

CATHERINE OF GENOA

CHAPTER 1 SOULS IN PURGATORY HAVE NO SELF-LOVE

While I was still alive, God placed me in the purgatory of His burning love. In these flames, I was purified so I could enter God's presence. By these flames, I could also understand my own soul and the condition of all those souls who are being purified of sins which were not cleansed in this world. United with divine love, I comprehended the following.

Content With God's Will

Because God has justly decreed that they be there, the souls in purgatory have no choice. They cannot even say, "I committed these sins so I deserve to be here", or "I wished I had refrained from these sins" or "This other soul will be freed before me", or "I will be freed before this other soul." They cannot say this because they have no memory (of good or evil) that will increase their pain.

They are so content with God's will and in doing what God wants, that they cannot think of themselves. They see only God's goodness, which draws them to God. They do not see themselves suffering for their sins. Even entertaining this thought would be an active imperfection which cannot exist in this state.

When they leave this earth, they see why they are sent to purgatory. However, they do not retain this memory. Since they are forever rooted in charity, and free of every defect, they never deviate from love. They have a pure will of pure love. They can never sin by refraining from love.

CHAPTER 2 THE JOYS OF THE SOULS IN PURGATORY

Except for the peace enjoyed by the saints in heaven, nothing can compare with the peace enjoyed by these souls. This peace increases as the rust of sin is cleansed. When rust is removed from an object, it can better reflect the sun's light. So, as the fire purges the soul, it is more open to God's communication.

As this rust is removed, the soul's contentment increases and divine love increasingly touches it. Although the pain never diminishes, the soul's will is so united to God by pure charity and is so satisfied with God's will, that it never calls pain, "pain".

Yet, these souls suffer torments which no tongue can describe and no intellect can comprehend (unless revealed by God's special grace – as he did to me). I cannot explain how the vision has never left my memory. I will describe it and whomever the Lord wishes, will understand it.

CHAPTER 3

THE GREATEST TORMENT – SEPARATION FROM GOD

Difference between purgatory and hell.

God creates every soul pure and free from sin, and gives each soul an instinct to see God. Original sin draws the soul away from this instinct. Actual sins withdraw the soul even more and the communication of the soul with God grows less.

All good comes only from participation in God. Irrational creatures participate according to God's decrees. However, God gives himself to rational creatures to the degree that they are freed from sin. In purgatory, the soul is returning to the purity and simplicity in which God created her. God increases her beatific instinct and kindles within her a vehement and powerful flame of love. The soul finds any obstacle between herself and God deeply painful. Her clearer vision causes greater pain.

Delay in Seeing God

Freed from all guilt of sin, the only barrier is the pain which they suffer in their delay in seeing God. When they see each obstacle to divine union, it enkindles a vehement flame that is similar to hell. However, they feel no guilt. The souls in hell experience a guilt because they have no participation in God's goodness. They remain in despair because their will is forever opposed to God's will.

CHAPTER 4

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SOULS IN HELL AND THOSE IN PURGATORY

Sin is a revolt against God's will and when that revolt continues, the soul has guilt. A soul in hell, due to its perverse will, has a guilt which can never be removed. At death, every soul is confirmed forever in either good or evil. "Where I find you, there I shall judge you."

There is no appeal against this judgment. After death, the will is not free.

The souls in hell die with the will to sin. They will always have guilt and punishment. It is not as much as they deserve, but it is eternal. The souls in purgatory have their guilt removed at death because they hated their sins and were sorry for offending God. Their penalty has an end. How great is man's blindness, not to see these truths.

The punishment of hell is not infinite because God's goodness shines even in hell. The soul deserves an infinite punishment for an infinite time. God's mercy makes only the time infinite. He mitigates a pain which his justice could have inflicted.

How dangerous to willfully commit sin! It is difficult to repent, and without repentance the guilt remains. Repentance remains effective if the man remains steadfast in his will not to commit sin.

CHAPTER 5

THE PEACE AND JOY IN PURGATORY

The souls in purgatory are totally confirmed to God's will, are content with his decrees and entirely purified of guilt. Because they hated their sins and confessed them in this life, only the stains of sin remain. These stains are devoured by the fire.

United to God's will, they see him clearly according to their degree of light. They see that God is the purpose for their being created. Because these souls are in conformity with God and experience their natural attraction, they are drawn to him powerfully. No example can be found to describe this powerful force drawing them to God. Yet, I will use one.

CHAPTER 6

THE VIOLENCE OF LOVE CONTAINED IN THE SOUL'S DESIRE FOR GOD

Suppose the world had only one loaf of bread and that people would need to see this bread to satisfy their hunger. If a person knew that only this loaf could satisfy him, his hunger would grow and become urgent. Until he reached this loaf he would suffer intolerable pains. Also, the pains would increase as he came closer. Hell is this situation for a damned soul who is sure that he will never see this bread. They hunger for God with no hope.

The souls in purgatory are different. They have the assured hope of being entirely satisfied. Therefore, they endure all the pain of hunger until the moment they take eternal possession of the bread of life, Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 7

GOD'S WISDOM IN CREATING HELL AND PURGATORY

A purified spirit finds rest only in God who created her. A sinful soul can find rest only away from God, in hell. When a damned soul separates from the body, it goes to its prescribed place, (in hell) according to the nature of its mortal sins. If a soul refused to go to hell, it would be in a deeper hell, because divine mercy, to some degree, prevents the full afflictions that the soul has merited. The soul finds hell as the place where her eternal pains are the slightest and so willingly puts herself there.

The same is true of purgatory. After death, the soul does not see in herself that original purity in which God created her. Instead, she sees the hindrances to her full union with God. Since purgatory alone can remedy these, she quickly places herself there. If purgatory did not exist, she could find no means of purification. She would then create her own hell because she could never see God. So, she loves purgatory more than anything else. Purgatory is like hell, but compared to losing God forever, it is nothing.

CHAPTER 8

THE NECESSITY OF PURGATORY

Paradise has no gates and whoever wishes can enter. God is all mercy and his arms are always extended to receive us into glory. However, God's essence (life) is so pure that a soul with the slightest imperfection would cast itself into a thousand hells, rather than be in God's presence when stained by sin. Realizing that purgatory was created for her cleansing, the soul throws herself in and finds great mercy in the removal of her stains.

No one can conceive the importance of purgatory. Its pains are as great as hell, but the soul (which receives this mercy), counts its pains as nothing compared with these obstacles (which purgatory removes) to its love for God. Their greatest pain is to see anything in

themselves that displeases God. They enjoy the state of grace and see the importance of removing these hindrances.

CHAPTER 9

HOW GOD AND THE SOUL SEE EACH OTHER IN PURGATORY

The words I use to describe what God has put into my mind seem false and worthless. I am confounded by the impossibility of finding words to express the magnitude of my understandings.

Between God and the soul, there is a conformity. When he finds her as pure as when he created her, he gives her an impulse of divine love which would annihilate her if she were not immortal. He transforms her into himself so that she forgets all else and sees only him. He draws her to himself, inflames her with love, and never leaves her until he brings her into the pure state in which he created her.

Overpowered

When the soul sees within herself these flames of love which draw her to her master, their burning heat overpowers her and she melts. In that divine light, she sees how God, in his great love and providence, is always attracting her to her greatest perfection. He does this from pure love. She sees herself clogged with sin and cannot follow her attraction for God. Meanwhile, he is looking upon her to reconcile her, so he can draw her to himself.

The soul sees her own plight. She is hindered from gazing upon God's light, and yet, she has the instinctive desire to be totally free and to yield herself to the flame that will unify herself to God. Seeing all these realities causes pain to the suffering soul. These souls do not consider the pain. Far worse is the opposition they find within themselves to the will of God, who is burning with pure love for their union. This love, with its unifying power, is always drawing them as if it had nothing else to do. When the soul sees this, she desires an even more painful purgatory so she would be more quickly cleansed. She would gladly cast herself in, impelled by this mutual love between God and herself.

CHAPTER 10

HOW GOD USES PURGATORY TO COMPLETE THE PURIFICATION.

(The soul is so purified that remaining in purgatory would cause no pain)

Purgatory is a furnace of divine love from which rays of fire dart toward the soul. These are so powerful that they would destroy both body and soul (if that were possible). These rays both purify and annihilate.

Consider gold. When melted, it becomes more pure. If continually melted, the fire will destroy all imperfection. The soul cannot be annihilated in God but can be annihilated in herself. The longer she is purified, the more she dies to herself. This happens until she is purified in God.

Purified Gold

When gold is totally purified no fire can do anything else. Its imperfections are gone. So it is with God's fire in the soul. God keeps the soul in the flames until every stain is removed and the soul reaches the highest perfection she is capable of. When this is accomplished, the soul rests in God. Nothing of herself remains. God is her entire being. When he has purified

her, she can no longer suffer. Nothing remains to be consumed. If she approached the fire, she would feel no pain because it is now only the fire of divine love. This is life eternal.

CHAPTER 11 THE SOUL DESIRES TO BE PURIFIED

When created, the soul received all the means of perfection to obey God's will and avoid every stain. However, contaminated by original sin, she loses her gifts, graces, and even her divine life. Even after baptism, she can only be regenerated by God's help because her inclination to evil remains. If she does not resist this inclination, it leads her to mortal sin by which she dies again.

God restores her by special graces, but she is still so sullied and inclined toward herself that she needs all the divine workings that I have described to restore her primitive innocence. Without them, she cannot be restored.

Original Innocence

When the soul reenters this path which leads to her original innocence, she receives a burning desire to be transformed into God. In this desire, she finds her purgatory. She does not see it as her purgatory, but this fiery desire becomes her purgatory.

This final act of love accomplishes its work without revealing to the soul what must be cleansed. If she saw her imperfections, they would drive her to despair. God's final working consumes all her imperfections. Only when they are destroyed does God reveal the divine action that restored her.

CHAPTER 12 HOW JOY AND SUFFERING ARE UNITED

What man judges as perfect is often imperfect in God's sight. If man does not refer his works to God, they are corrupt and sinful. For our works to be perfect, they must be done in us but not of us. God is the prime cause of his works, not man.

These works done by God are the final workings of his pure and simple love. In these, we have no merit. These flames so pierce the soul, that the body seems to hold a fire within or be like someone in a furnace who can find rest only in death. Truly, this divine love gives a peace, yet this peace does not diminish the pain. These pains come from the delay of love and they vary according to the soul's capacity for love. The soul has both great pleasure and great suffering, neither impeding the other.

CHAPTER 13 THESE SOULS CANNOT MERIT

If the souls in purgatory could repent, they would cancel their whole debt in a single moment because their contrition would have such overwhelming force. They could do this because they enjoy a clear vision of the greatness of every obstacle that hinders union with God. Yet, not one small part is taken away. This is Divine Justice. These souls desire only what God wills and would want it no other way.

If someone on earth makes a devout offering on their behalf, they receive them only as God decides. He repays according to his infinite goodness. If they took these alms apart from God's will, they would be turning in on themselves, and shutting God's will from their view. This would be hell to them. These souls are totally accepting of what God gives them, pleasure or pain. They never again can seek self.

CHAPTER 14

THESE SOULS SUBMISSION TO GOD'S WILL

They are transformed and hidden in God, resting content in his will. If a soul with the slightest stain tried to approach God, she would suffer more than in purgatory. The soul would rather go to hell than stand before God with a stain because the sight of God would be intolerable.

CHAPTER 15

REPROACHES TO THOSE IN THE WORLD

Illumined by this divine ray, the soul speaks to those on earth. "I want to utter a loud cry that strikes terror. Why are you so blinded that you make no provision for the hour of your death? You shelter yourself in hope for God's mercy (which you always exalt) and you do not see that your resistance to his goodness will be your condemnation. His goodness should lead you to his will, not to your's. His justice must be satisfied.

You say "I will go to confession and gain a plenary indulgence and will be saved." Remember that the full confession and entire contrition needed for this indulgence are difficult to attain. If you knew, you would tremble with fear, more sure of losing than gaining them.

CHAPTER 16

SUFFERINGS DO NOT PREVENT PEACE AND JOY

The souls in purgatory see two acts of God. First, they see his mercy and realize that God has been very good to them. They see their sins and what they deserved. Without Jesus' Precious Blood tempering God's justice, one sin would deserve a thousand hells. They suffer willingly and would not want their pain to be lightened. They see that it is justified and they accept his will, as if they were already in heaven.

