, or because there is none who will lead them in the right path or teach them how to get away from these beginnings. And at length, although Our Lord grants them such favour as to make them to go onward without this hindrance or that, they arrive at their goal very much later, and with greater labour, yet with less merit, because they have not conformed themselves to God, and allowed themselves to be brought freely into the pure and sure road of union. For, although it is true that God is leading them, and that He can lead them without their own help, they will not allow themselves to be led; and thus they make less progress, because they resist Him Who is leading them, and they have less merit, because they apply not their will, and on this account they suffer more. For these are souls who, instead of committing themselves to God and making use of His help, rather hinder God by the indiscretion of their actions or by their resistance; like children who, when their mothers desire to carry them in their arms, start stamping and crying, and insist upon being allowed to walk, with the result that they can make no progress; and, if they advance at all, it is only at the pace of a child.

4. Wherefore, to the end that all, whether beginners or proficient, may know how to commit themselves to God's guidance, when His Majesty desires to lead them onward, we shall give instruction and counsel, by His help, so that they may be able to understand His will, or, at the least, allow Him to lead them. For some confessors and spiritual fathers, having no light and experience concerning these roads, are wont to hinder and harm such souls rather than to help them on the road;

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<sup>6</sup> [*Lit.* 'and wideawake guides.']

<sup>7</sup> [*Lit.*, 'a low manner.']

they are like the builders of Babel, who, when told to furnish suitable material, gave and applied other very different material, because they understood not the language, and thus nothing was done. Wherefore, it is a difficult and troublesome thing at such seasons for a soul not to understand itself or to find none who understands it. For it will come to pass that God will lead the soul by a most lofty path of dark contemplation and aridity, wherein it seems to be lost, and, being thus full of darkness and trials, constraints and temptations, will meet one who will speak to it like Job's comforters, and say that it is suffering from melancholy, or low spirits, or a morbid disposition, or that it may have some hidden sin, and that it is for this reason that God has forsaken it. Such comforters are wont to declare immediately that that soul must have been very evil, since such things as these are befalling it.

5. And there will likewise be those who tell the soul to retrace its steps, since it is finding no pleasure or consolation in the things of God as it did aforesaid. And in this way they double the poor soul's trials; for it may well be that the greatest affliction which it is feeling is that of the knowledge of its own miseries, thinking that it sees itself, more clearly than daylight, to be full of evils and sins, for God gives it that light of knowledge in that night of contemplation, as we shall presently show. And, when the soul finds someone whose opinion agrees with its own, and who says that these things must be due to its own fault, its affliction and trouble increase infinitely and are wont to become more grievous than death. And, not content with this, such confessors, thinking that these things proceed from sin, make these souls go over their lives and cause them to make many general confessions, and crucify them afresh; not understanding that this may quite well not be the time for any of such things, and that their penitents should be left in the state of purgation which God gives them, and be comforted and encouraged to desire it until God be pleased to dispose otherwise; for until that time, no matter what the souls themselves may do and their confessors may say, there is no remedy for them.

6. This, with the Divine favour, we shall consider hereafter, and also how the soul should conduct itself at such a time, and how the confessor must treat it, and what signs there will be whereby it may be known if this is the purgation of the soul; and, in such case, whether it be of sense or of spirit (which is the dark night whereof we speak), and how it may be known if it be melancholy or some other imperfection with respect to sense or to spirit. For there may be some souls who will think, or whose confessors will think, that God is leading them along this road of the dark night of spiritual purgation, whereas they may possibly be suffering only from some of the imperfections aforementioned. And, again, there are many souls who think that they have no aptitude for prayer, when they have very much; and there are others who think that they have much when they have hardly any.

7. There are other souls who labour and weary themselves to a piteous extent, and yet go backward, seeking profit in that which is not profitable, but is rather a hindrance; and there are still others who, by remaining at rest and in quietness, continue to make great progress. There are others who are hindered and disturbed and make no progress, because of the very consolations and favours that God is granting them in order that they may make progress. And there are many other things on this road that befall those who follow it, both joys and afflictions and hopes and griefs: some proceeding from the spirit of perfection and others from imperfection. Of all these, with the Divine favour, we shall endeavour to say something, so that each soul who reads this may be able to see something of the road that he ought to follow, if he aspire to attain to the summit of this Mount.

8. And, since this introduction relates to the dark night through which the soul must go to God, let not the reader marvel if it seem to him somewhat dark also. This, I believe, will be so at the beginning when he begins to read; but, as he passes on, he will find himself understanding the first part better, since one part will explain another. And then, if he read it a second time, I believe it will seem clearer to him and the instruction will appear sounder. And if any persons find themselves disagreeing with this instruction, it will be due to my ignorance and poor style; for in itself the matter

is good and of the first importance. But I think that, even were it written in a more excellent and perfect manner than it is, only the minority would profit by it, for we shall not here set down things that are very moral and delectable<sup>8</sup> for all spiritual persons who desire to travel toward God by pleasant and delectable ways, but solid and substantial instruction, as well suited to one kind of person as to another, if they desire to pass to the detachment of spirit which is here treated.

9. Nor is my principal intent to address all, but rather certain persons of our sacred Order of Mount Carmel of the primitive observance, both friars and nuns -- since they have desired me to do so -- to whom God is granting the favour of setting them on the road to this Mount; who, as they are already detached from the temporal things of this world, will better understand the instruction concerning detachment of spirit.

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<sup>8</sup> Needless to say, the Saint does not here mean that he will not write in conformity with moral standards -- no writer is more particular in this respect -- nor that he will deal with no delectable matters at all, but rather that he will go to the very roots of spiritual teaching and expound the 'solid and substantial instruction,' which not only forms its basis but also leads the soul toward the most intimate union with God in love.

## BOOK THE FIRST

*Wherein is described the nature of dark night and how necessary it is to pass through it to Divine union; and in particular this book describes the dark night of sense, and desire, and the evils which these work in the soul.*<sup>9</sup>

### CHAPTER I

*Sets down the first stanza. Describes two different nights through which spiritual persons pass, according to the two parts of man, the lower and the higher. Expounds the stanza which follows.*

#### STANZA THE FIRST

**On a dark night, Kindled in love with yearnings -- oh, happy chance! --  
I went forth without being observed, My house being now at rest.**

IN this first stanzas the soul sings of the happy fortune and chance which it experienced in going forth from all things that are without, and from the desires<sup>10</sup> and imperfections that are in the sensual<sup>11</sup> part of man because of the disordered state of his reason. For the understanding of this it must be known that, for a soul to attain to the state of perfection, it has ordinarily first to pass through two principal kinds of night, which spiritual persons call purgations or purifications of the soul; and here we call them nights, for in both of them the soul journeys, as it were, by night, in darkness.

2. The first night or purgation is of the sensual part of the soul, which is treated in the present stanza, and will be treated in the first part of this book. And the second is of the spiritual part; of this speaks the second stanza, which follows; and of this we shall treat likewise, in the second and the third part,<sup>12</sup> with respect to the activity of the soul; and in the fourth part, with respect to its passivity.

3. And this first night pertains to beginners, occurring at the time when God begins to bring them into the state of contemplation; in this night the spirit likewise has a part, as we shall say in due course. And the second night, or purification, pertains to those who are already proficient, occurring at the time when God desires to bring them to the state of union with God. And this latter night is a more obscure and dark and terrible purgation, as we shall say afterwards.

4. Briefly, then, the soul means by this stanza that it went forth (being led by God) for love of Him alone, enkindled in love of Him, upon a dark night, which is the privation and purgation of all its sensual desires, with respect to all outward things of the world and to those which were delectable to

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<sup>9</sup> The Codices give neither title nor sub-title: both were inserted in e.p. ['Desire' is to be taken as the direct object of 'describes'; 'these' refers to 'sense' and 'desire,' not to the dark night.]

<sup>10</sup> [*Lit.*, 'appetites,' but this word is uniformly translated 'desires,' as the Spanish context frequently will not admit the use of the stronger word in English.]

<sup>11</sup> [The word translated 'sensual' is sometimes *sensual*, and sometimes, as here, *sensitivo*. The meaning in either case is simply 'of sense.']

<sup>12</sup> So Alc. The other authorities read: 'and of this we shall treat likewise, in the second part with respect to the activity [of the soul] [*these last three words are not contained in the Spanish of any authority*], and in the third and the fourth part with respect to its passivity.' E.p. follows this division. Alc., however, seems to correspond more closely with the Saint's intentions; for he did not divide each of his 'books' into 'parts' and appears therefore to indicate by 'part' what we know as 'book.' Now Book I is in fact devoted to the active purgation of sense, as are Books II and III to the active purgation of the spirit. For the 'fourth book,' see General Introduction, IV above.

its flesh, and likewise with respect to the desires of its will. This all comes to pass in this purgation of sense; for which cause the soul says that it went forth while its house was still at rest;<sup>13</sup> which house is its sensual part, the desires being at rest and asleep in it, as it is to them.<sup>14</sup> For there is no going forth from the pains and afflictions of the secret places of the desires until these be mortified and put to sleep. And this, the soul says, was a happy chance for it -- namely, its going forth without being observed: that is, without any desire of its flesh or any other thing being able to hinder it. And likewise, because it went out by night -- which signifies the privation of all these things wrought in it by God, which privation was night for it.

5. And it was a happy chance that God should lead it into this night, from which there came to it so much good; for of itself the soul would not have succeeded in entering therein, because no man of himself can succeed in voiding himself of all his desires in order to come to God.

6. This is, in brief, the exposition of the stanza; and we shall now have to go through it, line by line, setting down one line after another, and expounding that which pertains to our purpose. And the same method is followed in the other stanzas, as I said in the Prologue<sup>15</sup> -- namely, that each stanza will be set down and expounded, and afterwards each line.

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<sup>13</sup> [The word translated 'at rest' is a past participle: more literally, 'stilled.']

<sup>14</sup> [*Lit.*, 'and it in them.' This 'it' means the soul; the preceding 'it,' the house.]

<sup>15</sup> I.e., in the 'Argument.'

## CHAPTER II

*Explains the nature of this dark night through which the soul says that it has passed on the road to union.*

### On A Dark Night

WE may say that there are three reasons for which this journey<sup>16</sup> made by the soul to union with God is called night. The first has to do with the point from which the soul goes forth, for it has gradually to deprive itself of desire for all the worldly things which it possessed, by denying them to itself;<sup>17</sup> the which denial and deprivation are, as it were, night to all the senses of man. The second reason has to do with the mean,<sup>18</sup> or the road along which the soul must travel to this union -- that is, faith, which is likewise as dark as night to the understanding. The third has to do with the point to which it travels -- namely, God, Who, equally, is dark night to the soul in this life. These three nights must pass through the soul -- or, rather, the soul must pass through them -- in order that it may come to Divine union with God.

2. In the book of the holy Tobias these three kinds of night were shadowed forth by the three nights which, as the angel commanded, were to pass ere the youth Tobias should be united with his bride. In the first he commanded him to burn the heart of the fish in the fire, which signifies the heart that is affectioned to, and set upon, the things of the world; which, in order that one may begin to journey toward God, must be burned and purified from all that is creature, in the fire of the love of God. And in this purgation the devil flees away, for he has power over the soul only when it is attached to things corporeal and temporal.

3. On the second night the angel told him that he would be admitted into the company of the holy patriarchs, who are the fathers of the faith. For, passing through the first night, which is self-privation of all objects of sense, the soul at once enters into the second night, and abides alone in faith to the exclusion, not of charity, but of other knowledge acquired by the understanding, as we shall say hereafter, which is a thing that pertains not to sense.

4. On the third night the angel told him that he would obtain a blessing, which is God; Who, by means of the second night, which is faith, continually communicates Himself to the soul in such a secret and intimate manner that He becomes another night to the soul, inasmuch as this said communication is far darker than those others, as we shall say presently. And, when this third night is past, which is the complete accomplishment of the communication of God in the spirit, which is ordinarily wrought in great darkness of the soul, there then follows its union with the Bride, which is the Wisdom of God. Even so the angel said likewise to Tobias that, when the third night was past, he should be united with his bride in the fear of the Lord; for, when this fear of God is perfect, love is perfect, and this comes to pass when the transformation of the soul is wrought through its love.

5. These three parts of the night are all one night; but, after the manner of night, it has three parts. For the first part, which is that of sense, is comparable to the beginning of night, the point at which things begin to fade from sight. And the second part, which is faith, is comparable to midnight, which is total darkness. And the third part is like the close of night, which is God, the which part is now near to the light of day. And, that we may understand this the better, we shall treat of each of these reasons separately as we proceed.

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<sup>16</sup> [More exactly, this 'passage' or 'transition' (*tránsito*).]

<sup>17</sup> [*Lit.*, 'in negation of them.']

<sup>18</sup> [By 'the mean' is meant the middle, or main part, of the journey.]



