

CHAPTER XI

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

1. I shall now speak of those who are **beginning to be the servants of love** -- for this, I think, is what we become when **we resolve** (*determinamos*) to follow in this way of prayer Him Who so greatly loved us.

So great a dignity is this that **thinking of it alone** brings me a strange comfort (*me regalo extrañamente* extraordinary), for **servile fear** vanishes at once if while we are at this first stage **we act as we should**.

O Lord of my soul and my Good! Why, when a soul has resolved (*determinándose*) **to love** Thee and by forsaking everything **does all in its power towards that end** (*con hacer lo que puede en dejarlo todo para mejor se emplear en este amor de Dios*), so that it may **the better employ itself in the love of God**, hast Thou been pleased that it should not at once have the joy of ascending to the possession of this *perfect love*?

But I am wrong: I should have made my complaint by asking why we ourselves have no desire so to ascend, for it is we alone who are at fault in not at once **enjoying so great a dignity**.

If we attain (*tener con perfección este verdadero amor de Dios*) to **the perfect possession of this true love of God**, it brings all blessings (*los bienes*) with it.

But **so niggardly and so slow are we in giving ourselves wholly to God** that we do not prepare ourselves as we should to receive that precious thing which it is His Majesty's will that we should enjoy only at a great price.

(Somos tan caros y tan tardíos de darnos del todo a Dios, que, como su Majestad no quiere gocemos de cosa tan preciosa sin gran precio, no acabamos de disponernos.)

2. I am quite clear that there is nothing on earth with which so great a blessing can be purchased; but if we did **what we could to obtain it**, if we cherished no attachment to earthly things, and if all our cares and all our intercourse were centred in Heaven, I believe there is no doubt that this blessing would be given us very speedily, provided we prepared ourselves for it thoroughly and quickly, as did some of the saints.

But we think we are giving God everything, whereas what we are really offering Him is the revenue or the fruits of our land while keeping the stock and the right of ownership of it in our own hands.

We have made a resolve to be poor, and that is a resolution of great merit; but we often begin to plan and strive again so that we may have no lack, not only of necessities, but even of superfluities; we try to make friends who will give us these, lest we should lack anything;

and we take greater pains, and perhaps even run greater risks, than we did before, when we had possessions of our own.

Presumably, again, when we became nuns, or previously, when we began to lead spiritual lives and to follow after perfection, we abandoned all thought of our own importance; and yet hardly is our self-importance wounded¹ than we quite forget that we have surrendered it to God and we try to seize it again, and wrest it, as they say, out of His very hands, although we had apparently made Him Lord of our will. And the same thing happens with **everything else**.

3. A nice way of seeking the love of God is this!

We expect great handfuls of it, as one might say, and yet we want to reserve our affections for ourselves!

We make no effort to carry our desires into effect or to raise them far above the earth.

It is hardly suitable that people who act in this way should have **many spiritual consolations**; the two things seem to me **incompatible**.

4. So, being unable to **make a full surrender of ourselves**, we are never given a full supply of this treasure. May His Majesty be pleased to give it to us little by little, even though the receiving of it may cost us all the trials in the world.

The Lord shows exceeding great mercy to him whom He gives **grace and courage** to **resolve to strive** after this blessing **with all his might**.

For God denies Himself to no one who perseveres but gradually increases the courage (*animo*) of such a one till he achieves victory.

I say "courage" (*animo*) because of the numerous obstacles which the devil at first sets in his path to hinder him from ever **setting out upon it**, for the devil knows what harm will come to him thereby and that he will lose not only that one soul but many more.

If by the help of God the beginner strives to reach the summit of perfection, I do not believe **he will ever go to Heaven alone** but will always take many others with him: God treats him like a good captain, and gives him soldiers to go in his company.

So many are the dangers and difficulties which the devil sets before him that if he is not to turn back he needs not **merely a little courage** but **a very great deal**, and **much help from God**.

5. To say something, then, of the early experiences of **those who are determined to pursue this blessing/good and to succeed in this enterprise** (I shall continue later with what I began to say about *mystical theology*, as I believe it is called):

it is in these **early stages** that **their labour is hardest**, for it is they themselves who labour and the Lord Who gives the increase.

In the other degrees of prayer the chief thing is fruition, although, whether at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the road, all have their crosses, different as these may be.