Secondly, they see how merciful God has been in all his decrees. God impresses these two lights upon the soul. Because they are in grace, they understand and experience a satisfaction which increases as they approach God. They see all things in God, who dominates their attention more than their sufferings. Any vision they have of God is greater than any suffering. Yet, their joy does not lessen the pain.

CHAPTER 17

APPLYING THIS VISION TO HERSELF

I, myself, have experienced this purification process for the past two years. My soul seems to live in a body that is in purgatory. I experience as much suffering as the body can endure without dying. This suffering will gradually increase until my death. My spirit is alienated from everything that consoles me (even spiritual things). My will, understanding, and

memory have no relish for worldly or for spiritual goods. I take no more satisfaction in one thing over another.

I am interiorly besieged. Everything which refreshed me (spiritually or bodily) has been removed. As soon as my spirit discovers them, they vanish. I let them go because they are hindrances to my perfection. My spirit constantly removes anything that nourishes the inner man and expels every detected imperfection.

The Only Consolation

My exterior being is so oppressed that nothing can fulfill its human desires. Only God is my soul's consolation. He alone accomplishes this work and I am greatly satisfied. However, this does not lessen my oppression or my pain. There is no pain that could turn me away from God's will or make me want to be freed from this prison, until God is satisfied. My greatest suffering would be to escape from his will, because I see it as merciful and just.

Words fail me in describing what happens in my spirit. The world is my prison. The body is my chains. By grace, my soul sees her great misery in being kept back from God and suffers because she is so tender. God gives my soul a dignity which makes me one with him. God can suffer no pain. The soul who draws near to him shares in the same perfections.

An Intolerable Delay

This delay in divine union causes the soul intolerable pain. These imperfections prevent God's full action which she knows both by nature and by divine light. She is not able to possess, but is capable of possessing. She suffers according to the greatness of her desire for God. The more she knows God, the more she desires him and the more her desire is greater and her soul is sinless. Her impediments to God become more painful because she is totally turned to him. When no more obstacles exist, she will know him as he is.

A martyr accepts death rather than offend God. He experiences the pain. However, by God's light, his zeal for God's honor is greater than his love for life. In like manner, the soul in purgatory knows God's will and chooses it above all sufferings because God is infinitely more desirable than anything known or unknown. God absorbs the soul and she sees nothing else as important. She loses all in him. She cannot see or speak about any pain she suffers. The soul sees this in the first moment that she leaves this life. Know this. By God's mercy, everything in man is transformed and purified by purgatory.

CHAPTER 18

SHE DID NOT DESIRE EVEN LOVE FOR GOD OR IN GOD.

Whenever I spoke of these things, I thought I was lying, because my words were weak compared to what I experienced. I said, "I do not want a love for God and in God, because the words for and in suggest that something intervenes between God and me. Pure love, is simple and cannot endure that. The soul's pure love is as great as God because this love belongs to God.

Full Yet Always Increasing

Also, I could not speak of pure love as if I had experienced it, this love is totally above my experience. Also, I had such an abundance, and I could never understand how it could increase within me. I was always replenished with love. At any given moment, I could never

desire more than what was satisfying me. However, love kept cleansing me, so it could fill me more abundantly. Every day I was lifted above the smallest imperfections. Others might see them as perfections, but I was trying to cast them out.

While God is doing this, the soul sees neither God's work nor her imperfections. God shows her only his perfected work without any flaw, because the soul could not bear to see her imperfections. God continues to purify, but the soul's intellect does not comprehend his action.

Even the heavens are not pure in God's sight. God's purity cleanses until the soul is totally pure. It can only be known by supernatural light. God does this work secretly. Otherwise, the soul in God's hands would know the enormity of even one trifling imperfection. If the soul saw all of her defects being purified by God, she would despair. Therefore, God works continually in this life and removes these defects gradually, without the soul's knowledge.

The Road of Perfection

When God calls us to devotion, he finds us full of vices. So, he gives us the inclination to practice virtues. Then, he incites us to seek perfection. Then, by infused grace, he brings about true annihilation. Finally, he leads us to true transformation. This is God's extraordinary road.

When the soul is annihilated and transformed, it no longer works, acts, feels or understands. It has no knowledge (internal or external). God is the director and he guides with no help from any creature.

The Greatest Peace

It seems her body and soul are in a sea of peace which she would not leave for any earthly reason. She is immovable and imperturbable. She is so full of peace, that if her flesh and bones were pressed, only peace would come forth. She sings, "Shall I show you what God is? No one finds peace away from him."

The process continues. Every day she is more plunged into God and transformed by his peace. Her humanity is alienated from this world and from earthly things. The body no longer lives on food. Yet, she does not waste away and die. She remains in health without using the usual means of health. She is not supported by nature but by an incomprehensible spiritual abundance which overflows into her body. The person becomes beautiful in her looks, especially in her purified eyes. They are like heavenly stars and she appears as an angel on earth.

Pure Love

This pure love is so excellent that it does not get involved in anything (no matter how beautiful). God's pure love bestows ardent virtues and the soul gives no attention to anything else.

The work always progresses. The soul sees that she is made to live in pure love, and to delight in holy love. When the soul arrives at the point of pure love, she can do nothing but love and enjoy herself. Pure love is above every desire and understanding. The soul, even while still in this life, feels she is sharing in heavenly glory.

CHAPTER 19

AN ANSWER TO A FRIAR PREACHER

One day, a Friar Preacher told me that he was more prepared for divine love than I was, because he had entered religion while I was still in the world. He had freely renounced

everything and, therefore, was free to love God more than I, (who was living to the world). When he said this, an ardent flame of love seized me and I said, "If I believed that your religious habit could add one spark to my love, I would tear it off you. Whatever you merit because of your religious life, I do not seek to gain. These are yours. However, you can never make me believe that I cannot love God as much as you."

I said these words with so much fervor, that my hair burst from its band and fell over my shoulders. I was beside myself and said, "Love cannot be limited. A limited love is not pure and simple love."

Marriage Not An Impediment

Then I spoke intimately to God, "My Love, who shall prevent me from loving you? Not only in my married state, but even if I were in a camp of soldiers, I would not be prevented. If the world or my husband can impede divine love, what a feeble love that would be. From my experiences, I know that nothing can impede divine love. It conquers all difficulties." The Friar said that I could be deceived. I replied, "A love which contains nothing of itself can never be deceived." God told me that if I could even love the devil (as evil as he is) with pure love, he could not harm me. If pure love has power over the wicked, does it not have greater power over the soul filled with this love?

One time, I was greatly troubled because I had used lawful things to sustain my infirm life. God said, "Do not turn your eyes to any new thing, within or without. Be dead to all things. Whoever trusts me does not doubt." All these reasonings proceed from self-love. Pure love transcends all human thoughts. It always thinks and acts above nature.

CHAPTER 20

GOD WANTS US TO SERVE HIM THROUGH FAITH AND LOVE

(The text shifts into the third person, even though it speaks of Catherine.)

This saint, already having arrived at perfection and tasting the joys of heavenly happiness, was moved by compassion for those who did not turn away from evil. She said, "Oh man, you are created in great dignity but you seek evil things. Worldly things, even those which God gives you in this life, cannot compare with spiritual goods. Pray that you might reach heaven, whose blessings you cannot imagine."

If man saw clearly that he could gain eternal life by doing the good, and if he could imagine heavenly happiness, he would persevere in good. God wants man to merit by faith and not serve him from self-interest. God leads man by degrees, always giving him sufficient faith. However, toward the end of life, God gives a foretaste of heavenly glory. This fills the soul with heavenly thoughts so that faith almost ceases to be faith.

Acting From Love

If a person knew how much they would suffer for their sins, they would abandon all things and would never commit the smallest sin. But God does not want man to serve from fear because if terror fills his heart, love cannot enter. God does not let man see these dreadful sights. He shows them only to those who act from a pure love that casts out fear. These souls, both in heaven and on earth, see what the tongue cannot describe. Those led by faith are aware of God's kindness and they cling to these leadings and follow them.

Those who reject God's promptings and follow their own desires, will experience a painful vision at their death. They will not be able to endure the sight of even one defect, "O man, this fate is caused by your own obstinacy. This will happen when it is too late for you to act. Purgatory must cleanse you before entering heaven."

An Intermediate Road

God leads man by an intermediate road. He reveals evidence of his love (which attracts the soul) and also gives motives for fear (so the soul abandons sin). Neither love nor fear forces man. God wants man to be empowered by grace and faith. God accomplishes everything by his inspirations, which incite man to control his rebellious nature by experiencing satisfaction in serving God.

God is always ready to give us the interior and exterior help needed for salvation. However, if man occupies himself with useless goals, God will say at the hour of death, "What could I have done for you, which I did not do?" The soul will know that this is true and will render a strict account.

How can man neglect a matter of such great importance? I have seen life after death very clearly, (as if I could touch it). I would rather choose death than offend God voluntarily. I realized the great evils that God frees us from and the great joys he has in store. So, I said, "In this life, I desire neither grace nor mercy, only justice and vengeance upon the evil-doer." I said this because I saw God's mercy infinitely surpassing our gratitude and our sorrow for sins. Therefore, I could not endure that my sins against God would go unpunished.

Submitted to God's Justice

I cared little about gaining plenary indulgences. I greatly esteemed their value, but I would rather receive a just punishment than be released in God's sight. God is so good and I am so opposed to him. I wanted to submit everything to his Justice and to leave behind all hope of escaping this righteous pain. I did not seek these indulgences nor the prayers of others, so I would be punished as I deserved.

This attitude can only be understood in the state of perfection, where victory is secure and the soul wants only God's glory. Like a valiant soldier, the soul in combat desires no assistance. So, I prayed, "Dear God, to offend you is unbearable. Let me suffer anything except to see what I have done. At my death, show me all the demons. This is nothing compared to one slight offense against you. If a soul who loved you, saw one sin in herself, she would be ground to powder. I know this from the unspeakable torments that come from the interior fire that burns within me."

I conclude. Love accepts no opposition. It will not remain in the soul unless all obstacles are removed.

CHAPTER 21 PURE LOVE TOWARD GOD AND NEIGHBOR

God so ordered my life that I pleased everyone. A soul involved in serving God never displeases her neighbor. I asked God, "You command me to love my neighbor, but I can only love you. How can someone else enter into that love? God answered, "Whoever loves me, loves also those whom I love. Do for your neighbor all that is needed for his soul and body." This love is no obstacle because the neighbor is loved in God, not in himself.

This is my teaching. “Before God created man, all love was pure and without self-interest. In creating man, God was moved by pure love, which allowed God to do all possible good for man. Therefore, man’s love should return everything to God. If he places love first, man will have no fear and will seek nothing for himself.”

No Pain

Pure love is incapable of suffering. It does not know what suffering is and cannot understand the evil actions of others. If it felt all the pains of the devils and damned souls, it could not say they were pains. To feel pain, the soul must be without pure love.

“True love cannot be diverted from its object, nor can it feel anything else. To ask these souls to be engaged in worldly pursuits is useless. They are as dead persons to the world. It is impossible to describe pure love except to say that the human intellect cannot comprehend it. All I can say is, “I cannot say.”

CHAPTER 22 ST. CATHERINE OF GENOA WAS LIKE ST. PAUL

St. Catherine was like St. Paul, made perfect in one instant. After that instant, she lived like a perfect soul. She could never teach anyone the way to perfection because she had never worked to acquire virtues. Her virtues were infused and brought about effects which usually resulted from years of effort.

The fire of love was as great at the beginning as it was at the end. After being wounded with love, she never experienced any trials (interior or exterior) from the world, the flesh or the devil.

Although she suffered many adversities, her will never opposed God’s will. She received everything from God with love. Her humanity was subjected to the Spirit. It never rebelled, even though forced to do many penances. “My heart and my flesh rejoiced in the living God.” (Ps 34) She said, “Seeing how great is any offence against God, I cannot conceive of any other suffering except sinning against him. All other pains are consolations to me. I know that all creatures are as evil compared to God’s goodness.” However, someone without this experience will not know this.

Sustained By Grace

If God did not sustain us by grace, we would be full of sorrow and discontent. This is true even in this life where God does not abandon us (no matter how great are our sins). If a man were entirely forsaken by God, he could not live in this world because it is too terrible a reality for the human mind to understand.