### CHAPTER 3

*Speaks of the first cause of this night, which is that of the privation of the desire in all things, and gives the reason for which it is called night.*

1. WE here describe as night the privation of every kind of pleasure which belongs to the desire; for, even as night is naught but the privation of light, and, consequently, of all objects that can be seen by means of light, whereby the visual faculty remains unoccupied<sup>19</sup> and in darkness, even so likewise the mortification of desire may be called night to the soul. For, when the soul is deprived of the pleasure of its desire in all things, it remains, as it were, unoccupied and in darkness. For even as the visual faculty, by means of light, is nourished and fed by objects which can be seen, and which, when the light is quenched, are not seen, even so, by means of the desire, the soul is nourished and fed by all things wherein it can take pleasure according to its faculties; and, when this also is quenched, or rather, mortified, the soul ceases to feed upon the pleasure of all things, and thus, with respect to its desire, it remains unoccupied and in darkness.

2. Let us take an example from each of the faculties. When the soul deprives its desire of the pleasure of all that can delight the sense of hearing, the soul remains unoccupied and in darkness with respect to this faculty. And, when it deprives itself of the pleasure of all that can please the sense of sight, it remains unoccupied and in darkness with respect to this faculty also. And, when it deprives itself of the pleasure of all the sweetness of perfumes which can give it pleasure through the sense of smell, it remains equally unoccupied and in darkness according to this faculty. And, if it also denies itself the pleasure of all food that can satisfy the palate, the soul likewise remains unoccupied and in darkness. And finally, when the soul mortifies itself with respect to all the delights and pleasures that it can receive from the sense of touch, it remains, in the same way, unoccupied and in darkness with respect to this faculty. So that the soul that has denied and thrust away from itself the pleasures which come from all these things, and has mortified its desire with respect to them, may be said to be, as it were, in the darkness of night, which is naught else than an emptiness within itself of all things.

3. The reason for this is that, as the philosophers say, the soul, as soon as God infuses it into the body, is like a smooth, blank board<sup>20</sup> upon which nothing is painted; and, save for that which it experiences through the senses, nothing is communicated to it, in the course of nature, from any other source. And thus, for as long as it is in the body, it is like one who is in a dark prison and who knows nothing, save what he is able to see through the windows of the said prison; and, if he saw nothing through them, he would see nothing in any other way. And thus the soul, save for that which is communicated to it through the senses, which are the windows of its prison, could acquire nothing, in the course of nature, in any other way.

4. Wherefore, if the soul rejects and denies that which it can receive through the senses, we can quite well say that it remains, as it were, in darkness and empty; since, as appears from what has been said, no light can enter it, in the course of nature, by any other means of illumination than those aforementioned. For, although it is true that the soul cannot help hearing and seeing and smelling and tasting and touching, this is of no greater import, nor, if the soul denies and rejects the object, is it hindered more than if it saw it not, heard it not, etc. Just so a man who desires to shut his eyes will remain in darkness, like the blind man who has not the faculty of sight. And to this purpose David says these words: *Pauper sum ego, et in laboribus a indenture mea.*<sup>21</sup> Which signifies: *I am poor and in labours from my youth.* He calls himself poor, although it is clear that he was rich, because **his will was not set upon riches**, and thus it was as though he were really poor. But if he had not been

<sup>19</sup> [*Lit.*, 'without anything (*sc.* to do).']

<sup>20</sup> ['Blank board': Sp., *tabla rasa*; Lat., *tabula rasa*.]

<sup>21</sup> Psalm lxxxvii, 16 [A.V. lxxxviii, 15].

really poor and **had not been so in his will**, he would not have been truly poor, for his soul, as far as its desire was concerned, would have been rich and replete. For that reason we call this detachment night to the soul, for we are not treating here of the lack of things, since this implies no detachment on the part of the soul if it has a desire for them; but we are treating of the detachment from them of the taste and desire, for it is this that leaves the soul free and void of them, although it may have them; for it is not the things of this world that either occupy the soul or cause it harm, since they enter it not, but rather the will and desire for them, for it is these that dwell within it.

5. This first kind of night, as we shall say hereafter, belongs to the soul according to its sensual part, which is one of the two parts, whereof we spoke above, through which the soul must pass in order to attain to union.

6. Let us now say how meet it is for the soul to go forth from its house into this dark night of sense, in order to travel to union with God.

## Chapter 4

*Wherein is declared how necessary it is for the soul truly to pass through this dark night of sense, which is mortification of desire, in order that it may journey to union with God.*

1. THE reason for which it is **necessary** for the soul, in order to attain to **Divine union with God**, to pass through this **dark night** of mortification of the desires and denial of pleasures in all things, is because all the **affections** which it has for **creatures** are pure darkness in the eyes of God, and, when the soul is **clothed** in these affections, it has **no capacity** for being enlightened and possessed by the pure and simple light of God, if it first cast them not from it; for light cannot agree with darkness; since, as Saint John says: *Tenebroe eam non comprehenderunt.*<sup>22</sup> That is: *The darkness could not receive the light.*

2. The reason is that **two contraries** (even as philosophy teaches us) **cannot coexist in one person**; and that **darkness**, which is affection set upon the creatures, and **light**, which is God, are contrary to each other, and have no likeness or accord between one another, even as Saint Paul taught the Corinthians, saying: *Quo conventio luci ad tenebras?*<sup>23</sup> That is to say: *What communion can there be between light and darkness?* Hence it is that the light of **Divine union** cannot dwell in the soul if these **affections** first flee not away from it.

3. In order that we may the better prove what has been said, it must be known that **the affection and attachment** which the soul has for creatures **renders the soul like to these creatures**; and, the greater is its affection, the closer is the equality and likeness between them; for **love creates a likeness between that which loves and that which is loved.**

For which reason David, speaking of those who set their affections upon idols, said thus: *Similes illis fiant qui faciunt ea: et omnes qui confidunt in eis.*<sup>24</sup> Which signifies: *Let them that set their heart upon them be like to them.*

And thus, he that loves a creature becomes as low as that creature, and, in some ways, lower; for **love not only makes the lover equal to the object of his love, but even subjects him to it.**

Hence in the same way it comes to pass that the soul that loves anything else **becomes incapable** of **pure** union with God and transformation in Him. For the **low estate** of the creature is much less capable of union with the high estate of the Creator than is darkness with light.

For **all things** of earth and heaven, compared with God, **are nothing**, as Jeremias says in these words: *Aspexi terram, et ecce vacua erat, et nihil; et coelos, et non erat lux in eis.*<sup>25</sup> 'I beheld the earth,' he says, 'and it was void, and it was nothing; and the heavens, and saw that they had no light.' In saying that he beheld the earth void, he means that all its creatures were nothing, and that the earth was nothing likewise. And, in saying that he beheld the heavens and saw no light in them, he says that all the luminaries of heaven, compared with God, are pure darkness. So that in this way all the creatures are nothing; and their affections, we may say, are less than nothing, since they are an impediment to transformation in God and the privation thereof, even as darkness is not only nothing, but less than nothing, since it is privation of light. And even as he that is in darkness comprehends not the light, so the soul that **sets its affection upon creatures** will be unable to comprehend God; and, until it be purged, it will neither be able to possess Him **here below**, through pure transformation of love, **nor** yonder **in clear vision**. And, for greater clarity, we will now speak in greater detail.

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<sup>22</sup> St. John 1,5 (John 2, John 6,14).

<sup>23</sup> 2 Corinthians vi, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Psalm 115,9 [A.V. cxv, 8].

<sup>25</sup> Jeremias 4,23.

4. **All the being of creation**, then, compared with the infinite Being of God, is nothing. And therefore, the soul that sets its affection upon the being of creation is likewise nothing in the eyes of God, and less than nothing; for, as we have said, love makes equality and similitude, and even sets the lover below the object of his love. And therefore such a soul will in no wise be able to attain to union with the infinite Being of God;

for that which is not can have no communion with that which is.

And, coming down in detail to some examples, all the beauty of the creatures, compared with the infinite beauty of God, is the height of deformity<sup>26</sup> even as Solomon says in the Proverbs: *Fallax gratia, et vana est pulchritudo.*<sup>27</sup> 'Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain.' And thus the soul that is affectioned to the beauty of any creature is the height of deformity in the eyes of God. And therefore this soul that is deformed will be unable to become transformed in beauty, which is God, since deformity cannot attain to beauty; and all the grace and beauty of the creatures, compared with the grace of God, is the height of misery<sup>28</sup> and of uncomeliness.

Wherefore the soul that is ravished by the graces and beauties of the creatures has only supreme<sup>29</sup> misery and unattractiveness in the eyes of God; and thus it cannot be capable of the infinite grace and loveliness of God; for that which has no grace is far removed from that which is infinitely gracious; and all the goodness of the creatures of the world, in comparison with the infinite goodness of God, may be described as wickedness. 'For there is naught good, save only God.'<sup>30</sup> And therefore the soul that sets its heart upon the good things of the world is supremely evil in the eyes of God. And, even as wickedness comprehends not goodness, even so such a soul cannot be united with God, Who is supreme goodness.

5. All the wisdom of the world and all human ability, compared with the infinite wisdom of God, are pure and supreme ignorance, even as Saint Paul writes *ad Corinthios*, saying: *Sapientia hujus mundi stultitia est apud Deum.*<sup>31</sup> 'The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.' Wherefore any soul that makes account of all its knowledge and ability in order to come to union with the wisdom of God is supremely ignorant in the eyes of God and will remain far removed from that wisdom; for ignorance knows not what wisdom is, even as Saint Paul says that this wisdom seems foolishness to God; since, in the eyes of God, those who consider themselves to be persons with a certain amount of knowledge are very ignorant, so that the Apostle, writing to the Romans, says of them: *Dicentes enim se esse sapientes, stulti facti sunt.* That is: Professing themselves to be wise, they became foolish.<sup>32</sup> And those alone acquire wisdom of God who are like ignorant children, and, laying aside their knowledge, walk in His service with love. This manner of wisdom Saint Paul taught likewise *ad Corinthios*: *Si quis videtur inter vos sapiens esse in hoc saeculo, stultus fiat ut sit sapiens. Sapientia enim hujus mundi stultitia est apud Deum.*<sup>33</sup> That is: If any man among you seem to be wise, let him become ignorant that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.

So that, in order to come to union with the wisdom of God, the soul has to proceed rather by unknowing than by knowing; and all the dominion and liberty of the world, compared with the liberty and dominion of the Spirit of God, is the most abject<sup>34</sup> slavery, affliction and captivity.

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<sup>26</sup> [The words often translated 'deformity,' 'deformed,' or 'vileness,' 'vile,' are the ordinary contraries of 'beauty,' 'beautiful,' and might be rendered, more literally but less elegantly, 'ugliness,' 'ugly.']

<sup>27</sup> Proverbs 31,30.

<sup>28</sup> [For 'grace . . . misery' the Spanish has *gracia . . . desgracia*. The latter word, however, does not, as might be supposed, correspond to English 'disgrace.']

<sup>29</sup> E.p. omits 'supreme'; the Spanish word [having a more literally superlative force than the English] can hardly be applied, save in a restricted sense, to what is finite.

<sup>30</sup> St. Luke 18,19.

<sup>31</sup> 1 Corinthians 3,19.

<sup>32</sup> Romans 1,22.

<sup>33</sup> 1 Corinthians 3,18-19.

<sup>34</sup> [*Lit.*, 'is supreme.']

6. Wherefore the soul that is enamoured of **prelacy**,<sup>35</sup> or of any other such office, and longs for **liberty** of desire, is considered and treated, in the sight of God, not as a son, but as a base slave and captive, since it has not been willing to accept **His holy doctrine**, wherein He teaches us that whoso would be greater must be less, and whoso would be less must be greater.

And therefore, such a soul will be unable to attain to that **true liberty of spirit** which is attained in His Divine union.

For slavery can have no part with liberty; and liberty cannot dwell in a heart that is subject to desires, for this is the heart of a slave; but it dwells in the free man, because he has the heart of a son.

It was for this cause that Sara bade her husband Abraham cast out the bondwoman and her son, saying that the son of the bondwoman should not be heir with the son of the free woman.<sup>36</sup>

7. And all the **delights** and **pleasures** of the will in all the things of the world, in comparison with all those delights which are God, are supreme affliction, torment and bitterness. And thus, he that sets his heart upon them is considered, in the sight of God, as worthy of supreme affliction, torment and bitterness; and thus, he will be unable to attain to the delights of the embrace of union with God, since he is worthy of affliction and bitterness.

All the **wealth** and **glory** of all creation, in comparison with the wealth which is God, is supreme poverty and wretchedness. Thus the soul that loves and possesses creature wealth **is supremely poor and wretched in the sight of God**, and for that reason will be unable to attain to that wealth and glory which is the state of transformation in God; for that which is miserable and poor is supremely far removed from that which is supremely rich and glorious.