For those who follow Christ **must take the way which He took**, unless they want to be lost.

¹[*Lit.*: "hardly have they touched us in a point of honour." Cf. the use of "punto de honra" or "pundonor" in Spanish drama.]

Blessed are their labours which even here, in this life, have such abundant recompense I shall have to employ some kind of comparison, though, being a woman and writing simply what I am commanded, I should like to avoid doing so; but this spiritual language is so hard to use for such as, like myself, have no learning, that I shall have to seek some such means of conveying my ideas. It may be that my comparison will seldom do this successfully and Your Reverence will be amused to see how stupid I am. But it comes to my mind now that I have read or heard of this comparison: as I have a bad memory, I do not know where it occurred or what it illustrated, but it satisfies me at the moment as an illustration of my own.

6. **The beginner must think of himself as** of one setting out **to make a garden** in which **the Lord** is to **take His delight**, yet in soil most unfruitful and full of weeds.

His Majesty uproots the weeds and will set good plants in their stead.

Let us suppose that this is already done -- that a soul **has resolved to practise** prayer (*Oración*) and has already begun to do so.

We have now, by God's help, like **good gardeners**, to make these plants grow, and to water them carefully, so that they may not perish, but may produce flowers which shall **send forth great fragrance to give refreshment to this Lord of ours**, so that **He may often come into the garden to take His pleasure and have His delight among these virtues**.

[Four Ways to Water the Garden]

7. Let us now consider

- **how this garden can be watered,**
- so that we may **know what we have to do,**
- what **labour** it will **cost us,**
- if **the gain** will outweigh the labour
- and for **how long** this labour must be borne.

It seems to me that the garden can be **watered in four ways**:

[1] by taking the water from a well, which costs us great labour;

[2] or by a water-wheel and buckets, when the water is drawn by a windlass (I have sometimes drawn it in this way: it is less laborious than the other and gives more water)



;

[3] or **by a stream or a brook**, which waters the ground much better, for it saturates it more thoroughly and there is less need to water it often, so that the gardener's labour is much less;

[4] or by heavy rain, when the Lord waters it with no labour of ours, a way incomparably better than any of those which have been described.

8. And now I come to my point, which is **the application of these four methods** [way] of watering by which the garden is to be kept fertile, for if it has no water **it will be ruined**.

It has seemed possible to me in this way to explain something about the four degrees of prayer to which the Lord, of His goodness, has occasionally brought my soul. May He also of His goodness grant me to speak in such a way as to be of some profit to one of the persons who commanded me to write this book,² whom in **four months** the Lord has brought to a point far beyond that which I have reached in **seventeen years**.

He **prepared himself better than I**, and thus his garden, without labour on his part, is watered by all these four means, though he is still receiving the last watering only drop by drop; such progress is his garden making that soon, by the Lord's help, it will be submerged. It will be a pleasure to me for him to laugh at my explanation if he thinks it foolish.

9. **Beginners in prayer (Contemplative Prayer)**, we may say, are those who draw up the water out of the well: this, as I have said, is **a very laborious proceeding**, for **it will fatigue them** to keep

²"P. Pedro Ibañez", observes P. Graciàn, in another manuscript note to the copy of the first edition of St. Teresa's works referred to above (p. 62).

their **senses recollected**, which is a great labour because they have been accustomed to a life of **distractedness** (*derramados*).

Beginners must accustom themselves to pay no heed to what they see or hear, and they must practise doing this during hours of prayer (CP/PH);

they must be alone and in their solitude think over their past life -- all of us, indeed, whether *beginners* or *proficients*, must do this frequently.

There are differences, however, in the degree to which it must be done, as I shall show later.

At first it causes distress, for beginners are not always sure that they have repented of their sins (though clearly they have, since they have so sincerely resolved to serve God).

Then they have to endeavour to **meditate upon the life of Christ** and this fatigues their minds.

10. Thus far **we can make progress by ourselves** [using the General Help of the Grace of God] -- of course with the help of God, for without that, as is well known, we cannot think a single good thought.

This is what is meant by beginning to draw up water from the well -- and God grant there may be **water** in it!

But that, at least, **does not depend on us** [Particular Help of the Grace of God]: our task is to draw it up and to do what we can to water the flowers.