How many perils in this life! And when I consider the difference between spiritual life and spiritual death, I need God to sustain me. I want to express all that I know about this subject. If I needed martyrdom to do this, I would gladly accept any torments so I could warn everyone.

I saw in a vision the magnitude of the least stain of sin against God. I do not know why I did not die. I understood why hell is so horrible because even hell (as I saw it) was not equal to the dreadfulness of sin. Even in hell, God is merciful. I know this because I have seen the stain of venial sin. How does that compare to a mortal sin? And to many mortal sins? My vision lasted just a moment. It would have destroyed my body if it lasted longer.

Effects of Vision

What I say is little compared to what I comprehended. This vision brought me close to death. My blood congealed and my body grew weak. I seemed to be dying, but God' goodness wanted me to live to tell others. I realized why purgatory is equal to hell. Purgatory cleanses sin. Hell punishes it. Both are made for sin, and they are equally horrible. If man considered his evil inclinations, he could grasp this.

God gives this vision only to those confirmed in grace. Even these souls can see only what is for their good and the good of others. God also revealed his great goodness. By his compassion, God always incites us to do good so we are not plunged into this evil.

Just as St. Paul experienced an immediate conversion by seeing heavenly glory, so St. Catherine received the same gift by seeing the pains which sinners merit by their crimes.

CHAPTER 23 SELF LOVE AND DIVINE LOVE

I saw a vision of self love and its lord, the devil. "Self-love" is really "self-hate" It leads man to do evil and precipitates him into hell. This self-love was so essentially incorporated into a man that it seemed almost impossible for him to be purified in this life. The following are the qualities of someone filled with self love:

1. He is indifferent about injuring his own body and soul, and those of others.
2. He values neither his own reputation nor that of others
3. He seeks his own goals and will accept no contradiction
4. Having resolved upon a goal, he cannot be changed by promises or threats
5. He perseveres in his course, even if it involves poverty, disgrace, purgatory, death or hell. He is blind and cannot see.
6. Even if promised health and riches, he would repel all proposals. His heart cannot value anything correctly.
7. He is a slave to his self-love. He totally submits because he understands nothing else.
8. He does not care if he is called foolish. He shuts his eyes and ears to all else.

Self-love is a robber. It steals from God, and uses God's goods as its own. Self-love claims that it cannot live without its object. This hidden robbery is covered over by many veils and can be detected only by true love, which has nothing to hide.

Spiritual Self-Love

Self-love can never understand pure love. Self-love always wants to possess. Pure love never calls anything its own. Pure love sees only truth. Self-love is an obstacle to truth, neither believing the truth nor seeing truth as a friend. Spiritual self-love is more poisonous than bodily self-love and an antidote is hard to find. It disguises itself as holiness, or necessity, or charity or compassion. It has almost infinite disguises which cause my heart to faint.

Self-love causes the soul to be blind toward God. No evil is greater. Yet the soul cannot see this. It rejoices instead of weeping. Self-love is so evil that one grain can corrupt all mankind. If the soul could see the difficulties caused by self-love, he would not allow himself to be deceived.

Self-love is the root of all evils. Lucifer fell because he followed self-love. In ourselves, it seems even worse. Adam's sin has so contaminated us that it seems incurable. It penetrates our bones. All our actions are full of this poison, even those deeds which should purify our spirit. God alone is the remedy for this hopeless sickness. If He does not heal us by grace, we must be cleansed by purgatory fire.

Strength of Divine Love

Seeing how severe is this purgation and that man cannot escape self-love or see its dangers, I want to cry out for the rest of my life, "God help me". But then I think, "If this self-love is so strong that it makes man forget heaven or hell, how strong is divine love? Does not God's goodness infuse divine love into our hearts?" This love exists for our own good and that of our neighbor's. Divine love is gentle to all, renounces self will and accepts God's will. By this incomparable divine love, God inflames and purifies our wills, so that it fears nothing but sin. Rather than commit the least sin, it chooses to undergo the worst torments.

Divine love gives such peace that the soul seems to enjoy heaven, even in this life. The soul is so absorbed it cannot think of anything else. Divine love separates us from the world and unites us to God. What more can we desire, in this world or the next? Filled with this love, the soul longs for death and does not fear hell. It fears only sin which can separate it from the Beloved.

If men only knew how sin offends God, they would see it as the greatest hell. When someone loses this gentle love by his own fault, he would willingly suffer the agony of the damned to regain it. Experience has taught me. Divine love is our happiness and our rest. Self-love is our continual death, (both in this world and the next).

CHAPTER 24 GOD'S THREE WAYS OF PURIFYING US

Naked Love

First, God gives us a naked love (a love stripped of all things). This love is so poor and simple that it detests all self-love. Seeing the truth, it can never be self-deceived. This love despairs of its own powers, which offer no bodily or spiritual consolation. By degrees, naked love kills self-love (which has nothing to feed on). Yet, self-love is so great that it clings to the soul until death. Personally, I have seen naked love destroy many natural desires (which I thought were good). When they were removed I saw that they were faulty and resulted from my spiritual and bodily weaknesses. We need spiritual vision, because what seems perfect is really imperfect. Pure love is a mirror of truth giving us a clear light to see.

Knowing One's Sins

The second way pleased me even more. Love fills man with a mind which knows God. This causes the soul to suffer from knowing how sinful he is. This vision of his sins keeps him in spiritual poverty, and self-love wastes away from lack of nourishment. The soul realizes clearly that, if God did not remove this terrible vision of helplessness, the soul could never rise up. When God does remove this vision of total hopelessness, the soul has great peace and joy.

Knowing God

The third way is even more excellent. God fills the mind with himself, so the soul cannot think of anything but God and his works. The soul esteems its own works, only as a means to love God. The soul is dead to the world, totally unable to delight or to understand anything of

heaven or of earth. The soul receives a spirit of poverty and has no idea of what good it possesses or is accomplishing. Because God holds the soul in sweet confusion, the soul cannot even prepare for what it must do for God, or for others.

The soul is rich, but sees itself as poor, unable to claim anything as its own. It is lost and finds itself annihilated in God (where it was from the beginning but never knew it). Certainly, God uses the religious life to purify, but all souls (religious and laity) must pass by one of these three ways.

CHAPTER 25

TREATED FOR BODILY SICKNESS WHEN SHE WAS SUFFERING FROM SPIRITUAL FIRE

God's inner light caused my perfection. It was interior and not manifested externally by virtuous acts. I saw that I was united with God in an extraordinary way by secret, interior conversations which I was unable to repeat. I was not passive (as with other experiences) because I sensed the importance of what I saw. My heart was so inflamed that I fell dangerously ill. (You can see how unique was this experience). Usually people feel compunction for their mortal sins and consider venial sins as nothing. But my body was almost torn in two when I saw the greatness of a venial sin. If God had shown me a venial sin in my own soul I would have fallen dead.

No Medicines

Often, my sufferings were so great that I went for medical help. There was a "letting of blood" (seen in those ages as a help) to relieve the burning in my spirit and to restore my speech. This had little effect. When I seemed close to death, they increased the medicines. This increased the sufferings, but I was obedient. Then, everyone saw that God was the source of these sufferings. The medicines were taken away but I needed great care to preserve my life.

All the attendants were confused. At times, I would say, "Now, my heart is like ashes. I am consumed with love". At other times, I would go off by myself, lay prostrate on the ground, and fill the house with cries saying, "O Love, I can bear no more". At times, I would walk in the garden and say to the trees, "Are you not God's creatures, obedient to him?" This would relieve my sufferings.

CHAPTER 26

TWO THINGS NOT ACCEPTED AND ONE THING WHICH WAS DESIRED

My free will was so absorbed in God, that I experienced neither resistance nor choice. I had conquered all things, but I resisted two things and desired one.

Horror For Sin

First, due to my horror for sin, I could not consent to the smallest sin. I had gained such an awareness of my own failures, that I could not comprehend how people could consent to any sin, (especially mortal sin). When I witnessed an inexcusable sin, I could not believe that anyone could have this malice. I thought everyone honored God as I did.

Second, I could not accept God's will that he wanted Jesus to suffer such a cruel passion. I would rather endure the pains of hell than have Jesus suffer such punishment.

The one thing I desired was Holy Communion, for this is God Himself.

CHAPTER 27

THE SWEETNESS OF GOD'S COMMANDMENTS AND THE BENEFITS OF ADVERSITY

I would say, "Lord, if others are bound to keep your commandments, I am bound ten-fold. You do not command evil, and you give divine union to those who obey. Only those who keep your law understand that your commands (even though they oppose sensuality) are in accord with the spirit. The spirit calls us away from bodily delights because loving these inferior things is a hindrance to divine union.

I saw that God wants to consume (interiorly and exteriorly) all our corrupt desires. Therefore, he uses injuries, sickness, poverty, demonic temptations, mortifications and everything that is contrary to nature. He wants us to struggle with these adversities to extinguish our corrupt desires. After gaining the victory, these difficulties are no longer bitter, but sweet to us. Whoever believes that anything (good or bad) can separate him from God is not yet strong in divine love. Man should fear nothing except to offend God.

Unbreakable Bond

I saw in my heart a ray of love coming from God, which bound us together. Since my conversion, I never feared that this bond would be broken. The Lord taught me confidence, and when I prayed, a voice within would say, "Command, for love can do it." By a command, I would receive all I asked for. We are created only for God's love. Love for anything else should be called hatred because it deprives us of love. Love God and leave behind everything beneath God. These are enemies of true love.

I want all to feel this truth. If the sea were the food of love, I want everyone to drown. Even if they are far away, they would come and plunge in. All pleasure, compared with divine love, is pain. All riches, outside of this love, are poverty.

When filled with this love, a man loses all sense of suffering here below. Nothing keeps him from God's presence. To explain this I can only say, "What eye could not see, nor ear hear". Whatever I say is just crumbs falling from God's table.

CHAPTER 28

THE PROCESS OF GOD ANNIHILATING MAN – IMAGE OF A LOAF OF BREAD

When you eat bread, the parts that nurture you are absorbed and all the rest is cast out. The body would die if it retained this part. What if the bread protested, and did not want to be reduced to nothingness?

The body would reply, "Bread, you are made to support my life, which is more worthy than your existence. You should be content with the purpose for which you were created. If you had no purpose, you would be cast aside as worthless. You gain your purpose only by being eaten. You would say, "Quickly, take me and consume me, so I can gain my purpose."

I was so detached that I could not accomplish my duties, due to fatigue of mind and body. When I went to confession, I found no sin and it seemed as if I were deceiving. Through this detachment, I enjoyed the greatest peace.

CHAPTER 29

AN IDEA OF HER STATE

When I considered my vocation and saw all that God had done, it seemed as if he forced me and I had not even given consent. In the beginning, I resisted. Yet, I was inflamed with burning love. First, God aroused me from sin. Then, he illumined my intellect with faith. Finally, he inflamed my will with satisfaction and zeal. Although God did this in an instant, I measure it in time and explain it by many words.

Asked by my spiritual children to describe my state, I said it was impossible. Once, however, a religious so greatly desired this description, that I told him, "As you have said, the effect is not comprehensible". He asked me, "Can you not ask God for some drops of water for your children". I responded, "God's love is so gracious to his children, I can only present them to him".

My countenance changed and all received great consolation, just looking at me. Everyone found it difficult to leave my presence. When I was 63 years old, a ray of love again inflamed my heart and I suffered bodily pain. Some days later I was wounded again. Each time, the last wound would be the greatest.

CHAPTER 30

COMPUNCTION AT DESIRING DEATH **(EVERY DESIRE IS AN IMPERFECTION)**

In 1507, while saying the Office of the Dead, I felt a desire to die so that my soul would leave my body to be united with God. The body, tormented by the flames of love, also desired death. But these were natural desires, and I did not consent.

Since God wanted to purify me, I exclaimed "O Love, you do not want me to die. At least, let me be present at the death and burial of others so I can see their blessedness." God consented and, for a period of time, I was present at the death and burial of all who died in the hospital. Gradually, as love increased in my purified heart, I no longer desired to see people die. Yet, I was filled with a new joy in speaking about death.