8. And therefore Divine Wisdom, grieving for such as these, who make themselves vile, low, miserable and poor, because they love the things in this world which seem to them so rich and beautiful, addresses an exclamation to them in the Proverbs, saying: *O viri, ad vos clamito, et vox mea ad filios hominum. Intelligite, parvuli, astutiam, et insipientes, animadvertite. Audite quia de rebus magnis locutura sum.* And farther on he continues: *Mecum sunt divitiae, et gloria, opes superboe et justitia. Melior est fructus meus auro, et lapide pretioso, et gemina mea argento electo. In viis justitiae ambulo, in medio semitarum judicii, ut ditem diligentes me, et thesauros eorum repleam.*<sup>37</sup> Which signifies: *O ye men, to you I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. Attend, little ones, to subtlety and sagacity; ye that are foolish, take notice. Hear, for I have to speak of great things. With me are riches and glory, high riches and justice. Better is the fruit that ye will find in me than gold and precious stones; and my generation -- namely, that which ye will engender of me in your souls -- is better than choice silver. I walk in the ways of justice, in the midst of the paths of judgment, that I may enrich those that love me and fill their treasures perfectly.*

-- Herein Divine Wisdom speaks to all those that set their hearts and affections upon anything of the world, according as we have already said. And she calls them 'little ones,' because they make themselves like to that which they love, which is little. And therefore she tells them to be subtle and to take note that she is treating of great things and not of things that are little like themselves. That the great riches and the glory that they love are with her and in her, and not where they think. And that high riches and justice dwell in her; for, although they think the things of this world to be all this, she tells them to take note that her things are better, saying that the fruit that they will find in them will be better for them than gold and precious stones; and that which she engenders in souls is better than the choice silver which they love; by which is understood any kind of affection that can be possessed in this life.

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<sup>35</sup> [The word is applicable to any kind of preferential position.]

<sup>36</sup> Genesis 21, 10.

<sup>37</sup> Proverbs 8,4-6, 18-21.

## Chapter 5

*Wherein the aforementioned subject is treated and continued, and it is shown by passages and figures from Holy Scripture how **necessary** it is for the soul to journey to God through this dark night of the mortification of desire in all things.*

1. FROM what has been said it may be seen in some measure **how great a distance there is between all that the creatures are in themselves and that which God is in Himself**, and how souls that set their affections upon any of these creatures are at as great a distance as they from God; for, as we have said, **love produces equality and likeness**. This distance was clearly realized by Saint Augustine, who said in the *Soliloquies*, speaking with God: 'Miserable man that I am, when will my littleness and imperfection be able to have fellowship with Thy uprightness? Thou indeed art good, and I am evil; Thou art merciful, and I am impious; Thou art holy, I am miserable; Thou art just, I am unjust; Thou art light, I am blind; Thou, life, I, death; Thou, medicine, I, sick; Thou, supreme truth, I, utter vanity.' All this is said by this Saint.<sup>38</sup>

2. Wherefore, it is **supreme ignorance** for the soul **to think that it will be able to pass** to this high estate of union with God if first it void not the desire of all things, **natural** and **supernatural**, which may hinder it, according as we shall explain hereafter;<sup>39</sup> for there is the greatest possible distance between these things and that which comes to pass in this estate, which is naught else than transformation in God. For this reason Our Lord, when showing us this path, said through Saint Luke: *Qui non renuntiat omnibus quae possidet, non potest meus esse discipulus*.<sup>40</sup> This signifies: *He that renounces not all things that he possesses with his will cannot be My disciple*. And this is evident; for **the doctrine** that the Son of God came to teach was contempt for all things, whereby a man might receive as a reward the Spirit of God in himself. For, as long as the soul **rejects** not all things, it has no **capacity to receive** the Spirit of God in pure transformation.

3. Of this we have a figure in Exodus, wherein we read that God gave not the children of Israel the food from Heaven, which was manna, until the flour which they had brought from Egypt failed them<sup>41</sup>. By this is signified that first of all **it is meet to renounce all things**, for this angels' food is not fitting for the palate that would find delight in the food of men.

And not only does the soul become **incapable of receiving** the Divine Spirit when it stays and pastures on other strange pleasures, but those souls greatly offend the Divine Majesty who desire spiritual food and **are not content with God alone**, but desire rather to intermingle desire and affection for other things.

This can likewise be seen in the same book of Holy Scripture,<sup>42</sup> wherein it is said that, not content with that simplest of food, they desired and craved fleshly food.<sup>43</sup> And that Our Lord **was greatly wroth** that they should desire to intermingle a food that was so base and so coarse with one that was so noble<sup>44</sup> and so simple; which, though it was so, had within itself the sweetness and substance of

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<sup>38</sup> *Soliloq.*, chap. ii (Migne: *Patr. lat.*, Vol. XL, p. 866).

<sup>39</sup> So Alc. The other authorities have merely: 'which may pertain to it,' and e.p. adds to this: 'through self-love.' Even when softened by Diego de Pesús this phrase of the Saint did not escape denunciation, and it was the first of the 'propositions' condemned in his writings (cf. General Introduction, VI, above). It was defended by P. Basilio Ponce de León in his *Reply* (p. lx), and more extensively by P. Nicolás de Jesús María (*Elucidatio*, Pt. II, Chap i, pp. 125-40). In reality, little defence is needed other than that contained in the last chapters of the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, which clearly show the harm caused by supernatural favours, when these are abused, to the memory, the understanding and the will. Who, after all, can doubt that we may abuse 'things supernatural' and by such abuse hinder the soul from attaining union with God?

<sup>40</sup> St. Luke 14,33.

<sup>41</sup> Exodus 16,3-4.

<sup>42</sup> E.p. alters this to: 'in the same Scripture.' [It does not, in fact, occur in the same book.]

<sup>43</sup> Numbers 11,4.

<sup>44</sup> [*Lit.*, 'so high.']

all foods.<sup>45</sup> Wherefore, while they yet had the morsels in their mouths, as David says likewise: *Ira Dei descendit super eos.*<sup>46</sup> The wrath of God came down upon them, sending fire from Heaven and consuming many thousands of them; for God held it an unworthy thing that they should have a desire for other food when He had given them food from Heaven.

4. **Oh, did spiritual persons but know how much good and what great abundance of spirit they lose** through not seeking to **raise up their desires** above childish things, and how in **this simple spiritual food** they would find the sweetness of all things, if they desired not to taste those things!

But such food gives them no pleasure, for the reason why the children of Israel received not the sweetness of all foods that was contained in the manna was that they would not reserve their desire for it **alone**.

So that they failed to find in the manna all the sweetness and strength that they could wish, not because it was not contained in the manna, but because **they desired some other thing**.

Thus he that will love some other thing **together** with God of a certainty **makes little account of God**, for **he weighs in the balance against God** that which, as we have said, is **at the greatest possible distance from God**.

5. It is well known by experience that, when **the will** of a man is **affectioned to** one thing, **he prizes it more than any other**; although some other thing may be much better, he takes less pleasure in it. And if he wishes to **enjoy both**, he is bound to **wrong the more important**, because he makes an equality between them.

Wherefore, since there is naught that equals God, the soul that loves some other thing together with Him, or clings to it, does Him a grievous wrong. And if this is so, what would it be doing if it loved anything more than God?

6. It is this, too, that was denoted by the command of God to Moses that he should ascend the Mount to speak with Him: He commanded him not only to ascend it alone, leaving the children of Israel below, but not even to allow **the beasts** to feed over against the Mount.<sup>47</sup> By this He signified that the soul that is to ascend this mount of perfection, to commune with God, **must not only renounce all things** and leave them below, but must not even **allow the desires**, which are the beasts, to pasture over against this mount -- that is, upon other things which are not purely God, in Whom -- that is, in the state of perfection -- every desire ceases.

So he that journeys on the road and makes the ascent to God must needs be **habitually careful to quell and mortify the desires**;

and **the greater the speed** wherewith a soul does this, **the sooner** will it reach the end of its journey.

Until these be quelled, it cannot reach the end, **however much it practises the virtues**, since **it is unable to attain to perfection in them**;

for this perfection consists in voiding and stripping and purifying the soul of every desire.

Of this we have another very striking figure in Genesis, where we read that, when the patriarch Jacob desired to ascend Mount Bethel, in order to build an altar there to God whereon he should offer Him sacrifice, he first commanded all his people to do three things:

**one** was that they should cast away from them all strange gods;  
**the second**, that they should purify themselves;

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<sup>45</sup> [Wisdom 16, 20.]

<sup>46</sup> Psalm 77,31 [A.V. 78, 31].

<sup>47</sup> [Exodus 34,2-3.] E.p.: 'within sight of the Mount.' A, B: 'near the Mount.'

**the third**, that they should change their garments.<sup>48</sup>

7. By these three things it is signified that any soul that will ascend this mount **in order to make of itself an altar** whereon **it may offer to God the sacrifice of pure love and praise and pure reverence**, must, before ascending to the summit of the mount, have done these **three things** aforementioned perfectly.

- **First**, it must cast away all strange gods - namely, all strange affections and attachments;
- **secondly**, it must purify itself of the remnants which the desires aforementioned have left in the soul, by means of the dark night of sense whereof we are speaking, habitually denying them and repenting itself of them;
- and **thirdly**, in order to reach the summit of this high mount, it must have changed its garments, which, through its observance of the first two things, God will change for it, from **old to new**, by giving it
  - **a new understanding of God in God**, the old human understanding being cast aside;
  - and **a new love of God in God**, the will being now stripped of all its old desires and human pleasures,
  - and the soul being brought into a new state of knowledge and profound delight, all other old images and forms of knowledge having been cast away, and all that belongs to the old man, which is the aptitude of the natural self, quelled, and the soul clothed with a new supernatural aptitude with respect to all its faculties.

**So that its operation**, which before was **human, has become Divine**, which is that that is attained in the state of union, wherein the soul becomes naught else than **an altar whereon God is adored** in praise and love, and God alone is upon it.

For this cause God commanded that **the altar whereon the Ark of the Covenant** was to be laid should be **hollow within**,<sup>49</sup> so that the soul may understand how **completely empty of all things** God desires it to be, that it may be **an altar worthy of** the presence of His Majesty.

[Subtle allusion to Our Lady]

On this altar it was likewise forbidden that there should be any strange fire, or that its own fire should ever fail; and so essential was this that, because Nadab and Abiu, who were the sons of the High Priest Aaron, offered strange fire upon His Altar, Our Lord was wroth and slew them there before the altar.<sup>50</sup> By this we are to understand that **the love of God must never fail in the soul**, so that the soul may be **a worthy altar**, and so that no other love must be mingled with it.

8. **God permits not that any other thing should dwell together with Him.** Wherefore we read in the First Book the Kings that, when the Philistines put the Ark of the Covenant into the temple where their idol was, the idol was **cast down upon the ground** at the dawn of each day, and broken to pieces.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Gen. 35, 2.

<sup>49</sup> Exodus 27, 8.

<sup>50</sup> Leviticus 10,1-2.

<sup>51</sup> 1 Kings [A.V., I Samuel] 5, 3-5.



And He permits and wills that there should be only **one desire** where He is, which is to keep the law of God perfectly, and to bear upon oneself the Cross of Christ.

And thus **naught else** is said in the Divine Scripture to have been commanded by God to be put in the Ark, where the manna was, save the book of the Law,<sup>52</sup> and the rod Moses,<sup>53</sup> which signifies the Cross.

For the soul that aspires naught else than the keeping of the law of the Lord perfectly and the bearing of the Cross of Christ **will be a true Ark**, containing within itself the true manna, which is God, when that soul attains to a perfect possession within itself of this law and this rod, without any other thing so ever.

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<sup>52</sup> Deut. 31,26.

<sup>53</sup> Numbers 17,10. [More properly, 'the rod of Aaron.']

## CHAPTER VI

*Wherein are treated **two serious evils** caused in the soul by the desires, the one evil being **privative** and the other **positive**.*

1. IN order that what we have said may be the more clearly and fully understood, it will be well to set down here and state how these desires are the cause of two serious evils in the soul:

- the one is that they **deprive** it of the Spirit of God,
- and the other is that the soul wherein they dwell is **wearied, tormented, darkened, defiled** and **weakened**,

according to that which is said in Jeremias, Chapter II: *Duo mala fecit Populus meus: dereliquerunt fontem aquae vivae, et foderunt sibi cisternas, dissipatas, quae continere non valent aquas.* Which signifies: "They have forsaken Me, Who am the fountain of living water, and they have hewed them out broken cisterns, that can hold no water."<sup>54</sup>

Those two evils -- namely, the **privative** and the **positive** -- may be caused by **any disordered act of the desire**.

**[The First effect the desires cause in the soul: a privative effect]  
[Resistance to the Spirit of God]**

And, speaking **first of all**, of **the privative**, it is clear from the very fact that the soul becomes affectioned to a thing which comes under the head of creature, that the more the desire for that thing fills the soul,<sup>55</sup> **the less capacity has the soul for God**; inasmuch as *two contraries*, according to the philosophers, *cannot coexist in one person*; and further, since, as we said in the fourth chapter, **affection for God and affection for creatures are contraries**, there cannot be contained within **one will** affection for creatures and affection for God.