And God is so good that when, for reasons known to His Majesty, perhaps to our great advantage, **He is pleased that the well should be dry**, we, like good gardeners, **do all that in us lies**, and **He keeps the flowers alive without water and makes the virtues grow**. **By water here I mean tears** -- or, if there be none of these, **tenderness** and an interior feeling of devotion (*la ternura y sentimiento interior de devoción*).

11. **What, then, will he do here who finds that for many days he experiences nothing but aridity, dislike, distaste and so little desire to go and draw water that he would give it up entirely if he did not remember that he is pleasing and serving the Lord of the garden;**

if he were not anxious that all his service should not be lost, to say nothing of the gain which he hopes for from the great labour of lowering the bucket so often into the well and drawing it up without water?

It will often happen that, even for that purpose, **he is unable to move his arms -- unable, that is, to think a single good thought, for working with the understanding** is of course the same as drawing water out of the well.

What, then, as I say, will the gardener do here? **He will be glad and take heart and consider it the greatest of favours to work in the garden** of so great an Emperor; and, as he knows that he is pleasing Him by so working (and **his purpose must be to please, not himself, but Him**), let him render Him great praise for having placed such confidence in him, when He has seen that, **without receiving any recompense**, he is taking such great care of that which He had entrusted to him;

let him help Him to bear the Cross and consider how He lived with it all His life long;

let him not wish to have his kingdom on earth or ever cease from prayer;

and so let him resolve, even if this aridity should persist his whole life long, never to let Christ fall beneath the Cross.

The time will come when he shall receive his whole reward at once.

Let him have no fear that his labour will be lost.

He is serving a good Master, Whose eyes are upon him.

Let him pay no heed to evil thoughts, remembering how the devil put such thoughts into the mind of Saint Jerome in the desert.³

These trials bring their own reward.

I endured them for many years; and, when I was able to draw but one drop of water from this blessed well, I used to think that God was granting me a favour.

I know how grievous such trials are and I think **they need more courage than do many others in the world**.

But it has become clear to me that, even in this life, God does not fail to recompense them highly;

for it is quite certain that a single one of those hours in which the Lord has granted me to taste of Himself has seemed to me later a recompense for all the afflictions which I endured over a long period while keeping up the practice of prayer.

12. I believe myself that often in the early stages, and again later, it is the Lord's will to give us these tortures, and many other temptations which present themselves, in order to test His lovers and discover if they can drink of the chalice and help Him to bear the Cross before **He trusts them with His great treasures**.

I believe it is for our good that His Majesty is pleased to lead us in this way so that we may have a **clear understanding of our worthlessness**; for the favours which come later are of **such great dignity** that before He grants us them He wishes us to know by experience **how miserable we are**, lest what happened to Lucifer happen to us also.

What is there that Thou doest, my Lord, which is not for the greater good of the soul that Thou knowest to be already Thine and that **places itself in Thy power**, to follow Thee **whithersoever Thou goest, even to the death of the Cross**, and is determined to help Thee bear that Cross and not to leave Thee alone with it?

¿Qué hacéis Vos, Señor mío, que no sea para mayor bien del alma que entendéis que es ya vuestra y que se pone en vuestro poder para seguiros por donde fuereis hasta muerte de cruz y que está determinada a ayudáros la a llevar y a no dejaros solo con ella?

13. If anyone finds himself **thus determined**, there is nothing for him to fear.

No, spiritual people, there is no reason to be distressed.

Once you have reached so high a state as this, in which you desire to be alone and to commune with God, and abandon the pastimes of the world, the chief part of your work is done.

Praise His Majesty for this and trust in His goodness, which never yet failed His friends.

Close the eyes of your thought and do not wonder: "*Why is He giving **devotion** to that person of so few days' experience, and none to me after **so many years**?*"

³The reference as to the twenty-second epistle of St. Jerome "Ad Eustochium", which describes how vividly there would come to him in the desert pictures of the pomps and vanities of pagan Rome.

Let us believe that it is all for our greater good; let His Majesty guide us whithersoever He wills; we are not our own, but His.

It is **an exceeding great favour** that He shows us **when it is His pleasure that we should wish to dig in His garden, and we are then near the Lord of the garden**, Who is certainly with us.

If it be His will that **these plants and flowers should grow**, some by means of the water drawn from this well and others without it, what matter is that to me?