Once, I fell into ecstasy. Those who did not know me, thought I was suffering from vertigo. Because I did not want to be noticed, I also called my ecstasy "vertigo". However, a religious said, "Mother, you need not conceal your graces from me. Please choose someone and tell them about the graces God has given you." I saw this was God's will. So, I chose this same religious. Even though I knew how impossible it was to describe these inner communications, I began to tell this religious of these favors.

CHAPTER 31

ABANDONING SELF TOTALLY TO LOVE

From that point on, love took control of everything. I gave God the keys to my house. He did everything necessary and I took no heed of body, soul, friends or the world. I did everything out of pure love. When love took charge and produced the effect, I just watched God work. He showed me that many things which I thought were just were unjust and what seemed

perfect was imperfect. I found defects in everything. When I spoke of spiritual things, love told me not to speak, but to allow the flame to burn within. I spoke no word that would refresh me.

One day, I asked my confessor if I should eat so I would not injure my body. Exteriously my confessor gave the same reply as God did interiorly, “Why do you speak of eating and not eating for some motive. Just be silent. I know you and you cannot deceive me.” His understanding was keen. So, I abandoned all. I asked God to strip me of everything and to clothe me with burning love.

Naked Souls

Love exclaimed, “I want everyone naked, naked. I want nothing above me or below me. Please know that I change all souls that can be changed into myself. I despoil them of all that is self. Love wants to reign alone. If another joins love, the gates of heaven will be closed against him. These gates open only to pure love. So, let all be guided by love so God can attain his purpose.

Pure love draws the soul in many ways. When love sees anything that occupies the soul’s affections, she consumes them without sparing the soul or body. Love could destroy these in one blow. However, due to man’s weakness, love cuts away little by little – and silently. God says, “I will put my hand to work. Words are useless. By death, sickness and poverty, by scandal and lies, by relatives, friends and even the soul itself, I will destroy everything you love. Then, you will not know what to do. You will be removed from all that gives delight and will have only what causes pain and confusion. You will not understand my actions (which confuse reason). Therefore, you will cry out to escape but you will never escape.”

When Divine Love keeps the soul detached from what she used to love, then he shows the soul his face. When she sees this, she is naked. She casts herself into his hands and cries out, “Oh how blind. Here are all the delights I sought. Divine love has sweetly deceived me and stripped me of self-love. Now, he clothes me with a pure love which has every delight. I see the truth and lament my ignorance.”

CHAPTER 32 THE OPPOSITION OF SPIRIT AND HUMANITY

I was well-ordered and could always find a way to correct any disorder. I could not speak with people whose lives were out of order, especially those who supposedly were walking the way of perfection. When I saw them doing things which I detested, I left their company.

I was compassionate to all, but merciless toward their defects. If I saw an animal killed, I could hardly bear the loss of life. I was very severe in rooting out any evil in another which came from sin.

I could not see my own sins, nor could I believe that others committed sins. My peace of mind was so great, that it substituted for sleep and my body was refreshed even more. In natural sleep, I could not think of God. When I was pierced by the arrows of divine love, I lost all feeling and remained motionless until God would remove this experience.

My spirit was so different from my humanity. When humanity wept, my spirit laughed. My spirit would reprove me for taking any action that would alleviate my trials. My spirit

mocked me for my seeking relief and removed my relish for earthly things. In this desolation, I experienced a secret longing to hide myself and to weep.

Interior Suffering

Sometimes, I would throw myself upon thorns and would feel no pain because my mind was absorbed in love. I would even bite and burn my hands to relieve the interior suffering. I saw external, bodily pain as nothing. My spirit would desert my body. Then four people could not lift me from my seat. These were spontaneous impulses, not voluntary choices. I found no consolation on earth and was forced to abandon what others enjoy.

I found consolation only in my confessor. When he was taken from me, I had no help from heaven or earth. I would say, "I am like someone in a foreign land, having no friends or relatives. Having accomplished my purpose in coming here, I am ready to go home. I have such a love for my native land that a day absent seems like a year."

Each day, I was restrained even more. First, I felt confined within a city, then within a house, then within a room, then in a dark prison, then with feet chained and eyes covered, and then without food, and having no hope for release except by death. My consolation was to know that the merciful God was doing all this and I was satisfied. One time, I heard a voice say, "Arise you dead and come to judgment". I replied aloud, "I want to come right now". All who heard were astonished. I had such a burning love that I wanted to come to judgment. I wanted to see the infinitely powerful and just judge who makes all things tremble except what is pure and simple.

CHAPTER 33 AN EVIL SPIRIT NAMES HER CATHERINE, THE SERAPHIM

In the house, was a religious whom the devil frequently attacked. He even entered her mind, so she thought she was lost and separated from God. She fell so much under his power, that she almost became a demon herself. She found peace only in my presence for we understood each other. I had the spirit of God and she had the opposite.

One day she knelt before me, in the presence of my confessor. The devil spoke, "I am a slave because of the pure divine love in Catherine's heart". Upset by his own words, he cast the religious on the ground. Then, my confessor spoke to him, "What is this woman's name". He answered, "Catherine, the Seraphim". This religious had a powerful intellect and lived in virginity. Probably, the Lord allowed this affliction to keep her humble. She died a holy death and the evil spirit left her only at the end.

I reflected on this opposition between pure love and the evil spirit, and realized that people do not value the precious stones of total love. I felt a great compassion for man's blindness and said, "If I could take my blood and give it to people so they would see the value of love, I would do it. I cannot endure the thought that a man would lose his soul."

A Spiritual Confessor

I lived this way for 25 years, instructed by God alone. As I grew frail and old, the Lord sent me a director who cared for my body and soul. He was rector of the hospital where I lived. God gave him light to understand his divine plans and this priest wrote most of this book. I told him my extraordinary graces and he understood the very first time. I said, "I do not know where I am, concerning both my soul and my body. I want to confess but I do not see any sin." I

enumerated some faults but these did not seem like sins. I was like a child who ignorantly does something and then is told that it was wrong. Sometimes I said to him, “I do not know how to make my confession, because I do not have any stings of conscience. I want to make my confession but I do not know what to accuse myself of.”

The Confessor’s Help

When God did anything that troubled me, I spoke with the confessor and God enlightened him. Because he felt what I felt, I told him everything. If I experienced any obstacle communicating with him, I felt as if I were in burning flames. However, after speaking with him, I was satisfied. He even understood when I could not explain and I was greatly consoled. By one glance, he would quiet the fire within and strengthen my exhausted body.

God’s interior action was so intense, that I had to divert my mind by external things. This diversion was torture because it violated my heart. One time, I was weak for several days. I held his hand to my face, and I smelled an odor that caused supernatural sweetness.

The Effects of the Odor

My confessor asked me about the odor. I explained that God sent this to comfort my body and soul. It was so penetrating, it could bring the dead back to life. I said, “Since this comes from God, I will console myself as long as it pleases him. The confessor tried to experience this by smelling his own hand, but he experienced no fragrance. I told him that God does not give these blessings to those who seek them but only to those who have great need, and for a spiritual purpose.

I told him that this odor was just a small drop of the blessings which all the senses will enjoy in heaven. Through Our Lord’s humanity, everyone will be eternally satisfied, in body and soul. I was refreshed for several days by remembering this odor.

Her Need

My confessor was frequently away, so I said “God has given you care for me alone and you should not help anyone else. I persevered 25 years without any help but now I can no longer endure these interior and exterior trials. If you know how much I suffer when you are away, you would remain with me, instead of seeking recreation.” It seemed that every help which God gave me came through my confessor. He always had the right words for my needs. He was amazed himself, and later, he could not remember what he said.

However, some people wondered about these conversations, so the confessor left for three days to discern if this relationship was totally of God. Later, he was sorry for putting our relationship to a test because it cost me so much. He had seen so many supernatural signs that God reproved him for his lack of faith. After this, he did not worry.

I continued to depend on this confessor for many years. Even in his tiredness, his health never failed. When I withheld anything from him, God would inspire him to say, “You have this thought on your mind which you are hiding but God will not allow you to keep it from me.” I would acknowledge the truth and be freed from sufferings. Sometimes I would ask, “What is in my mind?” and God would give him the words.

CHAPTER 35

HER HUSBAND'S ACTIONS AND HOW HIS SOUL WAS SAVED

At 16, I married Guiliano Adorno. He was of a noble family, but with a stubborn temper. He conducted his business very poorly and soon was in poverty. Although I was always obedient and patient with his whims, I suffered much and could not retain my health. To satisfy him, I stayed at home, going out only to attend mass. I returned quickly not to offend him. God saw that I could gain perfection, and he gave me the greatest patience. For some years, I knew nothing of what was happening in the world. Later, I spent five years with other women, and got involved with the world.

Soon after, the Lord called me to leave my way of life. Then, I lived with my husband as brother and sister. He became a Third Order Franciscan and became seriously ill. He was so impatient, I worried about his salvation. As the end drew near, I went into solitude and pleaded with God, "O Love, give me his soul because you can do this." After half an hour, an interior voice assured me. I returned to his bedroom and he was calm and totally submitted to God's will.

Assured of Salvation

After his death, I told this story to a spiritual daughter saying, "The Lord assured me of his salvation". Later, I regretted saying this (although God wanted it revealed). After the burial, my friends said that I was freed of a great burden. Although I was free, I was not conscious of him being a trial. I also lost some of my brothers and sisters but, united to God's will, I did not suffer from these. Another woman also lost her husband and became a Dominican nun, (Sister Tommasa). God sent her to another convent to reform it. She attained great perfection and had such burning zeal that she wrote many devout books. The nuns of both convents spoke much of her holiness. She often said that she feared "turning back". That was why she entered the convent after her husband's death. I had difficulty even thinking about "turning back". That thought never came to me. So, you can see two women who were very different. I was converted instantly by infused grace. Sister Tommassa arrived at perfection step by step.

CHAPTER 36

CURE OF A HOPELESSLY ILL PERSON

Marco dal Sale had cancer of the nose and could not be healed by the doctors. His wife, Argentina, asked me to go to the hospital to pray for him. Being obedient to the Lord, I consoled the man with a few devout words. Later, the wife and I prayed together at St. Mary of Grace church. When his wife returned home, the man had become like an angel. "Who came with you?" he asked. When the wife told him, he asked that I come back.

Later, the wife told me of the change. However, I already knew. I never prayed for anyone unless led by the Lord. When I returned, her husband said, "First, I want to thank you. Secondly, I need another favor. After you left, Jesus appeared to me in the form of a gardener, as he did to Magdalene. He forgave my sins and told me that I would come to him on the feast of the Ascension. Therefore, please accept my wife as your spiritual daughter. His wife and I both agreed. After I left, he sent for an Augustinian priest, confessed his sins and received the sacraments. Then he drew up his will. Others thought he was wrong and would recover, but he was right.

His Death

On the vigil of the Assumption, he again summoned the Augustinian priest for the sacraments. He told the priest to return to the monastery. The next day he told his wife that she would suffer much (which she did) and encouraged her to be faithful to sufferings (which are the ladder to heaven). He then died. His spirit stopped at the room of the Augustinian priest saying, "Behold the man". The priest knew that his soul had passed to the Lord.

After his death, I received his wife as my spiritual daughter. Having her was a consolation, because I was often thrown into love's burning fires. I loved her much and always took her with me. One day, we again entered our Lady of Grace Church, and I said, "This is the place where the grace for your husband was given." In this way, she knew the efficacy of the prayer.

CHAPTER 37 A CONTINUING ACCOUNT

Nine years before her death, Catherine suffered an illness which the doctors did not understand. Nor, did it seem to be a spiritual work. Medicine and food were no help. Soon, a means to control it was found. She was greatly debilitated, appearing to be near death. The year before her death, she ate very little. In the last six months, she took only broth. She never missed Holy Communion. When she did, she suffered even more, as if she could not live without Communion.

The Sufferings

The vehemence of her spirit became so great that it shattered her from head to foot. Every limb and nerve was tormented by this inner fire. She threw up blood and everything. The last two weeks of her life, she took only Holy Communion. She could not sleep and her screams were dreadful.

The burning flames (interior and exterior) prevented her from moving. Her sufferings banished all her friends and those spiritual persons who might give her relief. So, she was in perfect solitude. Her hunger craved food but when it was brought she would lose her appetite. In her hunger, she remained patient.

She appeared transfixed to the cross, and desired only the Blessed Sacrament. Yet, she was happy and filled with words of divine love. Many came asking for prayers, because they saw heaven in her soul and purgatory in her suffering body.