For what has the creature to do with the Creator? What has sensual to do with spiritual? Visible with invisible? Temporal with eternal? Food that is heavenly, spiritual and pure with food that is of sense alone and is purely sensual? Christlike poverty of spirit with attachment to aught soever?

2. Wherefore, as in natural generation no form can be introduced unless the preceding, contrary form is first expelled from the subject, which form, while present, is an impediment to the other by reason of the contrariety which the two have between each other;

even so, for as long as the soul is subjected to **the sensual spirit**, the spirit which is **pure and spiritual** cannot enter it. Wherefore our Saviour said through Saint Matthew: *Non est bonum sumere panem filiorum, et mittere canibus.*<sup>56</sup> That is: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs". And elsewhere, too, he says through the same Evangelist: *Nolite sanctum dare canibus.*<sup>57</sup> Which signifies: "Give not that which is holy to the dogs".

In these passages Our Lord compares those who renounce their creature-desires, and prepare themselves to receive the Spirit of God **in purity**, to the children of God; and those who would have their **desire** feed upon the creatures, to dogs. For it is given to children to eat with their father at table and from his dish, which is to feed upon His Spirit, and to dogs are given **the crumbs which fall from the table**.

3. From this we are to learn that **all created things are crumbs** that have fallen from the table of

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<sup>54</sup> Jeremias ii, 13.

<sup>55</sup> [*Lit.*, 'the greater the bulk that that desire has in the soul.']

<sup>56</sup> St. Matthew xv, 26.

<sup>57</sup> St. Matthew vii, 6.

God. Wherefore he that feeds ever upon<sup>58</sup> the creatures is rightly called a dog, and therefore the bread is taken from the children, because they desire not to rise above feeding upon the crumbs, which are created things, to the **Uncreated Spirit of their Father**<sup>59</sup>. Therefore, like dogs, they are ever hungering, and justly so, because the crumbs serve to whet their appetite rather than to satisfy their hunger.

And thus David says of them: *Famem patientur ut canes, et circuibunt civitatem. Si vero non fuerint saturati, et murmurabunt.*<sup>60</sup> Which signifies: “They shall suffer hunger like dogs and shall go round about the city, and, if they find not enough to fill them, they shall murmur”.

For **this is the nature of one that has desires, that he is ever discontented and dissatisfied**, like one that suffers hunger; for what has the hunger which all the creatures suffer to do with **the fullness** which is caused by the Spirit of God? Wherefore **this fullness** that is **uncreated** cannot enter the soul, if there be not first cast out that other created hunger which belongs to **the desire** of the soul; for, as we have said *two contraries cannot dwell in one person*, the which contraries in this case are hunger and fullness.

4. From what has been said it will be seen **how much greater is the work of God** [Lit., 'how much more God does.'] **in the cleansing** and the purging of a soul from these contrarieties **than in the creating** of that soul from nothing.

For these contrarieties, these contrary desires and affections, are more completely opposed to God and offer Him **greater resistance** than does nothingness; for nothingness resists not at all.

And let this suffice with respect to **the first of the important evils** which are inflicted upon the soul by the desires -- namely, resistance to the Spirit of God -- since much has been said of this above.

#### [The Second effect the desires cause in the soul: a positive effect]

5. Let us now speak of **the second effect** which they cause in the soul. This is of **many kinds**, because the desires weary the soul and torment and darken it, and defile it and weaken it.

Of these **five things** we shall speak separately, in their turn.

#### [The First positive effect: weary and fatigue the soul]

6. With regard to **the first**, it is clear that the desires **weary and fatigue the soul**; for they are like **restless and discontented children**, who are ever demanding this or that from their mother, and are never contented.

And even as one that digs because he covets a treasure is wearied and fatigued, even so is the soul weary and fatigued in order to attain that which its desires demand of it; and although in the end it may attain it, it is still weary, because it is **never satisfied**; for, after all, the cisterns which it is digging are broken, and cannot hold water to satisfy thirst. And thus, as Isaias says: *Lassus adhuc sinit, et anima ejus vacua est.*<sup>61</sup> Which signifies: “His desire is empty. And the soul that has desires is wearied and fatigued”;

for it is like a man that is sick of a fever, who finds himself no better until the fever leaves him, and whose thirst increases with every moment.

For, as is said in the Book of Job: *Cum satiatus fuerit, arctabitur, oestuabit, et omnis dolor irruet super eum.*<sup>62</sup> Which signifies: “When he has satisfied his desire, he will be the more oppressed and straitened”; **the heat of desire** hath increased in his soul and thus **every sorrow will fall upon him**.

<sup>58</sup> [Lit., 'he that goes feeding upon.']

<sup>59</sup> K. Kavanaugh translates : “because they refuse to rise from the crumbs of creatures to the uncreated Spirit of their Father.”

<sup>60</sup> Psalm lviii, 15-16 [A.V., lix, 14-15].

<sup>61</sup> Isaias xxix, 8. The editions supply the translation of the first part of the Latin text, which the Saint and the Codices omitted: 'After being wearied and fatigued, he yet thirsteth,' etc.

<sup>62</sup> Job xx, 22.

The soul is wearied and fatigued by its desires, **because it is wounded and moved and disturbed by them** as is water by the winds; in just the same way they disturb it, allowing it not to rest in any place or in any thing soever.

And of such a soul says Isaias: *Cor impii quasi mare fervens*.<sup>63</sup> “The heart of the wicked man is like the sea when it rages.” And **he is a wicked man that conquers not his desires**.

The soul that would fain satisfy its desires grows wearied and fatigued; for it is like one that, being an hungered, opens his mouth that he may sate himself with wind, whereupon, instead of being satisfied, his craving becomes greater, for the wind is no food for him.

To this purpose said Jeremias: *In desiderio animoe sum attraxit ventum amoris sui*.<sup>64</sup> As though he were to say: “In the desire of his will he snuffed up the wind of his affection”.

And he then tries to describe **the aridity** wherein such a soul remains, and warns it, saying: *Prohibe pedem tuum a nuditate, et guttur tuum a siti*.<sup>65</sup> Which signifies: “Keep thy foot (that is, thy thought) from being bare and thy throat from thirst” (that is to say, thy will from the indulgence of the desire which causes greater dryness);

and, even as the lover is wearied and fatigued upon the day of his hopes, when his attempt has proved to be vain, so the soul is wearied and fatigued by all its desires and by **indulgence in them**, since they all **cause it greater emptiness and hunger**;

for, as is often said, **desire is like the fire**, which increases as wood is thrown upon it, and which, when it has consumed the wood, must needs die.

7. And in this regard it is still **worse with desire**; for the fire goes down when the wood is consumed, but desire, though it increases when fuel is added to it, decreases not correspondingly when the fuel is consumed; on the contrary, instead of going down, as does the fire when its fuel is consumed, **it grows weak through weariness, for its hunger is increased and its food diminished**.

And of this Isaias speaks, saying: *Declinabit ad dexteram, et esuriet: et comedet ad sinistram, et non saturabitur*.<sup>66</sup> This signifies: “He shall turn to the right hand, and shall be hungry; and he shall **eat** on the left hand, and shall not be filled”.

For they that **mortify not their desires**, when they 'turn,' justly see the fullness of the sweetness of spirit of those who are at the right hand of God, which fullness is not granted to themselves; and justly, too, when they **eat** on the left hand,<sup>67</sup> by which is meant the satisfaction of their desire with some creature comfort, **they are not filled**, for, leaving aside that which alone can satisfy, they feed on that which causes them greater hunger.

It is clear, then, that **the desires weary and fatigue the soul**.

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<sup>63</sup> Isaias lvii, 20.

<sup>64</sup> Jeremias ii, 24.

<sup>65</sup> Jeremias ii, 25.

<sup>66</sup> Isaias ix, 20.

<sup>67</sup> Thus Alc. [with 'run' for 'eat']. A, B, e.p. read: '. . . when they turn from the way of God (which is the right hand) are justly hungered, for they merit not the fullness of the sweetness of spirit. And justly, too, when they eat on the left hand,' etc. [While agreeing with P. Silverio that Alc. gives the better reading, I prefer 'eat' to 'run': it is nearer the Scriptural passage and the two Spanish words, *comen* and *corren*, could easily be confused in MS.]

## CHAPTER VII

*Wherein is shown how the desires torment the soul.  
This is proved likewise by comparison and quotations.*

1. THE **second** kind of **positive evil** which the desires cause the soul is in their **tormenting and afflicting** of it, after the manner of one who is in torment through being bound with cords from which he has no relief until he be freed. And of these David says: *Funes peccatorum circumplexi sunt me.*<sup>68</sup> The cords of my sins, which are my desires, have constrained me round about. And, even as one that lies naked upon thorns and briars is tormented and afflicted, even so is the soul tormented and afflicted when it rests upon its desires. For they take hold upon it and distress it and cause it pain, even as do thorns. Of these David says likewise: *Circumdederunt me sicut apes: et exarserunt sicut ignis in spinis.*<sup>69</sup> Which signifies: They compassed me about like bees, wounding me with their stings, and they were enkindled against me, like fire among thorns; for in the desires, which are the thorns, increases the fire of anguish and torment. And even as the husbandman, coveting the harvest for which he hopes, afflicts and torments the ox in the plough, even so does concupiscence afflict a soul that is subject to its desire to attain that for which it longs. This can be clearly seen in that desire which Dalila had to know whence Samson derived his strength that was so great, for the Scripture says that it fatigued and tormented her so much that it caused her to swoon, almost to the point of death, and she said: *Defecit anima ejus, et ad mortem usque lassata est.*<sup>70</sup>

2. **The more intense is the desire, the greater is the torment which it causes the soul.** So that the torment increases with the desire; and the greater are the desires which possess the soul, the greater are its torments; for in such a soul is fulfilled, even in this life, that which is said in the Apocalypse concerning Babylon, in these words: *Quantum glorificavit se, et in deliciis fuit, tantum date illi tormentum, et luctum.*<sup>71</sup> That is: As much as she has wished to exalt and fulfil her desires, so much give ye to her torment and anguish. And even as one that falls into the hands of his enemies is tormented and afflicted, even so is the soul tormented and afflicted that is led away by its desires. Of this there is a figure in the Book of the Judges, wherein it may be read that that strong man, Samson, who at one time was strong and free and a judge of Israel, fell into the power of his enemies, and they took his strength from him, and put out his eyes, and bound him in a mill, to grind corn,<sup>72</sup> wherein they tormented and afflicted him greatly;<sup>73</sup> and thus it happens to the soul in which these its enemies, the desires, live and rule; for the first thing that they do is to weaken the soul and blind it, as we shall say below; and then they afflict and torment it, binding it to the mill of concupiscence; and the bonds with which it is bound are its own desires.

3. Wherefore God, having compassion on these that with such great labour, and at such cost to themselves, go about endeavouring to satisfy the hunger and thirst of their desire in the creatures, says to them through Isaias: *Omnes sitientes, venite ad aquas; et qui non habetis argentum, properate, emite, et comedite: venite, emite absque argento vinum et lac. Quare appenditis argentum non in panibus, et laborem vestrum non in saturitate?*<sup>74</sup>

As though He were to say: All ye that have thirst of desire, come to the waters, and all ye that have no silver of your own will and desires, make haste; buy from Me and eat; come and buy from Me wine and milk (that is, spiritual sweetness and peace) without the silver of your own will, and without giving Me any labour in exchange for it, as ye give for your desires. Wherefore do ye give

<sup>68</sup> Psalm cxviii, 61 [A.V., cxix, 61].

<sup>69</sup> Psalm cxvii, 12 [A.V., cxviii, 12].

<sup>70</sup> Judges xvi, 16. [Actually it was Samson, not Dalila, who was 'wearied even until death.']

<sup>71</sup> Apocalypse xviii, 7.

<sup>72</sup> [Lit., 'bound him to grind in a mill.']

<sup>73</sup> Judges xvi, 21.

<sup>74</sup> Isaias lv, 1-2.

the silver of your will for that which is not bread -- namely, that of the Divine Spirit -- and set the labour of your desires upon that which cannot satisfy you? Come, hearkening to Me, and ye shall eat the good that ye desire and your soul shall delight itself in fatness.

4. This attaining to fatness is a going forth from all pleasures of the creatures; for the creatures torment, but the Spirit of God refreshes. And thus He calls us through Saint Matthew, saying: *Venite ad me omnes, qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos, et invenietis requiem animabus vestris.*<sup>75</sup> As though He were to say: All ye that go about tormented, afflicted and burdened with the burden of your cares and desires, go forth from them, come to Me, and I will refresh you and ye shall find for your souls the rest which your desires take from you, wherefore they are a heavy burden, for David says of them: *Sicut onus grave gravatoe sunt super me.*<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> St. Matthew xi, 28-9.

<sup>76</sup> Psalm xxxvii, 5 [A.V., xxxviii, 4].