[water here means: feeling or not feeling the devotion or consolations or the tears]

[Prayer]

*Do Thou, O Lord, what Thou wilt;
let me not offend Thee
and let not **my virtues** perish, if, of Thy goodness alone, Thou hast given me any.
I desire to suffer, Lord, because Thou didst suffer.
Let Thy will be in every way fulfilled in me,
and may it never please Thy Majesty that a gift so precious as Thy love
be given to **people who serve Thee solely to obtain consolations** (gustos).*

14. It must be carefully noted -- and I say this because I know it by experience -- that **the soul which begins to walk resolutely in this way of mental prayer and can persuade itself to set little store by consolations and tenderness in devotion, and neither to be elated when the Lord gives them nor disconsolate when He withholds them, has already travelled a great part of its journey.**

[Note: seen from outside it looks that St. Teresa is contravening to some common misconceptions about St. Ignatius' teaching re consolations and desolations.]

However often it may stumble, it need not fear a relapse, for **its building has been begun on a firm foundation.**

Yes, **love for God does not consist in shedding tears, in enjoying those consolations and that tenderness which for the most part we desire and in which we find comfort, but in serving Him with righteousness, fortitude of soul and humility.**
The other seems to me to be **receiving rather than giving anything.**

As for poor women like myself, who are weak and lack **fortitude**, I think it fitting that we should be led by **means of favours**: this is the way in which God is leading me now, **so that** I may be able to suffer certain trials which it has pleased His Majesty to give me.

[same observation in 7M]

But when I hear servants of God, men of weight, learning and intelligence, making such a fuss because **God is not giving them devotion**, it revolts me to listen to them.

I do not mean that, when God gives them such a thing, they ought not to accept it and set a great deal of store by it, because in that case His Majesty must know that it is good for them.

But I do mean that **if they do not receive it they should not be distressed**: they should realize that, as His Majesty does not give it them, **it is unnecessary**; **they should be masters of themselves and go on their way**.

Let them believe that **they are making a mistake about this**: I have proved it and seen that it is so. Let them believe that **it is an imperfection** in them **if, instead of going on their way with freedom of spirit, they hang back through weakness and lack of enterprise**.

15. **I am not saying this so much for beginners** (though I lay some stress upon it, even for these, because it is of great importance that **they should start with this freedom and determination**):

I mean it **rather for others**.

There must be **many who have begun** some time back and **never manage to finish their course** [*nunca acaban de acabar*], and I believe it is largely because **they do not embrace the Cross from the beginning** that they are distressed and think that they are making no progress.

[Important expression and teaching here: the necessity to “embrace the Cross” from the beginning.]

When the understanding (the mind) ceases to work, they cannot bear it, though perhaps even then the will is increasing in power, and putting on new strength,⁴ without their knowing it.

[“For **these consolations are supernatural** and, when the understanding (mind) **ceases to act**, the soul remains barren and suffers great aridity.” (see *Life* 12,4 and 5)]

[“the mind ceases to work”, because of the new action of God in them, ie mental prayer see *Life* 12,5.]

16. We must realize that **the Lord pays no heed to these things**: to us they may look like faults, but they are not so.

His Majesty knows our wretchedness and the weakness of our nature better than we ourselves and He knows that all the time these souls are longing to think of Him and to love Him.

It is this determination that He desires in us. [ie determination to embrace the Cross]

The other afflictions which we bring upon ourselves serve only to disturb our souls, and the result of them is that, if we find ourselves unable to get profit out of a single hour, we are impeded from doing so for four.

I have a great deal of experience of this and I know that what I say is true, for **I have observed it carefully and have discussed it afterwards with spiritual persons**.

The thing frequently arises from physical indisposition, for we are such miserable creatures that this poor imprisoned soul **shares in the miseries of the body**, and variations of season and changes in the

⁴[*Lit.*: "is growing fat and taking strength."]

humours often prevent it from accomplishing its desires and make it suffer in all kinds of ways against its will.

The more we try to force it at times like these, the worse it gets and the longer the trouble lasts.

But let **discretion** be observed so that it may be ascertained if this is the true reason: the poor soul must not be stifled.

Persons in this condition must realize that they are ill and make some alteration in their hours of prayer (Contemplative Prayer); very often it will be advisable to continue this change for some days.