Describing Purgatory

She saw the condition of the holy souls and spoke clearly of purgatory. It was as if she stood on a wall separating this life from the other, and she could describe the suffering of the holy souls. We are told that the heart of St. Ignatius the Martyr was opened after his death and the name of Jesus was written. If her heart were opened, some wonderful sign would be upon it.

Her burning flames even changed the color of the skin which was near her heart. If flames were applied to her body, she did not feel them, because the inner flames were more intense than any external flames. Inner flames strengthen and sustain. External flames consume and destroy.

CHAPTER 38

THESE SUFFERINGS HAD BEEN REVEALED

In her final year, she received many graces and performed many divine works. In one glance, God revealed to her all that he would do. He showed her all her sufferings and even her death. Upon hearing this, she became frantic and her soul almost left the body. When this vision was removed, she spoke such holy words that everyone trembled. While making this revelation, the soul was seemingly lifeless. She could not speak of this vision in words, but her gestures were so wonderful that all were astonished.

Her confessor was filled with fear. He understood the strict account given at the hour of death, when nothing is excused. What he saw overwhelmed him for many days.

Complaints of Her Human Nature

Her spirit was occupied with divine love, not caring whether the body died or not. Her human nature spoke to her, “You cannot continue in this way and live. Still, God does not yet intend for you to die and you would do nothing against the divine will. Since I (your humanity) must live, you must end this burning flame and bear with me as long as God wills. You will certainly make me suffer, for each day you gain strength and become more intent in fulfilling your mission. So, you will surely conquer me (your humanity)”.

Sometimes, her spirit was forced to yield somewhat to her humanity. Her spirit would like to have reduced the body to dust, and be entirely free. The body, for its part, would rather have endured a thousand deaths rather than suffer from oppression of spirit. In its distress, the body would cry, “Oh, how wretched to be engaged in this conflict”. Then it would say to her spirit, “I know that you do not like me because I hold you bound to earth and deprive you of God’s unbounded love. However, I cannot sustain this divine fire. I would endure any other torture than one day of its burning flames.”

Humanity Consumed

Gradually, the spirit consumed the human part. It became weak and no longer complained or made objections. Catherine could only say, “Oh, the sweetness of God” or, “Love, union and peace” or just, “God, God”. At last, she could say nothing. All her powers were confined within.

One time, the inner flame was so intense that she looked at a picture of the Samaritan woman and said, “O Lord, give me one drop of your water”. Instantly, she received that drop and her tongue described the refreshment.

At times, the conflict between her spirit and her humanity was so intense, that her soul was suspended in air, drawn by an intense desire for heaven but still attached to earth by her humanity. Eventually her superior part conquered the inferior part, and the latter became detached from earth. At first, her humanity was confused, but soon it lost all attraction for earth and began to enjoy spiritual things. Both spirit and humanity became reconciled, satisfied with the same food. Humanity did not entirely forget earth, but received so many heavenly blessings that it became more persevering and joyful. It slowly gained repose.

The Final Purification

The spiritual part was purified as it was drawn to heaven. The higher she ascended, the more detached she became. When her soul left her body at death, it was like a soul leaving purgatory for heaven.

Catherine suffered more and more from these divine favors. Due to the intense fire, she could hardly breathe for five or six days. Each attack was greater than the last and she had to hide her condition from others to avoid their wonder. Although her soul was at peace during these attacks, her body trembled like a leaf. Blood would flow from her nose and for several days she would be without strength. Then she would be restored so she was prepared for a fresh attack.

CHAPTER 39 DEPRIVED OF HER CONFESSOR AND OTHER TRIALS

On January 10, 1510, she felt no more need for her confessor. This thought came from her spirit but she kept it a secret. She wanted to deal with her humanity without any human help. She felt that the confessor would influence her too much. All of this was according to God's plan.

The Hidden Confessor

When the confessor left, her humanity was desolate. It was being consumed but was still alive, since it was not yet God's time. The confessor, however, hid himself, so he could witness God's actions. He heard Catherine pour out her agony, "O Lord, what do you want? All my senses are lost. I am like one dead. I am alone, poor, and oppressed by the world. I can no longer stay with earthly creatures." The hidden confessor was so moved by these cries, he made himself known. His words consoled her for many days. This was God's plan.

Increased Sufferings

Her sufferings increased and the attacks grew more frequent. She seemed to be burning in flames of fire and could not be kept in her bed. These tortures continued night and day, as if every moment was her last. She lost sight and speech. By her motions, she asked for Extreme Unction. However, she lived to endure great sufferings, remaining in communication with God and experiencing interior joy.

For a time, God deprived her of these divine communications. She was left desolate, with nothing to sustain her except the belief that this was God's will. She would exclaim, "It has been 35 years since I asked for anything for myself, but now I ask you not to leave me. You know, O Lord, that I could not endure this."

She confessed her need for God because, from her first moment of union, she had always enjoyed the divine presence. Any separation appeared dreadful to her. Her soul became more resigned, but her humanity became more fearful at each attack. When she spoke, her words were flames of divine love and penetrated the hearts of all.

Sufferings and Visions

Once, she had four attacks in one night. Her nerves were shattered and not a spot of her body was free from suffering. As she cried in agony, everyone asked God to spare her. Yet, she said, "No tongue can tell or imagination conceive, the peace which I enjoy. All the sufferings that man could inflict are as nothing compared to the pain I endure. In these sufferings, both my

spirit and humanity watch to see what God does. It is not my spirit but my humanity which cries out.

In between these attacks, her body seemed healthy and free from all fever. She laughed and spoke like a healthy person, telling people not to worry. She was at peace and God's ways were true. She had visions of angels and was laughing with them. She smiled and saw the joy of the angels who showed her their preparations for her final triumph. She also saw the devils, but without any fear. She was secure in her union with God.

Various Doctors

The doctors continued to prescribe remedies, which she took with great pain. Four months before her death, the doctors examined her and concluded that her sufferings were supernatural, and had no medical remedy.

The physician to the King, Doctor Boerio, came from England. Knowing the fame of Catherine, he was surprised to hear that there was no remedy. He visited her and reproved her for rejecting medical help, even accusing her of hypocrisy. She replied, "I do not want to be a scandal. If there is any remedy, I will take it." For 20 days, he applied remedies with no success. At that point, she told him that she had accepted his remedies to remove all scandal. Now he must leave the care of her soul to herself. The Holy Spirit did this to confound the great confidence of Doctor Boerio. Afterward, he held her in great esteem and often visited her.

CHAPTER 40 CATHERINE'S VISIONS

In her final sufferings, Catherine enjoyed a vision of each saint on their feast day.

On the feast of St. Laurence, her body appeared in flames (as was Lawrence's body). The next day God drew her upwards and she remained unmovable, with her eyes on the ceiling. She was silent but smiled as a sign of her joy. Later, she told us that the Lord showed her one spark of eternal joy. Filled with that joy, she said, "Lord, do with me whatever you wish". She knew that she would soon pass from these fires of purgatory to heavenly life. Her sufferings increased, followed by greater consolation.

Tortures and Visions

On the vigil of the Assumption, the sufferings became so great that it seemed like she was dying. After receiving Communion, she spoke burning words and all wept with devotion. The next day was torture and she was anointed. The following day, she saw a vision and showed her spiritual joy by her smile. She saw beautiful faces filled with joy. This delight remained for seven days and it seemed she was getting better. All of this was supernatural, a change from death to life, followed by a worsening condition.

When an even greater attack of love happened, she lost the use of her left side. For several hours, her eyes closed and she could not swallow. God's work was being accomplished without human help. Her thirst was great, but she could not swallow a sip. People placed fruit on her lips but she could not taste.

Other Attacks

On the vigil of St. Bartholomew (August 24), a demonical vision threw her into distress. She motioned for someone to sign the cross on her heart. When she blessed herself, we

understood the temptation was demonic. She wanted a surplice, stole and holy water. Soon, she was relieved. If this is the torment of a sinless one, how great the torment of sinners!

On August 25th, she took liquid under obedience. This distressed her and she fell into great weakness. She asked to have the windows opened to see the sky. At night, she had many candles lit and sang, Come, Spirit Creator. When her eyes were turned upward, she was seeing visions. She seemed about to die, exclaiming, “Let us go, no more earth”.

On August 27th, she had no life of her own and was resting with God. She asked everyone to leave saying, “Let only those absolutely needed enter this room”. She spoke to others only as needed, saying, “I do this in charity”. This was not her custom.

The Final Months

In these last months, she suffered most on the feast days. So, on August 28 (St. Augustine) her sufferings were very great. Her tongue and lips were parched from the burning fire within. Even touching her hair or the bed clothes was like wounding her.

Although unable to swallow even a morsel, she could always receive Holy Communion. When the priest feared to give it, she would signal him to proceed. After Communion, her face would glow like an angel. She would extend her arms, like a cross. It seemed that the wounds of Christ were impressed (although not outwardly appearing). When fresh water was used to cool her hands, it became boiling hot and heated the cup.

As the burning fire increased, she thought of previously forgotten sins. Remembering these gave her great pain.

On September 10th, her helpers gathered ten doctors to seek a remedy. They concluded that all these sufferings were supernatural. All her bodily organs were in good order and showed no illness. The doctors left and asked for her prayers.

On September 12th, she made a will about where to be buried. She became more exhausted from the attacks and lay as one dead, being consumed by internal flames. Looking at the ceiling, she said, “Drive away that beast”.

CHAPTER 41 HER PASSING TO THE LORD

On September 14th, the bleeding was violent, and she was deprived of all moisture. Her pulse was almost imperceptible. Her mind was clear and she received Communion.

On Saturday night, (even though it was not yet Sunday) she was asked if she wanted Communion. She said, “Not yet”. Then, she pointed to heaven, as if she would receive there. Having been separated from all earthly things, she saw that she would no longer need Communion on earth. She died saying, “Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit”.

The yellow tint around her heart from the internal fire spread to her whole body. Divine love was consuming everything. On Saturday, December 14, 1510, she left this earthly purgatory to take her place with the Seraphims.

Signs After Death

A spiritual daughter saw her soul fly to God with no hindrance. She said, "How narrow is the way that we must pass to arrive at our home without hindrance". Another spiritual daughter was troubled by an evil spirit who was tormented because he saw Catherine unite herself with God.

Her faithful doctor was asleep. Catherine visited him and said, "Rest in God, for I am going to Paradise". He told his wife what happened and later discovered that she had died at that moment. Another man was praying at the same hour. He saw Catherine ascending into heaven and was filled with a joy, as if he had been at her bedside.

A religious lady in her sleep saw Catherine going to heaven. In the morning, she discovered it was true. Another religious, rapt in ecstasy, saw Catherine so happy that she felt she was in heaven with her. Catherine told her many things which changed her life and prepared her to suffer for love of God. This lady often spoke of the comfort coming from the memory of that vision. So many persons, even at a distance, had the same vision that they cannot all be recorded.

Her Confessor's Vision

Her confessor had received no news of her death. Two days later, while celebrating mass, he had a clear vision of her martyrdom. He burst into tears and found it difficult to complete the mass. Amid his weeping, he found great consolation at her eternal rest. All those at the mass, also began to weep. In that vision, he saw all her sufferings clearly. What he had seen in life was as nothing. Without God's help, he would have died of grief.

CHAPTER 42 HER BURIAL AND PRESERVATION

Incorrupt

The saint's body was buried at the principal hospital in Genoa where she had served many years. The wooden case was placed near a wall, through which an aqueduct passed. After a year, it was disinterred. Everything around the body was covered with worms. However, the body itself was incorrupt. The flesh was dried, but not consumed. So many came to see the body that it had to be exposed in a case (so no one could touch it). All the clothes and the wood were spoiled. The body was without a stain.

Many brought their petitions. A sick friend, who was confined to bed, had a vision of Catherine's blessedness and was carried to the Church. She applied Catherine's cloths to her body and was instantly cured. She walked home, unaided. In thanksgiving, she had masses offered perpetually on the Assumption.

Some months before dying, Catherine asked that her heart should be examined to see if it had been consumed by love. However, her friends did not do this. The holy body was placed in a marble sepulcher, but so many visited it, that it was removed to a less conspicuous place. We must pray, through her intercession, that we will be united in eternal bliss.