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Wherein is shown how the desires darken and blind the soul.*

1. THE **third evil** that the desires cause in the soul is that they **blind and darken** it. Even as vapours darken the air and allow not the bright sun to shine; or as a mirror that is clouded over cannot receive within itself a clear image; or as water defiled by mud reflects not the visage of one that looks therein; even so the soul that is clouded by the desires is darkened in the understanding [the mind] and allows neither<sup>77</sup> the sun of **natural reason** nor that of **the supernatural Wisdom of God** to shine upon it and illumine it clearly. And thus David, speaking to this purpose, says: *Comprehenderunt me iniquitates meoe, et non potui, ut viderem.*<sup>78</sup> Which signifies: Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, and I could have no power to see.

2. And, at this same time, when the soul is darkened in **the understanding**, it is benumbed also in **the will**, and **the memory** becomes dull and disordered in its due operation. For, as **these faculties in their operations depend upon the understanding**, it is clear that, when the understanding is impeded, they will become disordered and troubled.

And thus David says: *Anima mea turbata est valde.*<sup>79</sup> That is: My soul is sorely troubled. Which is as much as to say, 'disordered in its faculties.'

For, as we say, the understanding has no more capacity for receiving enlightenment from **the wisdom of God** than has the air, when it is dark, for receiving enlightenment from the sun; neither has **the will** any power to embrace God within itself in **pure love**, even as the mirror that is clouded with vapour has no power to reflect clearly within itself any visage,<sup>80</sup> and even less power has **the memory** which is clouded by the darkness of **desire** to take clearly upon itself **the form of the image of God**, just as the muddled water cannot show forth clearly the visage of one that looks at himself therein.

3. **Desire blinds and darkens** the soul; for desire, as such, is blind, since of itself it has no understanding in itself, the reason being to it always, as it were, a **child leading a blind man**. And hence it comes to pass that, whensoever the soul is **guided by its desire**, it becomes blind; for this is as if one that sees were guided by one that sees not, which is, as it were, for both to be blind.

And that which follows from this is that which Our Lord says through Saint Matthew: *Si coecus coeco ducatum proestet, ambo in foveam cadunt.*<sup>81</sup> 'If the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit.'

Of little use are its eyes to a moth, since desire for the beauty of the light dazzles it and leads it into the flame.<sup>82</sup>

And even so we may say that one who feeds upon desire is like a fish that is dazzled, upon which the **light acts rather as darkness**, preventing it from seeing the snares which the fishermen are preparing for it.

This is very well expressed by David himself, where he says of such persons: *Supercecidit ignis, et non viderunt solem.*<sup>83</sup> Which signifies: "There came upon them the fire, which burns with its heat and dazzles with its light". And it is this that desire does to the soul, enkindling its **concupiscence**

<sup>77</sup> [*Lit.*, 'gives no occasion either for,' etc.]

<sup>78</sup> Psalm xxxix, 13 [A.V., xl, 12.]

<sup>79</sup> Psalm vi, 4 [A.V., vi, 3].

<sup>80</sup> [*Lit.*, 'the present visage.']

<sup>81</sup> St. Matthew xv, 14.

<sup>82</sup> [*hoguera*. More exactly: 'fire,' 'bonfire,' 'blaze.']

<sup>83</sup> Psalm lvii, 9 [cf. A.V., lviii, 8].

and dazzling its understanding so that it cannot see its light. For the cause of its being thus dazzled is that when another light of a different kind is set before the eye, the visual faculty is attracted by that which is interposed so that it sees not the other;

and, as the desire is set so near to the soul as to be within the soul itself, the soul meets this first light and is attracted by it; and thus it is unable to see the light of clear understanding, neither will see it until **the dazzling power of desire** is taken away from it.

4. For this reason one must greatly lament the ignorance of certain men, who burden themselves with extraordinary penances and with many other voluntary practices, and think that this practice or that will suffice to bring them to the union of Divine Wisdom; but such will not be the case if they endeavour not diligently to mortify their desires. If they were careful to bestow half of that labour on this, they would profit more in a month than they profit by all the other practices in many years. For, just as it is necessary to till the earth if it is to bear fruit, and unless it be tilled it bears naught but weeds, just so is mortification of the desires necessary if the soul is to profit. Without this mortification, I make bold to say, the soul no more achieves progress on the road to perfection and to the knowledge of God of itself, however many efforts it may make, than the seed grows when it is cast upon untilled ground. Wherefore the darkness and rudeness of the soul will not be taken from it until the desires be quenched. For these desires are like cataracts, or like motes in the eye, which obstruct the sight until they be taken away.

5. And thus David, realizing how blind are these souls, and how completely impeded from beholding the light of truth, and how wroth is God with them, speaks to them, saying: *Priusquam intelligerent spinos vestros rhamnum: sicut viventes, sic in ira absorber eos.*<sup>84</sup> And this is as though He had said: Before your thorns (that is, your desires) harden and grow, changing from tender thorns into a thick hedge and shutting out the sight of God even as oft-times the living find their thread of life broken in the midst of its course, even so will God swallow them up in His wrath. For the desires that are living in the soul, so that it cannot understand Him,<sup>85</sup> will be swallowed up by God by means of chastisement and correction, either in this life or in the next, and this will come to pass through purgation. And He says that He will swallow them up in wrath, because that which is suffered in the mortification of the desires is punishment for the ruin which they have wrought in the soul.

6. Oh, if men but knew how great is the blessing of Divine light whereof they are deprived by this blindness which proceeds from their affections and desires, and into what great hurts and evils these make them to fall day after day, for so long as they mortify them not! For a man must not rely upon a clear understanding, or upon gifts that he has received from God, and think that he may indulge his affection or desire, and will not be blinded and darkened, and fall gradually into a worse estate. For who would have said that a man so perfect in wisdom and the gifts of God as was Solomon would have been reduced to such blindness and torpor of the will as to make altars to so many idols and to worship them himself, when he was old?<sup>86</sup> Yet no more was needed to bring him to this than the affection which he had for women and his neglect to deny the desires and delights of his heart. For he himself says concerning himself, in Ecclesiastes, that he denied not his heart that which it demanded of him.<sup>87</sup> And this man was capable of being so completely led away by his desires that, although it is true that at the beginning he was cautious, nevertheless, because he denied them not, they gradually blinded and darkened his understanding, so that in the end they succeeded in quenching that great light of wisdom which God had given him, and therefore in his old age he foresook God.

7. And if unmortified desires could do so much in this man who knew so well the distance that lies

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<sup>84</sup> Psalm lvii, 10 [A.V., lviii, 9].

<sup>85</sup> [*Lit.*, 'before it can understand God.']

<sup>86</sup> 3 Kings [A.V., 1 Kings] 11:4.

<sup>87</sup> Ecclesiastes 2:10.



between good and evil, what will they not be capable of accomplishing by working upon our ignorance? For we, as God said to the prophet Jonas concerning the Ninivites, cannot discern between<sup>88</sup> our right hand and our left.<sup>89</sup> At every step we hold evil to be good, and good, evil, and this arises from our own nature. What, then, will come to pass if to our natural darkness is added the hindrance of desire?<sup>90</sup> Naught but that which Isaias describes thus: *Palpavimus, sicut coeci parietem, et quasi absque oculis attreetavimus: impegimus meridie, quasi in tenebris.*<sup>91</sup> The prophet is speaking with those who love to follow these their desires. It is as if he had said: We have groped for the wall as though we were blind, and we have been groping as though we had no eyes, and our blindness has attained to such a point that we have stumbled at midday as though it were in the darkness. For he that is blinded by desire has this property, that, when he is set in the midst of truth and of that which is good for him, he can no more see them than if he were in darkness.

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<sup>88</sup> [*Lit.*, 'we ... know not what there is between.']

<sup>89</sup> Jonas iv, 11.

<sup>90</sup> [*Lit.*, 'is added desire.']

<sup>91</sup> Isaias lix, 10.

## CHAPTER IX

*Wherein is described how the desires defile the soul.  
This is proved by comparisons and quotations from Holy Scripture.*

1. **THE fourth evil** which the desires cause in the soul is that they **stain and defile** it, as is taught in Ecclesiasticus, in these words: *Qui tetigerit picem, inquinabitur ab ea.*<sup>92</sup> This signifies: He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled with it. And a man touches pitch when he allows the desire of his will to be satisfied by any creature. Here it is to be noted that the Wise Man compares the creatures to pitch; for there is more difference between excellence of soul and the best of the creatures<sup>93</sup> than there is between pure diamond,<sup>94</sup> or fine gold, and pitch. And just as gold or diamond, if it were heated and placed upon pitch, would become foul and be stained by it, inasmuch as the heat would have cajoled and allured the pitch, even so the soul that is hot with desire for any creature draws forth foulness from it through the heat of its desire and is stained by it. And there is more difference between the soul and other corporeal creatures than between a liquid that is highly clarified and mud that is most foul. Wherefore, even as such a liquid would be defiled if it were mingled with mud, so is the soul defiled that clings to creatures, since by doing this it becomes like to the said creatures. And in the same way that traces of soot would defile a face that is very lovely and perfect, even in this way do disordered desires befoul and defile the soul that has them, the which soul is in itself a most lovely and perfect image of God.

2. Wherefore Jeremias, lamenting the ravages of foulness which these disordered affections cause in the soul, speaks first of its beauty, and then of its foulness, saying: *Candidiores sunt Nazaroei ejus nive, nitidiores lacte, rubicundiores ebore antiquo, sapphiro pulchriores. Denigrata est super carbones facies eorum, et non sunt cogniti in plateis.*<sup>95</sup> Which signifies: Its hair -- that is to say, that of the soul -- is more excellent in whiteness than the snow, clearer<sup>96</sup> than milk, and ruddier than old ivory, and lovelier than the sapphire stone. Their face has now become blacker than coal and they are not known in the streets.<sup>97</sup> By the hair we here understand the affections and thoughts of the soul, which, ordered as God orders them -- that is, in God Himself -- are whiter than snow, and clearer<sup>98</sup> than milk, and ruddier than ivory, and lovelier than the sapphire. By these four things is understood every kind of beauty and excellence of corporeal creatures, higher than which, says the writer, are the soul and its operations, which are the Nazarites or the hair aforementioned; the which Nazarites, being unruly,<sup>99</sup> with their lives ordered in a way that God ordered not -- that is, being set upon the creatures -- have their face (says Jeremias) made and turned blacker than coal.

3. All this harm, and more, is done to the beauty of the soul by its unruly desires for the things of this world; so much so that, if we set out to speak of the foul and vile appearance that the desires can give the soul, we should find nothing, however full of cobwebs and worms it might be, not even the corruption of a dead body, nor aught else that is impure and vile, nor aught that can exist and be imagined in this life, to which we could compare it. For, although it is true that the unruly soul, in its natural being, is as perfect as when God created it, yet, in its reasonable being, it is vile, abominable, foul, black and full of all the evils that are here being described, and many more. For, as we shall afterwards say, a single unruly desire, although there be in it no matter of mortal sin, suffices to bring

<sup>92</sup> Ecclesiasticus xiii, 1.

<sup>93</sup> [More literally: 'and all the best that is of the creatures.' 'Best' is neuter and refers to qualities, appurtenances, etc.]

<sup>94</sup> [Lit., 'bright diamond.']

<sup>95</sup> Lamentations iv, 7-8.

<sup>96</sup> [Lit., *más resplandecientes*, 'more brilliant,' 'more luminous.']

<sup>97</sup> [Lit., *plazas* (derived from the Latin *plateas*), which now, however, has the meaning of 'squares,' '(market) places.']

<sup>98</sup> ['Clearer' here is *más claros*; the adjective is rendered 'bright' elsewhere.]

<sup>99</sup> [The words translated 'unruly,' 'disordered,' here and elsewhere, and occasionally 'unrestrained,' are the same in the original: *desordenado*.]

a soul into such bondage, foulness and vileness that it can in no wise come to accord with God in union<sup>100</sup> until the desire be purified. What, then, will be the vileness of the soul that is completely unrestrained with respect to its own passions and given up to its desires, and how far removed will it be from God and from His purity?

4. It is impossible to explain in words, or to cause to be understood by the understanding, what variety of impurity is caused in the soul by a variety of desires. For, if it could be expressed and understood, it would be a wondrous thing, and one also which would fill us with pity, to see how each desire, in accordance with its quality and degree, be it greater or smaller, leaves in the soul its mark and deposit of impurity and vileness, and how one single disorder of the reason can be the source of innumerable different impurities, some greater, some less, each one after its kind. For, even as the soul of the righteous man has in one single perfection, which is uprightness of soul, innumerable gifts of the greatest richness, and many virtues of the greatest loveliness, each one different and full of grace after its kind according to the multitude and the diversity of the affections of love which it has had in God, even so the unruly soul, according to the variety of the desires which it has for the creatures, has in itself a miserable variety of impurities and meannesses, wherewith it is endowed<sup>101</sup> by the said desires.