They must endure this exile as well as they can, for a soul which loves God has often the exceeding ill fortune to realize that, living as it is in this state of misery, it cannot do what it desires because of its evil guest, the body.

I said we must observe **discretion**, because sometimes the same effects will be produced by **the devil**; and so, it is well that prayer (Contemplative Prayer) should not always be given up when the mind is greatly distracted and disturbed, nor the soul tormented by being made to do what is not in its power.

17. There are other things which can be done -- exterior acts, such as reading or works of charity -- though sometimes the soul will be unable to do even these.

At such times the soul must render the body a service for the love of God, so that on many other occasions the body may render services to the soul.

Engage in some spiritual recreation, such as conversation (so long as it is really spiritual), or a country walk, according as your confessor advises.

In all these things it is important to have had experience, for from this we learn what is fitting for us; but let God be served in all things.

Sweet is His yoke, and it is essential that we should not drag the soul along with us, so to say, but lead it gently, so that it may make the greater progress.

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

If a person would gain **spiritual freedom** and **not be continually troubled**, let him begin by **not being afraid of the Cross** and he will find that the Lord will help him to bear it;

he will then **advance happily** and **find profit in everything.**

It is now clear that, **if no water is coming from the well, we ourselves can put none into it.**

But of course, we must not be careless: water must always be drawn when there is any there, for at such a time God's will is that we should use it so that He may **multiply our virtues.**

CHAPTER XII

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

1. Although in the last chapter I digressed a good deal about other things, because they seemed to me very necessary, what I was trying to make clear was **how much we can attain by our own power and how in this first stage of devotion we can do a certain amount for ourselves.**

For, if we **examine and meditate** upon the Lord's sufferings for us, we are moved to compassion, and this grief and the **tears** which proceed from it are **very sweet.**

And then **if we think** about the glory we hope for, and the love which the Lord bore us, and His resurrection, **we are moved to** a rejoicing which is neither wholly spiritual nor wholly sensual, but is a virtuous joy; the grief also is of great merit.

Of this nature are all the things which cause a devotion **acquired** in part by the understanding, though this can be neither merited nor attained **unless it be given by God** [general help of the Grace of God].

It is best for a soul which has been raised no higher than this **not to try to rise by its own efforts.** Let this be noted carefully, for if the soul does try so to rise it will make no progress but only go backward.

[What does to rise by its own efforts mean? See n°4 below: “**lift up his spirit so as to experience consolations which are not being given to him**” and see 5 below: “**to presume or think that we can suspend it (the mind) ourselves**”]

2. In this state it can make **many acts of resolution to do great things for God** and it can **awaken its own love.**

It can make other acts which **will help the virtues to grow**, as is explained in a book called *The Art of serving God*,⁵ which is very good and suitable for persons in this state, because in it **the understanding (mind) is active.**

The soul can **picture itself in the presence of Christ**, and accustom itself to become enkindled with great love for His **sacred Humanity** and to have Him ever with it and speak with Him, ask Him for the things it has need of, make complaints to Him of its trials, rejoice with Him in its joys and yet never allow its joys to make it forgetful of Him.

It has no need to think out set prayers but can use just such words as suit its desires and needs.

This is an excellent way of making progress, and of making it very quickly; and if anyone strives always to have this precious companionship, makes good use of it and really learns to love this Lord to Whom we owe so much, such a one, I think, has achieved a definite gain.

3. For this reason, as I have said, **we must not be troubled if we have no [conscious] devotion**, but thank the Lord Who allows us to harbour a desire to please Him, although our deeds may be of little worth.

This method of **bringing Christ into our lives** is **helpful at all stages;**

it is a most certain means of making progress in **the earliest stage**, of **quickly reaching the second degree of prayer**, and, in the final stages, of keeping ourselves safe from the dangers into which the devil may lead us.

4. This, then, is what we can do. If anyone tries to pass beyond this stage and **lift up his spirit so as to experience consolations which are not being given to him**, I think he is losing both in the one respect and in the other.

⁵By the Franciscan P. Alonso de Madrid: first published at Seville in 1521 and reprinted many times in the sixteenth century.

For **these consolations are supernatural** and, when the understanding (mind) **ceases to act**, the soul remains barren and suffers great aridity.