SECTION 2 SPIRITUAL DIALOGUE

This has three parts:

1. Catherine was captivated by worldly attractions but was entirely converted to austere works of penance.
2. Describes sublime purifications of the spiritual life.
3. Speaks of Divine Love and its Effects.

PART ONE

DISCOURSE OF THE SOUL WITH THE BODY AND SELF LOVE

CHAPTER 1 **SOUL, BODY AND SELF-LOVE**

I saw a soul and a body conversing. The soul said, “Body, God created me to enjoy myself. I want to go where I can accomplish this and have you accompany me as a friend. You, too, will profit. If I find anything that pleases me, I will enjoy it. You can do the same.”

Body: “I am obliged to do what you want. Yet, I see that you cannot gain what you want without me. I agree with your proposal but before beginning, let us have a clear understanding. If either of us finds what pleases us, let him have it in peace. I do not want you to deceive me. If I find something I like, I don’t want you saying, “I do not want you staying here because I am seeking my own interests elsewhere.” Then, I would have to abandon my plans and I would die. Therefore, we need a third companion who will decide all our differences.

Soul: “I am pleased. Who is this third person?”

Body: “It is Self-Love. He who lives with both of us. He will allow me enjoy what is mine and will do the same for you.

Soul: What if we find food that gratifies both?

Body: If there is enough for both, we will be content. If not, Self-Love will give each his share. However, our tastes are different and unless one of us changes, the same food will not satisfy both. But this is contrary to our natures.

Soul: I am more powerful, so I do not fear your converting me.

Body: You are more powerful but you cannot possibly convert me because the earth is my home where I enjoy many delightful things. Being at home, I can easily convert you. You seek what you do not see or taste. You do not even know where your home is.

The Agreement

Soul: First we must have an agreement to secure harmony. Then, we will experiment. In the first week, you must do what pleases me. In the second week, I will do what pleases you. The one exception is that I never offend our Creator.

If you induce me to offend God, I will be doing your bidding and you will take pleasure in whatever you want. United in this way, only God can interrupt our union, for it will be

protected by free will. In this world and in the next, we will receive together the reward of all the good and evil that we do.

Self-love, you have heard our agreement. Will you be our judge and companion on the journey?

Self-Love: This is to my advantage and will not injure me. I will give what belongs to each, deciding always on equal terms. However, if either of you wrongs me, I shall go to the other. I will not be deprived.

Body: I will never abandon you, self-love.

Soul: Neither will I, since we all agree that we will not offend God. If either of us sins, the others will check the offender. Let us go, in God's name. Being the most worthy, I will take the first week.

Body: I am content. Do with me whatever reason directs. Self-love and I yield to you.

CHAPTER 2

THE SOUL AND BODY TAKE THEIR TURNS

Soul: Being without stain, I will consider all of God's benefits. I was created for blessedness and can live with the angels. I can contemplate divine things because I have an intellect which can be drawn into God's intelligence. I have a constant desire to eat my bread with the bread of angels.

As a soul, I am invisible and delight in invisible things. I was created for heaven and I need only heavenly strength to put all earthly things under my feet. Therefore, I will spend this week in contemplation. Whoever cannot do this, must be patient. Unfortunately, my companions (Body and Self-Love) were growing restless, so I said, "Well, I have finished my week. How did you do?"

Self-Love: I did not do well because Body and I cannot enter those regions. We have had no food and are almost dead. Now, we will take revenge.

Body: This is my week and I will show you what God has done for me. He gave me the heavens and the earth, the sea with fish and the air with birds. He gave me nations and cities. He gave me foods of every kind, which supply my needs. All of these I can enjoy without offending God, for he gave them for my delight. You must permit me to enjoy these.

I must remind you that during this week, you cannot enter your country of contemplation and leave me starving. If so, I would die and that would offend God. While on earth, I can enjoy all of God's delights. Then, after death, I will enter with you into your country of heaven.

Remember, I am interested in your salvation because it is my salvation, also. I do not desire anything against reason or against God. Ask Self-Love. My demands are not unreasonable and I will abide by his decision. I am sure what I seek is agreeable to God.

CHAPTER 3

SELF-LOVE BLAMES BOTH SOUL AND BODY AND WANTS TO RULE

Self-Love: Body, I see that your motives are according to God's words, "Love your neighbor as yourself". However, I see Soul placing us in danger of losing our lives.

O Soul, restrain yourself and see our necessities. Body and I find nothing for ourselves in your country. It is the last place I would choose to live. O Body, if you give up superfluous things because they injure you and the Soul, then I cannot remain with either of you. You will only serve each other. You, Soul, will give the Body what it needs and it will be satisfied. So, I will have to leave.

Soul: I do not want to condescend to the Body. I fear that its pleas of necessity will lead me to accept its gratifications and lose what is greater. Seeing both of your cravings, I fear you will change me from spiritual to earthly. I will lose my taste for heavenly things. Also, my intellect will be defiled and my body corrupted. O help me, God.

Body: Self-love has settled the question and we are together. Do not forget, Soul, God would not have created these things if they hurt souls. The Soul has such power, that only by her consent can she be held back. God respects her will and does not force it. Neither I, nor Self-Love, can take anything away without your consent. You hold the reins.

Soul: Tell me what are these indispensable necessities, so I can provide for them all at once and not be disturbed again.

Body: I must have clothes, food, drink and sleep. I must be served so I can serve you. If I am overtaxed, I cannot attend to your needs. Look after my necessities. God has provided delights for the body, so the Soul can enjoy greater goods. God will be praised and both of us satisfied. If any conflict arises, Self-Love will judge and we will live in peace.

Soul: I will provide for your necessities, but I suspect that the two of you are joined against me. Your words seem reasonable but you speak so often about your needs, that I distrust you. Someday, I might escape your hands and serve God without you.

CHAPTER 4

THEY CONTINUE THEIR JOURNEY

SOUL ALLOWS SELF-LOVE TO PERSUADE HER

Body: Let us travel in harmony, each seeking his own food and pleasure.

Soul: It is my turn again but I cannot act as I did the first week. I am bound to provide for the needs of Body and Self-Love. My time is only half as profitable, so I can live in good terms with the others. This is a heavy trial, to leave divine contemplation to provide food for animals. The difference between these weeks is like night and day.

Body: This is my week and I am famished due to the fastings of the Soul. Yet, she takes care of me and I gain strength. I no longer fear that the Soul will harm me. She is no longer taking the high stand of that first week. Now I have my week and also half of her week. My needs, which she cannot supply, grow always greater.

Soul: O Self-Love, I lose my rights by your endless necessities. I leave my path by allowing you, who are so self-seeking, to lead me. If we all go astray will you tell me the truth?

Self-Love: O Soul, you are far from us because you are so high. You even think it a great thing to think of our necessities. You will settle down. Then, keeping company with us will no longer seem a hardship. God will provide. You are not to experience perfect happiness in this life, only in the next. Just do your best.

Soul: I cannot defend myself. The two of you are united and you consume my week. The two of you have endless wants and I have no time for myself.

When your turn comes, you want everything and proclaim yourselves masters. I will be the loser. So, I will not follow this plan. Let each provide for himself. However, I have no choice except to stay with you.

Body and Self-Love: This will be good. Each can have their own sphere and we will live peacefully. At last, O Soul, you have discovered your mistake.

CHAPTER 5

THE SOUL YIELDS TO THE ALLUREMENTS OF BODY AND SELF-LOVE AND FALLS INTO SIN

So they traveled together, each seeking his own pleasure. However, the Soul granted the Body what it thought necessary, Self-Love incited the Body. These two united and everything seemed necessary. They denied themselves nothing. If they did not gain some new nourishment, they complained. They led the Soul into the great sea of earthly love and delight. This transformed her and she spoke only of the needs of Body and Self-Love. Overwhelmed by disordered appetites, she could never seek her own spiritual needs. She thought, "If they lead me into their country as I led them into my country (the first week) who will rescue me from their power? By necessity, they will do with me what they want."

Although this Soul craved spiritual things, she changed her sails to avoid despondency. No longer able to live in her own country, she fooled herself by saying, "These created things, with all their beauty, help me to taste divine things." After tasting them, she would say, "Oh, how beautiful must be heavenly things." By traveling with Body and Self-Love, she lost her divine instincts and fed on the husks of swine. Soon, all three were on very good terms. They journeyed along in great harmony. However, they paid no attention to reason, attending only to earthly pleasures and delights. They had no desire to speak or hear about spiritual things.

As they continued along, the Soul experienced only a little compunction which she seldom noticed. At times, she did think of losing her soul at death. This caused great fear. When this fear left, she returned to her earthly journey. One thing was against her. All agreed to satisfy themselves fully. Yet the Soul has a boundless capacity and earthly things could not give her peace. She became restless, and wandered farther from God.

Earthly things blinded her but she thought she had peace. To satisfy herself, she was always busy. When she was not occupied, she became disgusted. Then, due to spiritual blindness, she went from one thing to another, from one hope to another. She lost herself in these pursuits, even though God willed that they could never satisfy her.

If man could find rest on earth, few would be saved. People would make no effort to free themselves from earthly things. By natural instincts, the Soul seeks happiness. However, when the Body blinds her, she seeks earthly goods. The Soul, with its infinite capacity, foolishly allows herself to be led.

The more the Body assimilates the soul to itself, the more it can enjoy earthly pleasures. This pulls down the Soul. If she did not consent, the Body would have no delight. Because the Soul cannot be content with earth, the Body's delights cannot fulfill her desires. The Soul becomes famished. The Body's tastes cannot satisfy the Soul's desires. Also, the Body retains its desires for new pleasures and when the Soul agrees, both are ill at ease.

The Soul is upset. She is in this narrow vessel of the Body and required to replenish its needs. She must remain in the Body but when she tries to find happiness through the Body, her spiritual desires are famished. The Body's desires are trifles and when satisfied, its desires are blunted. The more the Body gratifies her tastes, the less enjoyment the Soul has. Therefore, the Soul speaks to Self-Love.

CHAPTER 6

THE SOUL PROPOSES A NEW WAY OF ACTING

Soul: O, Self-Love, do you not see how we harm one another? You made me yield to your appetites and I am poorly fed. I no longer eat in heaven and you starve me on earth.

Self-Love: Both of you have reason to be dissatisfied. Perhaps, we shall find a way that suits us all because I, too, am not satisfied. I could devour in one instant what the Body consumes in a year. How must it be with you? Your capacity exceeds mine. Let us search for better food, even if the Body complains.

The Soul: What is your food? What can we find that satisfies both of us and also sustains the Body?

Self Love: I feed on both earthly and spiritual food. But, do not take me to divine contemplation, where you went that first week. When I travel with anyone, I always carry enough supplies that all my followers have an abundance. They are rich.

Soul: Earth does not have food that will satisfy both of us. Unfortunately, we have wandered far from heaven (where food is plentiful) and I can find no way to lead us there. When we chose to feed upon the world, God closed the door to us. Now we are confused about our pasture and want to return to him. However, we are doing so for our own benefit, not from the true love which the Lord requires. Only by love does he work within.

When I see how I have fed you and all that I have lost, I deserve to be hated by God, by you, by the world and by hell. I am almost in despair. I allowed you to lead me to earthly things, as if they could fulfill our necessities.

Self-Love's Disordered Desires

After trying everything, I realize that nothing on earth can satisfy us. I see all of your appetites. Satisfying your desires only inflames them. After the slightest gratification, they become disordered and are never appeased. When you are satisfied, I am famished. When I

wanted to return to my own country, these appetites did not cooperate (as they did the first week). I made a mistake. I withdrew from my straight path of strong spiritual activity.

From Spiritual to Earthly

Having consented to the Body's disordered pleas, I was quickly buried in sin, going from necessity to superfluity. I lost grace and became blind. I went from spiritual to earthly. Now I can only move toward earth and seek out every evil. I have wandered from my home. O Body and Self-Love, you have carried me so far that I cannot resist your appetites.

You have so changed me and perverted me that I feed on your food. By being united with you, I blindly follow your desires. Instead of being a spiritual soul, I have become almost an earthly body.

You, Self-Love, keep us closely bound. I am in chains, dead to spiritual things. Deprived of spiritual lights and tastes, I seek only earthly and bodily things. The only good that remains in me is a spirit of remorse which gives me little rest. I neglect myself and feed upon earthly things. Every day, I waste my time and enter into greater slavery. The more I withdraw from God, the more estranged I become from my natural goal, which is God.