5. The variety of these desires is well illustrated in the Book of Ezechiel, where it is written that God showed this Prophet, in the interior of the Temple, painted around its walls, all likenesses of creeping things which crawl on the ground, and all the abomination of unclean beasts.<sup>102</sup> And then God said to Ezechiel: 'Son of man, hast thou not indeed seen the abominations that these do, each one in the secrecy of his chamber?'<sup>103</sup> And God commanded the Prophet to go in farther and he would see greater abominations; and he says that he there saw women seated, weeping for Adonis, the god of love.<sup>104</sup> And God commanded him to go in farther still, and he would see yet greater abominations, and he says that he saw there five-and-twenty old men whose backs were turned toward the Temple.<sup>105</sup>

6. The diversity of creeping things and unclean beasts that were painted in the first chamber of the Temple are the thoughts and conceptions which the understanding fashions from the lowly things of earth, and from all the creatures, which are painted, just as they are, in the temple of the soul, when the soul embarrasses its understanding with them, which is the soul's first habitation. The women that were farther within, in the second habitation, weeping for the god Adonis, are the desires that are in the second faculty of the soul, which is the will; the which are, as it were, weeping, inasmuch as they covet that to which the will is affectioned, which are the creeping things painted in the understandings. And the men that were in the third habitation are the images and representations of the creatures, which the third part of the soul -- namely memory -- keeps and reflects upon<sup>106</sup> within itself. Of these it is said that their backs are turned toward the Temple because when the soul, according to these three faculties, completely and perfectly embraces anything that is of the earth, it can be said to have its back turned toward the Temple of God, which is the right reason of the soul, which admits within itself nothing that is of creatures.

7. And let this now suffice for the understanding of this foul disorder of the soul with respect to its desires. For if we had to treat in detail of the lesser foulness which these imperfections and their variety make and cause in the soul, and that which is caused by venial sins, which is still greater than

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<sup>100</sup> [The Spanish of the text reads literally: 'in a union.']

<sup>101</sup> [The verb is *pintar*, 'paint': perhaps 'corrupt' is intended. The same verb occurs in the following sentence.]

<sup>102</sup> Ezechiel viii, 10.

<sup>103</sup> [Ezechiel viii, 12.]

<sup>104</sup> Ezechiel viii, 14.

<sup>105</sup> Ezechiel viii, 16.

<sup>106</sup> [*Lit.*, 'revolves'--'turns over in its mind' in our common idiom.]

that of the imperfections, and their great variety, and likewise that which is caused by the desires for mortal sin, which is complete foulness of the soul, and its great variety, according to the variety and multitude of all these three things, we should never end, nor would the understanding of angels suffice to understand it. That which I say, and that which is to the point for my purpose, is that any desire, although it be for but the smallest imperfection, stains and defiles the soul.

## CHAPTER X

*Wherein is described how the desires weaken the soul in virtue and make it lukewarm.*

1. **THE fifth** way in which **the desires harm the soul** is by making it **lukewarm and weak**, so that it has **no strength** to follow after virtue and to persevere therein.

For as the strength of the desire, **when it is set upon various aims**, is less than if it were set wholly on one thing alone,

and as, **the more are the aims** whereon it is set, **the less** of it there is for each of them, for this cause philosophers say that *virtue in union is stronger than if it be dispersed*.

Wherefore it is clear that, if the desire of the will be **dispersed** among other things than virtue, it must be **weaker** as regards virtue.

And thus the soul whose will is set upon various trifles is like **water**, which, having a place below wherein to empty itself, never rises; and such a soul has no profit.

For this cause the patriarch Jacob compared his son Ruben to **water poured out**, because in a certain sin he had given rein to his desires. And he said: *'Thou art poured out like water; grow thou not.'*<sup>107</sup> As though he had said: Since thou art **poured out like water as to the desires**, thou shalt not grow in virtue.

And thus, as hot water, when **uncovered**, readily loses heat, and as aromatic spices, when they are unwrapped, gradually lose the fragrance and strength of their perfume,

even so **the soul that is not recollected in one single desire for God**<sup>108</sup> loses heat and vigour in its virtue.

This was well understood by David, when he said, speaking with God: *I will keep my strength for Thee.*<sup>109</sup> That is, **concentrating the strength of my desires upon Thee alone**.

2. And the desires weaken the virtue of the soul, because they are to it like the shoots that grow about a tree, and take away its virtue so that it cannot bring forth so much fruit. And of such souls as these says the Lord: *Voe proegnantibus, et nutrientibus in illis diebus.*<sup>110</sup> That is: *"Woe to them that in those days are with child and to them that give suck"*. This being with child and giving suck is understood with respect to the desires; which, if they be not pruned, will ever be taking more virtue from the soul, and will grow to the harm of the soul, like the shoots upon the tree. Wherefore Our Lord counsels us, saying: Have your loins girt about<sup>111</sup> -- the loins signifying here the desires. And indeed, they are also like leeches, which are ever sucking the blood from the veins, for thus the Preacher terms them when he says: The leeches are the daughters -- that is, the desires -- saying ever: *Daca, daca.*<sup>112</sup>

3. From this it is clear that the desires bring no good to the soul but rather take from it that which it has; and, if it mortify them not, they will not cease till they have wrought in it that which the children of the viper are said to work in their mother; who, as they are growing within her womb, consume her and kill her, and they themselves remain alive at her cost. Just so the desires that are not mortified grow to such a point that they kill the soul with respect to God because it has not first

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<sup>107</sup> Genesis xlix, 4.

<sup>108</sup> [el alma no recogida en un solo apetito de Dios]

<sup>109</sup> Psalm lviii, 10 [A.V., lix, 9].

<sup>110</sup> St. Matthew 29, 19.

<sup>111</sup> St. Luke 12, 25.

<sup>112</sup> Proverbs 30, 15.

killed them. And they alone live in it. Wherefore the Preacher says: *Aufer a me Domine ventris concupiscentias.*<sup>113</sup>

4. And, even though they reach not this point, it is very piteous to consider how the desires that live in this poor soul treat it, how unhappy it is with regard to itself, how dry with respect to its neighbours, and how weary and slothful with respect to the things of God. For there is no evil humour that makes it as wearisome and difficult for a sick man to walk, or gives him a distaste for eating comparable to the weariness and distaste for following virtue which is given to a soul by desire for creatures. And thus the reason why many souls have no diligence and eagerness to gain virtue is, as a rule, that **they have desires and affections which are not pure and are not fixed upon God.**<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ecclesiasticus xxiii, 6. [In the original the last two sentences are transposed.]

<sup>114</sup> [*Lit.*, 'not pure on (or 'in') God.']

## CHAPTER XI

*Wherein it is proved **necessary** that the soul that would attain to Divine union should be free from [voluntary] desires, **however slight they be.***

1. I EXPECT that for a long time the reader has been wishing to ask whether it be necessary, in order to attain to this high estate of perfection, to undergo first of all total mortification in **all** the desires, great and small, or if it will suffice to mortify **some** of them and to leave others, those at least which seem of little moment.

For it appears to be a **severe and most difficult** thing for the soul to be able to attain to **such purity and detachment** that it has no will and affection for anything.

**[Distinction to be made between “voluntary” desires and “natural” desires.]**

2. *To this I reply:*

**first**, that it is true that all the desires are not equally hurtful, nor do they all equally embarrass the soul.

I am speaking of those that are **voluntary**, for the **natural desires** hinder the soul little, if at all, from attaining to union, when they are **not consented** to nor pass beyond the first movements (I mean,<sup>115</sup> all those wherein the rational will has had no part, whether at first or afterward);

and to take away these -- that is, to **mortify them wholly in this life** -- is **impossible**. And these hinder not the soul in such a way as to prevent its attainment to Divine union, even though they be not, as I say, wholly mortified; for the natural man may well have them, and yet the soul may be **quite free** from them according to the rational spirit.

For it will sometimes come to pass that the soul will be in the **full**<sup>116</sup> **union** of the *prayer of quiet in the will* at the very time when these desires are dwelling in the sensual part of the soul, and yet the higher part, which is in prayer, will have nothing to do with them.

But all the other **voluntary desires**,

- whether they be of **mortal sin**, which are the gravest,
- or of **venial sin**, which are less grave,
- or whether they be only of **imperfections**, which are the least grave of all,

must be driven away every one, and the soul **must be free from them all**, **howsoever slight they be**, if it is to come to this **complete union**; and **the reason is** that

**the state of this Divine union** consists in the soul's total transformation, according to the will, in the will of God, so that, there may be **naught in the soul that is contrary to the will of God**, but that, in all and through all, **its movement may be that of the will of God alone.**

<sup>115</sup> [The original has no such explanatory phrase.]

<sup>116</sup> [That is, will be enjoying all the union that the prayer of quiet gives.]

3. It is for this reason that we say of this state that **it is the making of two wills into one** -- namely, into the will of God, which will of God is likewise the will of the soul.

**[intentionally knowingly sinning]**

For if this soul **desired** any imperfection that God wills not, there would not be made one will of God, since the soul would have a will for that which God has not.

**It is clear, then, that for** the soul to come to unite itself perfectly with God through love and will, **it must first** be free from all desire of the will, howsoever slight.

That is, that **it must not intentionally and knowingly consent with the will to imperfections, and it must have power and liberty to be able not so to consent intentionally.**

I say “knowingly”, because, **unintentionally and unknowingly**, or without having the power to do otherwise, **it may well fall into imperfections and venial sins, and into the natural desires whereof we have spoken;**

for of such sins as these which are **not voluntary and surreptitious** it is written that the just man shall fall seven times in the day and shall rise up again.<sup>117</sup>

But of the **voluntary desires**, which, though they be for very small things, are, as I have said, intentional venial sins, any one that is not conquered suffices to impede union.<sup>118</sup>

I mean, if this **habit** be not **mortified**; for sometimes certain acts of different desires have not as much power when the habits are mortified.

Still, the soul will attain to the stage of not having even these, for they likewise proceed from **a habit of imperfection.**

But **some habits of voluntary imperfections**, which are never completely conquered, **prevent** not only the attainment of Divine union, but also **progress in perfection.**

4. These *habitual imperfections* are, for example, a common custom of **much speaking**, or some **slight attachment** which we never quite wish to conquer -- such as that to

a person,  
a garment,  
a book,  
a cell,  
a particular kind of food, tittle-tattle, fancies for tasting,  
knowing or hearing certain things,  
and suchlike.

Any one of these imperfections, if the soul has become **attached** and **habituated** to it, is of as **great harm to its growth and progress in virtue** as though it were to fall daily into many other imperfections and usual venial sins which **proceed** not from a habitual indulgence in any habitual and harmful attachment, and **will not hinder it** so much as when it has **attachment** to anything.

For **as long as it has this there is no possibility that it will make progress in perfection, even though the imperfection be extremely slight.**

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<sup>117</sup> Proverbs xxiv, 16.

<sup>118</sup> [The original omits ‘union.’]



For **it comes to the same thing whether a bird be held by a slender cord or by a stout one**; since, even if it be slender, the bird will be well held as though it were stout, for so long as it breaks it not and flies not away. It is true that the slender one is the easier to break; still, easy though it be, the bird will not fly away if it be not broken. And thus, the soul that has attachment to anything, however much virtue it possesses, will not attain to **the liberty of Divine union**.

For **the desire and the attachment of the soul have that power** which **the sucking-fish**<sup>119</sup> is said to have when it clings to a ship; for, though but a very small fish, if it succeed in clinging to the ship, it makes it incapable of reaching the port, or of sailing on at all.

**It is sad to see** certain souls in this plight; like rich vessels, they are laden with wealth and good works and spiritual exercises, and with the virtues and the favours that God grants them; and **yet**, because **they have not the resolution to break** with some

whim  
or attachment  
or affection

(which all come to the same thing), **they never make progress or reach the port of perfection**, though they would need to do no more than make one good flight and thus to **snap that cord of desire right off**, or to **rid themselves of that sucking-fish of desire** which clings to them.

5. **It is greatly to be lamented** that, when God has granted them strength to break other and stouter cords<sup>120</sup> -- namely, affections for sins and vanities -- they should fail to attain to such blessing because they have not shaken off **some childish thing** which God had bidden them **conquer for love of Him**, and which is nothing more than a thread or a hair.<sup>121</sup>

[falling back; St. Teresa of Avila]

And, what is worse, not only do they make **no progress**, but because of this attachment they **fall back, lose that which they have gained**, and retrace that part of the road along which they have travelled at the cost of so **much time and labour**; for it is well known that,

**on this road, not to go forward is to turn back,**  
**and**  
**not to be gaining is to be losing.**

This Our Lord desired to teach us when He said: 'He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathers not with Me scatters.'<sup>122</sup> He that takes not the trouble to repair the vessel, however slight be the crack in it, is likely to spill all the liquid that is within it. The Preacher taught us this clearly when he said: *He that despises small things shall fall by little and little.*<sup>123</sup> For, as he himself says, *a great*

<sup>119</sup> [Or 'remora.']

<sup>120</sup> [*cordeles*: a stronger word than that used above (*hilo*), which, if the context would permit, might better be translated 'string' -- its equivalent in modern speech. Below, *hilo* is translated 'thread.']