And, as **the foundation of the entire edifice is humility**, the nearer we come to God, the greater must be the progress which we make in this virtue: otherwise, we lose everything.

It seems to be **a kind of pride** that makes us wish to rise higher, for God is already doing more for us than we deserve by bringing us near to Him.

It must not be supposed that I am referring here to the lifting up of the mind to a consideration of the high things of Heaven or of God, and of the wonders which are in Heaven, and of God's great wisdom. I never did this myself, for, as I have said, I had no ability for it, and I knew myself to be so wicked that even when it came to thinking of earthly things God granted me grace to understand this truth, that it was no small presumption in me to do so -- how much more as to heavenly things!

Other persons will profit in this way, especially if they are learned, for learning, I think, is a priceless help in this exercise, if humility goes with it.

Only a few days ago I observed that this was so in certain learned men, who began but a short while since and have made very great progress; and this gives me great longings that many more learned men should become spiritual, as I shall say later.

5. When I say that **people should not try to rise** unless they are raised by God I am using the language of spirituality; anyone who has had any experience will understand me and if what I have already said cannot be understood I do not know how to explain it.

In the *mystical theology* which I began to describe, **the understanding (mind) loses its power of working, because God suspends it**, as I shall explain further by and by if God grants me His help for that purpose.

What I say we must not do is **to presume or think that we can suspend it ourselves**; nor must we allow it to cease working: if we do, **we shall remain stupid and cold and shall achieve nothing whatsoever**.

When the Lord suspends the understanding (mind) and makes it cease from its activity, He gives it something which both amazes it and keeps it busy, so that, without reasoning in any way, it can understand more in a short space of time than we, with all our human efforts, in many years.

To keep the faculties of the soul busy and to think that, at the same time, you can keep them quiet, is foolishness. And I say once more that, although the fact is not generally realized, there is no great humility in this: it may not be sinful, but it certainly causes distress, for it is lost labour, and the soul feels slightly frustrated, like a man who is just about to take a leap and then is pulled back, so that he seems to have put forth his strength and yet finds that he has not accomplished what he had expected to. Anyone who will consider the matter will detect, in the slightness of the gain achieved by the soul, this very slight lack of humility of which I have spoken. For that virtue has this excellent trait -- that when an action is accompanied by it the soul is never left with any feeling of irritation. I think I have made this clear, though it may possibly be so only to me. May the Lord open the eyes of those who read this by granting them experience of it, and, however slight that experience may be, they will at once understand it.

6. I spent a good many years doing a great deal of reading and understanding nothing of what I read; for a long time, though God was teaching me, I could not utter a word to explain His teaching to others, and this was no light trial to me. When His Majesty so wills He can teach everything in a moment, in a way that amazes me. I can truthfully say this: though I used to talk with many spiritual persons, who would try to explain what the Lord was teaching me so that I might be able to speak about it, I was so stupid that I could not get the slightest profit from their instruction. Possibly, as His Majesty has always been my teacher -- may He be blessed for everything, for I am thoroughly ashamed at being able to

say that this is the truth --, it may have been His will that I should be indebted to no one else for my knowledge. In any case, without my wishing it or asking for it (for I have never been curious about such things, as it would have been a virtue in me to be, but only about vanities), God suddenly gave me a completely clear understanding of the whole thing, so that I was able to speak about it in such a way that people were astounded. And I myself was more astounded even than my own confessors, for I was more conscious than they of my own stupidity. This happened only a short time ago. So I do not now attempt to learn what the Lord has not taught me, unless it be something affecting my conscience.

7. Once more I repeat my advice that it is very important that **we should not try to lift up our spirits unless they are lifted up by the Lord**: in the latter case we shall become aware of the fact instantly.

It is specially harmful for women to make such attempts, because the devil can foster illusions in them, although I am convinced that the Lord never allows anyone to be harmed who strives to approach Him with humility: rather will he derive more profit and gain from the very experience through which the devil thought to send him to perdition.

As this road is that most generally taken by beginners, and the counsels that I have given are of great importance, I have said a good deal about it. I confess that others have written about it much better elsewhere, and I have felt great confusion and shame in writing of it, though less than I should. May the Lord be blessed for it all, Whose will and pleasure it is that one such as I should speak of things that are His -- things of such a nature as these and so sublime!