The Soul's Sorrow

The Soul often mourned in this way, ignorant that her sorrow came from a divine instinct. God never abandons any creature that is still on earth. He visits the Soul by his inspirations. If the Soul listens, God helps them. If the Soul resists, it grows worse because it is rejecting a grace which would prevent sin.

Soon, this Soul became burdened with her sins. Having no remedy, she lost hope. She took pleasure in sin and even boasted about it. Because she had received great graces, her blindness was great and her despair of doing good was overwhelming. No human means existed to gain relief. She had fallen so low that only God, by his infinite goodness, could rescue her. Her delights were fixed on earthly objects. She hated everything else. She was so changed that what was sweet before was now bitter. Her heavenly tastes had become earthly.

CHAPTER 7 GOD GIVES HER LIGHT

In his goodness, God let the soul wander until she became disgusted with earthly things and discovered that they could never satisfy her. Then, God sent a light which penetrated her intellect and showed her all her errors and dangers, from which God alone could free her. She saw that she faced death both of the body and of the soul. She found enemies on every side that had led her like a beast to its destruction. With that, terror seized her and she cried out to God.

Turning to God

Soul: O, I am a wretched creature. Who can save me? God alone. O Lord, let me see the light that I can escape these snares.

She saw that she had no power and could go only from bad to worse. So, she turned her thoughts to God and asked his help. Suddenly, she had a firm confidence in God and permitted him to do whatever he willed.

Soul: In the future, I will receive all that happens as coming from God's hand. Only my sins are mine because I commit them against God's will. My voluntary sins are my property.

The Soul made this firm resolution in the secret place of her own spirit, with no outward demonstration. When God sees a soul distrusting self and trusting him, he stretches out his helping hand. He knocks. If we open, he enters and drives out our enemies, one by one. He restores the Soul to its Baptismal innocence. God does this in different ways according to the Soul's state. Now, I will explain how he deals with Self-Love.

CHAPTER 8 ENLIGHTENMENT ABOUT GOD'S PURE LOVE

To purify me from self-love, God sent divine light and I could see God's pure love. I understood all that he had done and still does. He does not need me. By my many sins, I was God's enemy, even ready to repeat my sins.

The Soul's Awe

God showed me that he will do good even though I sinned. The more I moved away by sin, the more God drew me close by his inspirations. He wanted to keep me in his love and he used countless means to do so. When I saw all that he had done, I was filled with wonder, "Who am I that God seems to care for no one else?"

God showed me that he created me from pure love and that he only required that I should love him with that same love. He wanted me to stay with him and sought union with me.

He proved this love in creating the angels and Adam. Because he wanted Adam to love and obey, he demanded some type of submission from him. Otherwise, man (created in such excellence) would think he was God. He possessed great gifts of body and soul and had complete dominion over material creation. God gave him a command, so he could give God obedience.

Sending Jesus

I saw that God had created man for the highest good. His body and soul would enter heaven. He showed me the great evil of sin and that sin could only be remedied by a second manifestation of divine love. He taught me about his ardent love which sent Jesus Christ to save us from eternal damnation. God revealed all this to me in a single instant. (Editor's note: God gave Catherine this singular gift at the very beginning, after she had gone to confession.)

God's Great Patience

I saw the liberty in which God had created me, subjecting me only to himself and not to any creature. He had given me a free will, over which nothing in heaven or earth has power. He showed me his great patience, by which he waited for me, and how he had carried my many sins. If I had died in these, I would have been lost forever.

He reminded me how he had rescued me from the danger of death, so that I had time to see my errors and escape eternal damnation. He reminded me of his many inspirations, given to save me from sin. Even though I disregarded them, he continued to send them in different ways. He allowed my free will and, in a sense, forced me to do what he required. He did this so patiently, that no human love could compare with it.

Constant Love

Because of the great love he has for man, God's anger is never inflamed. Rather, he always loves man and seeks to be one with him. On God's side, this instinct is never missing. His pure love always burns and never consumes. He always acts on our behalf. He is terrible only toward sin. He hates sin because it prevents his love from working in us. Even the devils would burn with divine love if their sins were not so heinous.

God showed me that he is always waiting to inflame men's hearts. However, sin thwarts this desire. When sin is removed, there is peace. Where sin exists, there is strife.

Limiting Hell

I also saw that God's love is so great that, no matter how great the sinner, God's love is never extinguished for him while the sinner lives on earth. After death, all becomes hatred and never-ending wrath for sinners. The wicked deserve infinite punishment for an infinite time. However, I saw a ray of divine mercy shining even into hell and limiting the punishment that God could justly have inflicted.

I also saw a ray of love darting toward man with the power to annihilate him. When this divine love found obstacles, then God would feel pain (if this were possible) and would suffer the greatest grief. This ray wanted to penetrate the Soul, but could not due to the Soul's failure.

The ray totally surrounded the Soul and sought to enter from every side. However, the Soul, blinded by Self-Love, did not perceive this ray. When God saw the Soul self-condemned because she would not allow the light to enter, God said, "My love for this Soul is so great, that I desire never to abandon her." This is true. The Soul, deprived of divine love, becomes almost as evil as divine love is good. I say "almost" because God gives it a little mercy.

Never Wants To See A Soul Lost

I heard these words, "My love for you is so great, that I would never willingly see you lost. I would gladly suffer for you. However, good and evil cannot live together, so I must abandon you. Through Me, you would be capable of all blessedness. Abandoned by Me, you are capable of all wickedness." Really, I cannot recount all of God's workings in me.

Touched by this ray, I saw and felt a flame coming from the Divine Source. This experience left me bereft of all sense, without understanding or feeling. In that pure moment of love, I remained wholly absorbed and I never forgot this sight. I always saw pure divine love turned to me.

A Continual Vision

I was shown that I had lived without knowledge of this great love. I saw great faults in myself and how I could respond to this pure love. I was so humbled that I would have publicly professed my sins to the whole city. I could only repeat with great inner anguish, "O Lord, no more world and no more sin."

Although I saw much, this did not prevent the divine ray from doing its work. My mind was lost in a pure love that saw all things, the imperfections that had to be removed. I did not judge my sins according to the punishment they deserved, but as offenses against God's great mercy, for I saw his pure love for me. This vision always remained in my heart, and drew me continually to God. This love melted me so that all my actions were done in this purity. I continued in this ray and nothing inferior to God could come between myself and that light.

CHAPTER 9 THE SOUL SPEAKS TO SELF-LOVE AND THE BODY

After seeing these pure truths which Love placed in her, Soul said to the Body and Self-Love, “God is about to do a work in me. Therefore, I will no longer listen to you, because if I follow you I will perish. Unless I had experienced this, I would never have believed it.

Regaining the Right Path

Under the guise of necessity, you have done all you can to bring me to perdition. Now, I no longer respect you. I see both of you as deadly enemies who will never be my friends. I will return to my original path which you caused me to leave. Hopefully, by divine light, I will never be deceived again. I did what I shouldn't have done. Now I will make you do what you do not want to do. I will not spare you (as you did not spare me). I was enslaved to you. Now, I will bring you into subjection and change your nature.

The Body and Self-Love realized that they could no longer deceive Soul because she had received such divine light.

Body and Self-Love: If we cannot live in peace with you, then we will live in violence, opposing you as much as we can. We will do everything to injure you, and will receive our just rewards.

The Decision

Soul: For a time you will be greatly dissatisfied. However, when I purify your excesses, you will be satisfied and will share forever in my blessings. Be patient. We will all enter into peace.\

I will lead you to a joy so great that you will not want anything, even in this life. You have tried everything and are not satisfied. I will bring you to unending happiness. The Soul will experience such peace that the Body will feel it. It will be enough to mitigate the suffering of a thousand hells. With God's help, we will come out safely on every side. I will not speak any more. I will just act.

Body: To me, you seem terrible, and ready to attack us to excess. So, I want to recall some things that have been said. Then, I will leave you alone.

First, after love of God comes love of neighbor. This concerns first your own body, which you must maintain in health. Otherwise, you cannot fulfill your plans. I am necessary. After my death, you cannot add to your glory nor purify yourself. Purgatory is much different than suffering in an earthly body.

Second, when the body is healthy, the soul can more easily receive divine light. If I am sick, then you would miss many inspirations. We have things of mutual interest, so we both reach heaven.

Guided By Light

Soul: I know what I need, both from divine light and from reason. Let there be no more external persuading. I will do injustice to no one. All will be cared for. All complaints come from disordered appetites which are not subject to reason. I will change your opinion, O Body, and you will live in unbelievable peace.

When I turned my mind to spiritual things, I was in control. When I lowered myself and became your equal, and when I made an agreement with Self-Love, I was deluded. We agreed not to take advantage of each other, but soon I was enslaved. Now, I intend to take control again. If you are willing to be my servant, I will accept you and you will have what a servant needs. If you refuse, then I must make you my slave. Then, you will want to serve me from love. When that happens there will be no opposition and I will be in control.

CHAPTER 10 THE SOUL'S VIEW OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE

Enlightened by God, Soul saw her failings and those unknown perils which could have caused her to fall. She was astonished at God's mercy to a creature plunged in sin.

When someone sees God's goodness, God also shows him his defects. The soul sees these instantaneously in the light of pure love. The Soul saw two things clearly, God's goodness and herself plunged in sin because she acted against God's infinite love.

Soul: O Lord, I will never offend you or oppose your goodness. You have overpowered me and drawn me so close that I will never withdraw myself, whatever the cost.

The Blindness Removed

Seeing her inner defects, the Soul said to herself: Are you ready to come before your Maker? Who will deliver you from your difficulties? You thought you were beautiful but now you see yourself as ugly. Self-Love blinded you and you thought that sensual delights were heaven. Now you see them all as works of the devil. Then the soul turned to Humanity.

Soul: I warn you, O Human Nature. Do not speak to me of anything sinful or you will suffer. In the future, I will treat you as an evil spirit. You are diabolical in your behavior because you know nothing else. Now you see how terrible it is to offend God. Will you still follow your natural appetites which are contrary to his will? If you do, I will inflict a penance on you.

Hearing these words, and conscious of her great offenses, Human Nature became like a criminal led to justice.

CHAPTER 11 THE SOUL SEES WHAT SHE WOULD HAVE BECOME

Soul: "O Master, why have you given me such light? I was corrupt and your enemy. I went astray and fed on sensual delights. I did not want to be lifted up and shunned all your helps. Now I am confused as I see myself in your light.

While I was still in sin, you showed me my condition, where I was going and where my sins would carry me. I also saw what would happen if you had not intervened. Filled with fear, I could only weep over my sad condition. If I had continued in sin, how many sorrows I would have experienced in this world. In the next world, I would have been an enemy of God and in hell.

Great Suffering

For a time, this vision remained with me, causing me such suffering that I was depressed. I could find no rest, either in heaven (which had no place for me) or on earth (which should have

swallowed me up). I could not be with others, nor be concerned about what comforted me. I alone had done all this evil and I wanted to make satisfaction, without any help. Therefore, I said:

Soul: Hell is my place, but I can only go there by death. My God, what will become of me. Where will I hide? I find no place of rest. I cannot come before you because I am so stained. Yet, I find you everywhere. What shall I do with the tattered garment which clothes me? Tears are useless. Contrition is not accepted. Penances are fruitless. Nothing will satisfy for my sins if God is not merciful.

A Powerful Vision

I remained in this despair, powerless to make satisfaction and unable to turn to God's mercy. Nothing inside gave me any hope. I was tormented by the evil I had done, and unable to shed a tear. These feelings almost took my life. I could not speak, eat, sleep or look up to heaven. I had no spiritual or natural feeling. I did not know if I was in heaven or on earth. I was stunned and senseless, wanting to hide and avoid the company of others. Seeing myself as a creature who had offended God, I was no longer rational. This happened, because I saw the greatness of my sins and the ruin which they caused me. If I saw this vision any longer, it would have consumed my body.

God had me contemplate this vision until I would never forget it. Then, he came to my help. One day, Our Lord appeared to me by an interior vision. He was bleeding from head to foot. He said to me, "Do you see this blood. It is shed to satisfy for your sins". With these words, I was pierced with a deep wound of love. At the same time, divine confidence banished all my fear and I rejoiced.