<sup>121</sup> [*Hilo*, rendered 'thread,' as explained in n. 4 above, can also be taken in the stronger sense of 'cord.']

<sup>122</sup> St. Matthew 12:30.

<sup>123</sup> Ecclesiasticus 19:1.

fire comes from a single spark.<sup>124</sup> And thus one imperfection is sufficient to lead to another; and these lead to yet more;

wherefore you will hardly ever see a soul that is **negligent in conquering one desire**, and that **has not many more arising from the same weakness and imperfection that this desire causes**. In this way they are continually filling;

**we have seen many persons** to whom God has been granting the favour of leading them a long way, into a state of great detachment and liberty, yet who, merely through beginning to **indulge some slight attachment, under the pretext of doing good, or in the guise of conversation and friendship [St. Teresa of Avila]**, often lose their spirituality and desire for God and holy solitude, fall from the **joy and wholehearted devotion** which they had in their spiritual exercises, and **cease not until they have lost everything**; and this because they broke not with **that beginning of sensual desire and pleasure** and kept not themselves in solitude for God.

6. Upon this road **we must ever journey** in order to attain our goal; which means that **we must ever be mortifying our desires and not indulging them**; and if they are not all completely mortified **we shall not completely attain**.

For even as a log of wood may fail to be transformed in the fire because **a single degree of heat** is wanting to it, even so the soul will not be transformed in God if it have but **one imperfection**, although it be something **less than voluntary desire**;

for, as we shall say hereafter concerning **the night of faith** [Ascent II,III], the soul has only one will, and that will, if it be embarrassed by aught and set upon by aught, is not **free, solitary, and pure**, as is necessary for Divine transformation.

7. Of this that has been said we have **a figure** in the Book of the Judges, where it is related that the angel came to the children of Israel and said to them that, because they had not destroyed that forward people, but had made a league with some of them, they would therefore be left among them as enemies, that they might be to them an occasion of stumbling and perdition.<sup>125</sup>

And just so does God deal with certain souls: though He has taken them out of the world, and slain the giants, their sins, and destroyed the multitude of their enemies, which are the occasions of sin that they encountered **in the world**, solely that they may enter this Promised Land of Divine union with greater liberty, **yet they harbour friendship and make alliance with the insignificant peoples**<sup>126</sup> -- that is, with **imperfections** ["Way of Perfection"]-- and mortify them not completely; therefore Our Lord is angry, and **allows them to fall into their desires and go from bad to worse**.

8. In the Book of Josue, again, we have a figure of what has just been said -- where we read that God commanded Josue, at the time that he had to enter into possession of the Promised Land, to **destroy all things** that were in the city of Jericho, in such wise as to leave therein nothing alive, man or woman, young or old, and to slay all the beasts, and to take naught, neither to covet aught, of all the spoils.<sup>127</sup> This He said that **we may understand how**, if a man is to enter this Divine union, **all that lives in his soul must die**, both little and much, small and great, and that the soul must be without desire for all this, and detached from it, even as though it existed not for the soul, neither the soul for it.

This Saint Paul teaches us clearly in his epistle *ad Corinthios*, saying:

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<sup>124</sup> [*Lit.*, 'the fire is increased by a single spark.'] Ecclesiasticus xi, 34 [A.V., xi, 32].

<sup>125</sup> Judges 2:3.

<sup>126</sup> [The original phrase (*gente menuda*) means 'little folk.' It is used of children and sometimes also of insects and other small creatures. There is a marked antithesis between the 'giants,' or sins, and the 'little folk,' or imperfections.]

<sup>127</sup> Josue 6:21: "Then they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword."

*'This I say to you, brethren, that the time is short; it remains, and it behoves you, that they that have wives should be as if they had none; and they that weep for the things of this world, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as if they used it not.'*<sup>128</sup>

This the Apostle says to us in order to teach us **how complete must be the detachment** [*detachment* is one of the three virtues of Way of Perfection] of our soul from all things if it is to journey to God.

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<sup>128</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:29-31.

## CHAPTER XII

*Which treats of the answer to another question,  
explaining **what the desires are**  
that suffice to cause the evils aforementioned in the soul.*

1. WE might write at greater length upon this matter of **the night of sense**, saying all that there is to say concerning **the harm** which is caused by the desires, not only in the ways aforementioned, but **in many others**.

But for **our purpose** that which has been said suffices; for we believe **we have made it clear** in what way **the mortification of these desires** is called **night**, and how it behoves us to **enter this night** [explained in chapter 13-14] in order to journey to God.

The only thing that remains, before we treat of **the manner of entrance therein** [explained in chapter 13-14], in order to bring this part to a close, is a question concerning what has been said which might occur to the reader.

[Two questions remain:]

2. It may **first** be asked **if any desire can be sufficient to work and produce in the soul the two evils aforementioned** -- namely, **the privative**, which consists in depriving the soul of the grace of God, and **the positive**, which consists in producing within it the five serious evils whereof we have spoken.

**Secondly**, it may be asked **if any desire, however slight it be and of whatever kind, suffices to produce all these together**, or if some desires produce **some** and others produce **others**. If, for example, some produce torment; others, weariness; others, darkness, etc.

3. Answering this question, I say,

**first of all**, that with respect to the **privative evil** -- which consists in the soul's being deprived of God -- this is wrought **wholly**, and can **only** be wrought, by the **voluntary desires**, which are of the matter of **mortal sin**; for they deprive the soul of grace in this life, and of glory, which is the possession of God, in the next.

**In the second place**, I say that both those desires which are of the matter of **mortal sin**, and the **voluntary desires**, which are of the matter of **venial sin**, and those that are of the matter of **imperfection**, are **each sufficient to produce in the soul all these positive evils together**; the which evils, although in a certain way they are privative, we here call positive, since they correspond to a **turning towards the creature**, even as the privative evils correspond to a turning away from God.

But there is this difference, that

the desires which are of **mortal sin** produce **total blindness, torment, impurity, weakness, etc.**

Those others, however, which are of the matter of **venial sin or imperfection**, produce **not** these evils **in a complete and supreme degree**, since they deprive not the soul of grace, upon the loss of which depends the possession of them, since the death of the soul is their life; but they produce them in the soul remissly, **proportionately** to the remission of grace which these desires produce in the

soul.<sup>129</sup> So that desire which most weakens grace will produce the most abundant torment, blindness and defilement.

4. It should be noted, however, that, although **each desire** produces **all** these evils, which we here term positive,

there are **some** which, **principally and directly**, produce **some** of them, and **others** which produce others, and the remainder are produced consequently upon these.

- For, although it is true that **one sensual desire [apetito] produces all these evils**, yet its **principal and proper** effect is the defilement of soul and body.

- And, although **one avaricious desire [apetito] produces them all**, its **principal and direct** result is to produce misery.

- And, although similarly **one vainglorious desire [apetito] produces them all**, its **principal and direct** result is to produce darkness and blindness.

- And, although **one gluttonous desire [apetito] produces them all**, its principal result is to produce lukewarmness in virtue. And even so is it with the rest.

5. And **the reason why any act of voluntary desire [apetito] produces in the soul all these effects together** lies in the **direct contrariety** which exists between them and all the acts of virtue which produce the contrary effects in the soul.

For,

even as **an act of virtue** produces and begets in the soul sweetness, peace, consolation, light, cleanness and fortitude **altogether**,

even so **an unruly desire** causes torment, fatigue, weariness, blindness and weakness **[altogether]**.

**All the virtues** grow through the practice of **any one of them**, and

**all the vices** grow through the practice of **any one of them** likewise, and the remnants<sup>130</sup> of each grow in the soul.

And although all these evils are **not evident at the moment** when the desire is indulged, since the resulting pleasure gives no occasion for them, yet **the evil remnants which they leave** are clearly perceived, whether before or **afterwards**.

This is very well illustrated by that book which the angel commanded Saint John to eat, in the Apocalypse, the which book was **sweetness** to his mouth, and in his belly **bitterness**.<sup>131</sup>

For the desire, when it is carried into effect, is **sweet** and appears to be good, but its **bitter** taste is felt afterwards;

the truth of this can be clearly proved by anyone who allows himself to be led away by it [by experience].

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<sup>129</sup> [The word here translated 'remissness' is rendered 'remission' in the text, where it seems to have a slightly different meaning.]

<sup>130</sup> [The word translated 'remnants' also means 'after-taste'.]

<sup>131</sup> Apocalypse 10:9.

Yet I am not ignorant that **there are some men so blind and insensible as not to feel this** [they can't have the experience], for, as they do not walk in God, **they are unable to perceive** that which **hinders them from approaching Him.**

[warning and clarification:]

6. I am not writing here of:

- the other **natural desires** which are not voluntary,
- and of **thoughts** that go not beyond the first movements,
- and other **temptations** to which the soul is not consenting;
- for these produce in the soul **none of the evils** aforementioned.

For, although a person who suffers from them may think that the **passion** and **disturbance** which they then produce in him are defiling and blinding him, **this is not the case**; rather they are bringing him **the opposite advantages.**

For, in so far **as he resists them, he gains fortitude, purity, light and consolation, and many blessings,**

even as Our Lord said to Saint Paul: *That virtue was made perfect in weakness.*<sup>132</sup>

But the voluntary desires work all the evils aforementioned, and more.

[For Spiritual Directors]

Wherefore **the principal care** of spiritual masters is to **mortify** [deprive] their disciples **immediately** with respect to any desire soever, by causing them to **remain without the objects of their desires**, in order to **free them from such great misery.**

<sup>132</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:9. ['Virtue' had often, in the author's day, much of the meaning of the modern word 'strength.']

## CHAPTER XIII

*Wherein is described the manner and way which the soul must follow  
in order to enter this night of sense.*

1. IT now remains for me to give certain counsels [avisos] whereby the soul may **know how to enter this night of sense** and may be able so to do.

To this end it must be known that the soul habitually enters this night of sense **in two ways**:

the one is active;  
the other passive.

- The **active** way consists in **that which the soul can do**, and does, of itself, in order to enter therein, whereof we shall now treat in the counsels which follow.

- The **passive** way is that wherein the soul does nothing, and God works in it, and it remains, as it were, patient. Of this we shall treat in **the fourth book** [Dark Night I], where we shall be treating of **beginners**. And because there, with the Divine favour, we shall give many **counsels to beginners**, according to the **many imperfections** which they are apt to have while on this road, I shall not spend time in giving many here. And this, too, because it belongs not to this place to give them, as **at present we are treating only of the reasons [causas] for which this journey is called a night**, and of **what kind it is**, and **how many parts it has**.

But, as it seems that it would be incomplete [muy corto], and less profitable than it should be [no de tanto provecho], if we gave no help [remedio] or counsel [aviso] here for walking in this **night of desires** [para ejercitar esta noche de apetitos], I have thought well to **set down briefly here the way which is to be followed**: and I shall do the same at the end of each of the **next two parts**<sup>133</sup>, or causes, of **this night**, whereof, with the help of the Lord, I have to treat.

### [All Included in These Two Counsels]

2. These counsels [avisos] for the **conquering of the desires**, which now follow, albeit brief and few, I believe to be as **profitable** and **efficacious** as they are concise; so that one who **sincerely desires to practice them** will need no others, but will find them **all included in these**.

### 3. **First,**

let him have  
an **habitual desire**<sup>134</sup> to imitate Christ  
**in everything that he does**,  
conforming himself to His life;  
**upon which life he must meditate** [considerar]  
so that he may **know how to imitate it**,  
and to behave in all things as Christ would behave.

[Lo Primero, traiga **un ordinario apetito** de imitar a Cristo en todas sus cosas, conformándose con su

<sup>133</sup> The Saint offers also a summary in Dark Night I,10 for the passive night of the sense.

<sup>134</sup> [The word used for desire is *apetito*, which has been used in the past chapters for desires of sense (cf. chap. I, above).]

vida, la cual **debe considerar para saberla imitar** y haberse en todas las cosas como se hubiera él.]

4. **Secondly,**

**in order** that he may be able **to do this well,**

every pleasure that presents itself to the senses,  
if it be not **purely** for the honour and glory of God,  
must be renounced and completely rejected **for the love  
of Jesus Christ,**

who in this life had no other pleasure,  
neither desired any, than to do **the will** of His Father,  
which He called His meat and food.<sup>135</sup>

[Lo segundo, para poder bien hacer esto, cualquiera gusto que se le ofreciere a los sentidos, como no sea **puramente** para honra y gloria de Dios, renúncielo y **quédese vacío de él** por amor de Jesucristo, el cual en esta vida no tuvo otro gusto, ni le quiso, que hacer la voluntad de su Padre, lo cual llamaba él su comida y manjar (Jn 4,34).]

**I take this example:**

- If there present itself to a man the pleasure of **listening** to things that tend not to the service and honour of God, let him not **desire** that pleasure, nor **desire** to listen to them;
- and if there present itself the pleasure of **looking** at things that help him not Godward [*no le ayuden (a amar) más a Dios*], let him not **desire** the pleasure or look at these things;
- and if **in conversation** or in aught else soever such pleasure present itself, let him act likewise.
- And similarly with respect to **all the senses**, in so far as he can fairly avoid the pleasure in question;

if he cannot, it suffices that, although these things may be present to his senses, **he desires not to have this pleasure.**

And in this wise he will be able to mortify and void his senses of such pleasure, as though they were in darkness. [*Y de esta manera ha de procurar **dejar luego mortificados y vacíos de aquel gusto** a los sentidos, como a oscuras.*]

If he takes care to do this, **he will soon reap great profit.**

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<sup>135</sup> [John 4:34.]



## [The Four Passions]

5. For the **mortifying and calming** [*mortificar y apaciguar*] of the **four natural passions**, which are

**joy,  
hope,  
fear and  
grief,**

2. The soul, then, states that "fired with love's urgent longings" it passed through this night of sense to union with the Beloved. A love of pleasure, and attachment to it, usually fires the will toward the enjoyment of things that give pleasure. A more intense enkindling of another, better love (love of the soul's Bridegroom) is necessary for the vanquishing of the appetites and the denial of this pleasure. By finding satisfaction and strength in this love, it will have the courage and constancy to readily deny all other appetites. The love of its Bridegroom is not the only requisite for conquering the strength of the sensitive appetites; an enkindling with urgent longings of love is also necessary. For the sensory appetites are moved and attracted toward sensory objects with such cravings that if the spiritual part of the soul is not fired with other, more urgent longings for spiritual things, the soul will be able neither to overcome the yoke of nature nor to enter the night of sense; nor will it have the courage to live in the darkness of all things by denying its appetites for them.<sup>[2]</sup>

from the **concord and pacification** [*concordia y pacificación*] whereof come these and other blessings,  
the **counsels** here following are of the greatest help, and of great merit, and the **source of great virtues**.

6. **Strive always to prefer**, [*Procure siempre inclinarse*]

not that which is **easiest**, but that which is **most difficult**;  
Not that which is **most delectable**, but that which is **most unpleasing**;  
Not that which gives **most pleasure**, but rather that which gives **least**;  
Not that which is **restful**, but that which is **wearisome**;  
Not that which is **consolation**, but rather that which is **disconsolateness**;  
Not that which is **greatest**, but that which is **least**;  
Not that which is **loftiest** and **most precious**, but that which is lowest and **most despised**;  
Not that which is<sup>136</sup> **a desire for anything**, but that which is a **desire for nothing**;  
Strive to go about seeking not **the best of temporal things**, but the **worst**,

**strive thus to desire to enter into complete detachment and emptiness and poverty**, with respect to everything that is in the world, **for Christ's sake**.

*[y desear entrar en toda desnudez y vacío y pobreza por Cristo de todo cuanto hay en el mundo]*

<sup>136</sup> *Lit.*, 'Not that which is to desire anything, etc.']

7. And it is meet that the soul embrace these acts **with all its heart** and **strive to subdue its will** thereto.

For, if it performs them **with its heart**, it will **very quickly** come to find in them great delight and consolation, and to act with order and discretion.

8. These things that have been said, if they be **faithfully put into practice**, are **quite sufficient** for **entrance into the night of sense**;

but, **for greater completeness**, we shall describe another kind of **exercise** which teaches us to **mortify the concupiscence** of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which, says Saint John,<sup>137</sup> are the things that reign in the world, from which all the other desires proceed.

9. **First**, let the soul strive to work in **its own despite**, and **desire all to do so**.

**Secondly**, let it strive to speak in **its own despite** and **desire all to do so**.

**Third**, let it strive to think humbly of itself, *in its own despite*, and *desire all to do so*.

10. **To conclude** these counsels and rules, it will be fitting to set down here those lines which are written in the *Ascent of the Mount*, which is the figure that is at the beginning of this book; the which lines are **instructions for ascending** to it, and thus **reaching the summit of union**.

[same advice given for the sensual and spiritual things]

For, although it is true that that which is there spoken of is **spiritual and interior**, there is reference **likewise** to the **spirit of imperfection** according to **sensual and exterior things**, as may be seen by the **two roads** which are on either side of **the path of perfection**.

It is in this way and according to this sense that we shall understand them here; that is to say, **according to that which is sensual**.

Afterwards, in **the second part of this night**, they will be understood **according to that which is spiritual**.<sup>138</sup>

11. The lines are these:

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<sup>137</sup> [1 St. John 2:16.]

<sup>138</sup> The Saint does not, however, allude to these lines again. The order followed below is that of **Ale.**, which **differs** somewhat from that followed in the diagram.

<p>In order to arrive at <b>having pleasure in Everything</b>, Desire to have pleasure in <b>nothing</b>.</p> <p>In order to arrive at <b>possessing Everything</b>, Desire to possess <b>nothing</b>.</p> <p>In order to arrive at <b>being everything</b>, Desire to be <b>nothing</b>.</p> <p>In order to arrive at <b>knowing everything</b>, Desire to know <b>nothing</b>.<sup>139</sup></p>	<p><i>Para venir a gustarlo <b>todo</b>, no quieras tener gusto en <b>nada</b>.</i></p> <p><i>Para venir a poseerlo <b>todo</b>, no quieras poseer algo en <b>nada</b>.</i></p> <p><i>Para venir a serlo <b>todo</b>, no quieras ser algo en <b>nada</b>.</i></p> <p><i>Para venir a saberlo <b>todo</b>, no quieres saber algo en <b>nada</b>.</i></p>
<p>In order to arrive at <b>that wherein thou hast no pleasure</b>, Thou must go by a way wherein thou hast no pleasure.</p> <p>In order to arrive at <b>that which thou knowest not</b>, Thou must go by a way that thou knowest not.</p> <p>In order to arrive at <b>that which thou possessest not</b>, Thou must go by a way that thou possessest not.</p> <p>In order to arrive at <b>that which thou art not</b>, Thou must go through that which thou art not.</p>	<p><i>Para venir a <b>lo que no gustas</b>, has de ir por donde no gustas.</i></p> <p><i>Para venir a lo que no sabes, has de ir por donde no sabes.</i></p> <p><i>Para venir a lo que no posees, has de ir por donde no posees.</i></p> <p><i>Para venir a lo que no eres, has de ir por donde no eres.</i></p>
<p>12. When thy <b>mind dwells upon anything</b>, Thou art <b>ceasing to cast thyself upon the All</b> For, in order to <b>pass from the all to the All</b>, Thou hast to <b>deny thyself wholly</b><sup>140</sup> <b>in all</b>.</p> <p>And, when thou comest to <b>possess it wholly</b>, Thou must possess it <b>without desiring anything</b>. For, if thou wilt have anything in having all,<sup>141</sup> Thou hast not <b>thy treasure purely in God</b>.</p>	<p><i>MODO PARA NO IMPEDIR AL TODO</i></p> <p><i>12. Cuando reparas en algo, dejas de <b>arrojarte</b>* al todo. Porque para venir del todo al todo has de negarte del todo en todo.</i></p> <p><i>Y cuando lo vengas del todo a tener, has de tenerlo <b>sin nada querer</b>. Porque, si quieres tener algo en todo, <b>no tienes puro en Dios tu tesoro</b>.</i></p>

**\*Arrojarse:**

1. (arrojarse) Lanzarse o precipitarse de arriba abajo.

2. (arrojarse) Dejarse caer **con violencia o brusquedad** hacia alguien o algo.

<p>13. In this <b>detachment</b> [<i>desnudez</i>] the spiritual soul finds its <b>quiet and repose</b>; for, since it covets nothing, nothing wearies it when it is lifted up, and nothing oppresses it when it is cast down,</p>	<p>13. En esta <b>desnudez</b> halla el espiritual su <b>quietud y descanso</b>, porque, no <b>codiciando</b>* nada, nada le fatiga hacia arriba y nada le oprime hacia abajo,</p>
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<sup>139</sup> [This line, like ll. 6, 8 of the paragraph, reads more literally: 'Desire not to possess (be, know) anything in anything.' It is more emphatic than l. 2.]

<sup>140</sup> [There is a repetition here which could only be indicated by translating 'all-ly.' So, too, in the next couplet.]

<sup>141</sup> [*Lit.* 'anything in all.']

because it is in the centre of its humility; but when it covets anything, at that very moment it becomes wearied.	porque está en el centro de su humildad. Porque, cuando algo codicia, en eso mismo se fatiga.
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*\*Codiciar: Desear mucho o en exceso una cosa difícil de alcanzar, en especial dinero, poder o cualquier cosa para mejorar la situación personal.*

## CHAPTER XIV

### Wherein is expounded the second line of the stanza.

*Kindled in love with yearnings.*

1. NOW that we have expounded **the first line of this stanza**, which treats of **the night of sense**, explaining what this night of sense **is**, and why it is called **night**;

and now that we have likewise described the order and manner which are to be followed for a soul to enter therein actively [chapter 13],

the next thing to be treated in due sequence is **its properties and effects**, which are wonderful, and are described in the next lines of the stanza aforementioned, upon which I will briefly touch for the sake of expounding the said lines, as I promised in the Prologue;<sup>142</sup> and I will then pass on at once to **the second book** [Ascent II and III], treating of **the other part of this night, which is the spiritual**.

2. The soul, then, says that, '*kindled in love with yearnings*,' it passed through this **dark night of sense** and came out thence to the union of the Beloved.

For, **in order to** conquer all the desires and to deny itself the pleasures

which it has in everything, and for which its love and affection are wont to enkindle the will that it may enjoy them,

**it would need to experience** another and a greater enkindling by another and a better love, which is that of its Spouse;

to the end that,

**having its pleasure set upon Him and deriving from Him its strength,**

**it should have courage and constancy to deny itself all other things with ease.**

[Porque para vencer todos los apetitos y negar los gustos de todas las cosas, con cuyo amor y afición se suele inflamar la voluntad para gozar de ellos,

era menester otra **inflamación mayor** de **otro amor mejor**, que es el de su Esposo, para que, **teniendo su gusto y fuerza en éste**, tuviese valor y constancia para fácilmente negar todos los otros.]

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<sup>142</sup> This confirms our point (Bk. I, chap. II, § 6, above) that the Saint considers the Argument as part of the Prologue.

[Otilio / Kavanaugh Translation:]

And, in order to conquer the strength of the desires of sense, it would need, **not only to have love for its Spouse**, but also **to be enkindled by love and to have yearnings**.

For it comes to pass, and so it is, that **with such yearnings of desire** the sensual nature is moved and attracted toward sensual things, so that,

if **the spiritual part** be not **enkindled with other and greater yearnings for that which is spiritual**,

**it will be unable** to **throw off the yoke** of nature<sup>143</sup> or to **enter this night** of sense, neither will it have **courage to remain in darkness** as to all things, depriving itself of desire for them all.

3. And **the nature** and all **the varieties** of these yearnings of love which souls experience in the early stages of this road to union;

and the diligent means and contrivances which they employ in order to leave **their house**, which is **self-will**, during the night of the mortification of their senses;

and how **easy, and even sweet and delectable, these yearnings for the Spouse** make all the trials and perils of this night to appear to them, this is not the place to describe, neither is such description possible;

for it is better to know [experience] and meditate upon these things than to write of them.

And so we shall pass on to expound the remaining lines in the next chapter.

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<sup>143</sup> *Lit.*, 'to conquer the natural yoke.']

## CHAPTER XV

*Wherein are expounded the remaining lines of the aforementioned stanza.*

*. . . oh, happy chance! --  
I went forth without being observed,  
My house being now at rest.*

1. THESE lines take as a metaphor **the miserable estate of captivity**, a man's deliverance from which, when none of the jailers hinder his release, he considers a 'happy chance.'

For the soul, on account of<sup>144</sup> original sin, is truly as it were **a captive in this mortal body**, **subject to the passions and desires of nature**, from bondage and subjection to which it considers its having gone forth without being observed as a 'happy chance' -- having gone forth, that is, without being impeded or engulfed<sup>145</sup> by any of them.

2. For to this end the soul profited by going forth upon a 'dark night' -- that is, in **the privation of all pleasures and mortification of all desires**, after the manner whereof we have spoken.

And by its '**house** being now at rest' is meant **the sensual part**, which is the house of all the desires, and is now at rest because they have all been overcome and lulled to sleep.

For until **the desires are lulled to sleep** through the mortification of the sensual nature, and **until at last the sensual nature itself** is at rest from them, so that **they make not war upon the spirit**, the soul goes not forth to **true liberty** and to **the fruition of union** with its Beloved.

*Porque hasta que los apetitos se adormezcan por la mortificación en la sensualidad, y la misma sensualidad esté ya sosegada de ellos, de manera que ninguna guerra haga al espíritu, no sale el alma a la verdadera libertad, a gozar de la unión de su Amado.*

## END OF THE FIRST BOOK

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<sup>144</sup> [*Lit.*, 'after.']

<sup>145</sup> [*Lit.*, 'comprehended.']