CHAPTER 12 GOD MANIFESTS HIS LOVE FOR HER AGAIN

I received an even greater vision. I saw the pure love by which God loved me and suffered for me. I was wounded so deeply that I despised anything that could come between God and me. I saw man's evil and God's goodness. These first two visions never faded from my memory. They revealed each other. One showed the mercy of God performing acts of pure love for man (I could hardly contain the delight). This revealed the evil of man. God acted in love, even though I did not return it. God saw my sins but continued his mercy. Always looking out for my benefit, He brought about my good and was not hindered by my sins.

Self-Evaluation

Then, I looked inside myself and saw how I had opposed God. I saw that man was as bad as God was good. I fell into despair. If God had not veiled the vision, I would have fainted for fear. Because of my despair (which I thought could not be remedied), I turned to God.

Soul: Lord, I give myself to you. I am fit only to make a hell for myself. So, I will make an agreement with You. I give myself into Your hands, so You can hide me in Your mercy and dispose of me. Occupy me with love. This will enlighten me and keep me lost in you, so I find no time for myself.

The Lord's Response

The Lord told me that he was satisfied. After that moment, I lost all thought of self and was never disturbed. God infused a burning ray of love that wounded me deeply. In one instant, I was stripped of all natural attachments and was drawn powerfully to him. This ray of love

absorbed and transformed me. I moaned even more now than when I saw how sinful I was. This ray of love entered me and impressed the five wounds, five fountains flowing with drops of blood and love for man. I looked at the first and then the second, but only to a limited degree so I would not die.

Her Response

Seeing myself as a sinner caused no suffering. God had taken away my sorrow. I saw myself clearly, and how God upheld me. I saw that if God abandoned me, I would fall into all kinds of sins, for I was as evil as the evil spirits. However, being in God's hands, I felt no fear.

What tortured me was to see God's burning love for man. No tongue can describe how inflamed was that glowing fire. This manifestation of God's love made me reject all that displeased him. I gained a jealous watchfulness against the least defect, not only against sins but against all imperfections and attachments. Being in God's hands, I was stronger than all the devils and I could not even injure myself.

CHAPTER 13 CASTING OFF ALL THAT WAS SUPERFLUOUS

By God's inspirations, I looked upon created things as if they did not exist. I rejected all superfluous food (even what seemed necessary) and became detached from clothing and society (good and bad). I entered into a solitude of mind and body. With a new gift of prayer, I would stay on my knees for hours. My humanity resisted this but it had to follow whatever I chose.

Austerities

God alone guided all this. I just followed him. By giving me the opposite desires, He regulated all my desires and freed me from worldly inclinations. I was deprived of fruits (which I liked) and I ate no meat. When I needed food, it was always at hand. I always had some dust of aloes. When I liked some food, I sprinkled this on to ruin the taste. My eyes were always down. I was so occupied with God's inner working within me that my awareness of outer things was almost dead.

I placed rough objects in my bed to rob myself of sleep. However, God did not want this, so I slept (even against my will). When my human nature saw all this, it was greatly dissatisfied. However, like a thief in prison, it said nothing, hoping only that this stage would pass. However, the spirit so restrained my human nature, that it became dry and lifeless, and the following conversation took place.

CHAPTER 14 DIALOGUE OF SPIRIT WITH HUMAN NATURE

Spirit: Tell me, human nature, what you think of your life.

Human Nature: I think you have gone too strong in this direction and will not be able to sustain it. I hope that neither death nor sickness happens. If so, you will not gain your goal. You will have to go to purgatory, where you will suffer more in one moment than in a lifetime. While you go to the fire of purgatory, I will be far better off lying in the grave. I think you should retrace your steps.

Spirit: I want neither death nor illness. You are better off now, purged of all that is bad. Abstinence has made you healthy. Soon, divine love will consume everything. I will provide enough food so death and illness do not result.

Human Nature's Response

The Spirit filled me with light and I saw all that would harm human nature. Finding itself without any comfort, human nature thought; "I would be comforted if I gained some consolation from spiritual things. Otherwise, I am tormented and imprisoned."

Filled with these thoughts, I entered a church. Upon receiving Communion, God gave me a ray of spiritual light that was so powerful that Body and Soul seemed to enter eternal life. The illumination and feelings were so great that even human nature feasted, and said: "I could live in this way."

Then, human nature experienced a second light of divine love and said, "I do not ask for any sign or sensible delights because they hinder pure love. The soul must give these up so the soul and body do not grow attached to them. Do not give them to me, because I desire pure love."

CHAPTER 15 HUMAN NATURE CLAIMS THAT SPIRIT DOES NOT KEEP ITS PROMISES

Spirit had promised that Human Nature would be satisfied by spiritual food. Human nature was greatly upset because Spirit did not provide the food it wanted. At this point, Spirit was even withholding religious consolations.

Human Nature: You do not keep your promises, Spirit, and I cannot persevere without some natural or spiritual nourishment.

Spirit: You have misunderstood my promise. I said "in the end" you will be content. At present, you are looking for what will fatten you, not what will satisfy you. I hate sensible delights and I want you to hate them. You still have these cravings which you want me to gratify. However, I want to deaden them so they desire only what pleases me.

Harmed By Spiritual Delights

You are sick and I must treat you as a sick person. You think that God's spiritual delights cannot harm you. However, your intellect, by sharing in your sensuality, is not a good judge. I want to devote myself to pure love, freed from everything that can excite other desires. I detest an attachment to spiritual delights more than to natural delights.

Because they seem good, spiritual delights capture the soul more easily and the soul nourishes himself on these delights. This leads him away from God. If someone wishes to enjoy God, they must shun these spiritual delights which are poison to pure love. Souls must flee spiritual delight as they flee the devil. They cause incurable sicknesses which souls cannot perceive. They do not understand that these hinder God himself who is separate from all his creation.

First, I cleanse the house. Then, I furnish it with good things that satisfy both of us. Even if this takes years, I must force you to accept this. I will subdue you by any means, so I can be free of your torments. You are poison in every wine that I drink. Only when I destroy you, will

I have peace. Although I act against you, it will be for your benefit. Do not get angry with me. Console yourself with hope, and accept my will.

CHAPTER 16 HUMAN NATURE ASKS SPIRIT TO ACT JUSTLY

Human Nature: You see that I am very unhappy. I cannot escape you nor can I force my will on you. Just grant me one thing. I ask that you act justly. I am only a body, without prayer, will, or memory. I am an instrument doing whatever you tell me. Together with reason and will, were not you the first to sin? Who, then, deserves the punishment?

Refuting Human Nature's Reasoning

Spirit: I believe that I can refute your reasoning. If the body can never sin, then God is an unjust judge. He rewards you with heaven or he sends you to hell. Someone who does neither good or bad, should have no reward and no punishment.

Certainly, I sinned first. I had free will and to do good or evil needs my consent. If I resolve to do good, many faculties will aid me, and the world, the flesh and the devil cannot stop me. If I seek to do evil, the world, flesh and devil will support me. Since God rewards the good and punishes the evil, all who helped me in good will be rewarded. All who helped me in evil will be punished.

In the beginning, I followed my spiritual inclinations but You, Human Nature, attacked me with your pleas. We were in constant conflict. Self-Love, as mediator, disagreed with both of us, and led us astray. To please your needs, I left the right path. And for this I am justly punished. If mortal sin is found among us, I will be more tormented than you, but we will both wish that we had never been created. Therefore, we must both be purified, not only of sin but of every imperfection contracted by our evil habits. God has given me a great light so that no taint of imperfection will remain in either of us.

How long will this season of purification last? In the beginning, it seems terrible. However, as it goes on, you suffer less because your wicked habits are destroyed and you receive powerful support. God never allows people to suffer beyond their strength. Certainly, it is better to suffer a little here than to remain in eternal torments. Better to suffer a thousand years on earth than one hour in purgatory.

CHAPTER 17 GOD BESTOWS A DIVINE SWEETNESS

Having satisfied human nature, Spirit accepted that penetrating love which restrained human nature and left it breathless.

After God established me in pure love, He tried me with many temptations. He infused a divine tenderness. Both Soul and Body were so overpowered, they could hardly live. However, the Soul saw clearly that she did not want this sweetness while on earth. Nor did she want divine proofs because they corrupt love.

“I will guard myself and not provide any quiet spot where I would feed upon these favors, for they poison pure love. “

More Visions

Yet, God pursued me and kept me in the fountain of divine sweetness. Even though I complained, God plunged me into this sea by giving me many visions. In one vision, God showed me His pure love for me.

Fortunately he lessened that flame by a vision of my sins. Otherwise, I would have died. Another vision revealed all my evil inclinations. This also tempered God's devouring flame. After seeing his love, I would rather die than offend God, (even by the least imperfection). Blessed in this way, the Soul never thought of her body and was freed from its annoyances.

CHAPTER 18 HUMAN NATURE ASKS FOR SOMETHING TO DO

When human nature saw how narrow was its path, it asked Spirit very humbly.

Human Nature: Spirit, you have deprived me of all external consolation. I am dead to the world. If you continue to be strict, I will want to die.

Spirit: I will give you an external task but you will hate it. If you complain, it will be even worse.

Human Nature: I only want to have something to do.

Spirit: I warn you. I want to teach you obedience and you will be subject to every creature. You must work for everyone. Whenever you are called to help the poor and infirm, you must never refuse. You will nurse even the most diseased. Even if you are talking to God, I want you to leave prayer and go to help. Do not look at the status of the person you are helping. Do not choose your own will but submit to the will of others.

To Remove All Imperfection

I must give you tasks which you do not like, so I can extinguish all your inordinate pleasures and displeasures. I will root out every imperfection and let you pause for neither pleasure or pain. You will be as a dead person. I need to try you.

When I give you something difficult, I will keep you at the task until it becomes easy. I will remove from you what gives you consolation and you will lose all sense of pleasure. I will try you in every way. Also, you will form no special friendship. You will love everyone, friend and enemy, rich and poor. Just do your duty. That is how I will lead you.

CHAPTER 19 THE SPIRIT COMPELS HUMAN NATURE TO LIVE IN POVERTY

Following this conversation, my human nature was reduced to such great poverty that I could not live without God's help.

I went to visit the poor. These poor creatures were filled with despair and they would often cry out. Entering their homes was like going into a tomb. In spite of this, I wanted to draw near and touch them, so I could help both their bodies and souls. Some of the sick even complained about those who helped them, filling them with abuse.

The Trials

I visited the poor of St. Lazarus, where the greatest suffering happened. The Spirit sent me there and I found my task worse than I could believe. I was assailed by my human nature (which hated these infirmities) and also by Spirit, which was lost and unable to converse with anyone.

My Human nature was overwhelmed by Spirit and thrown into confusion. She wanted to escape its power and to get away from these sick people. Everything distressed her, but Spirit wanted her to work without any disgust. Human nature had these problems and no answers. All this was done to give her a freedom of spirit.

CHAPTER 20 THE SPIRIT ALLOWS HUMAN NATURE TO CHOOSE EXTERIOR OR INTERIOR SUFFERINGS

After giving my human nature these tasks and making her understand, Spirit spoke:

Spirit: Now that you have seen what you had only heard about, what will you do? You have tried both ways. Now, you must choose. Whichever you choose, I will make you live in subjection to that creature. This subjection will be so great that you will find no rest. I will begin this soon.

Human Nature: I have tried both extremes and have endured many sufferings. Yet, I would choose to live among creatures, rather than in the divine light. I fear exterior sufferings, but I also fear even more that divine light which terrifies me. Really, I am perplexed.

Need to Choose

Spirit: Whatever you choose, you will lose the other. I warn you. You will lose everything superfluous because I want to be pure and detached, just as God created me. To gain this, I will set aside everything that opposes me.

Human Nature: You are so determined that more talking is useless. I give myself into your hands as one dead.

Spirit, wanting to annihilate my human nature, saw that touching the filth and vermin disgusted me. So, Spirit said, "To free yourself of this loathing, eat some of the vermin." Although at first taken aback, my human nature obeyed and was set free. This was so against human nature, that no natural effort could have accomplished it. Yet, when I complied, I enjoyed a contentment that gave me courage for the future. I could practice every self-denial and accept the outcries of the sick.

The Spirit did this within me for three years, all without any interior awareness. I persevered until I lost all anxiety about these difficulties.

CHAPTER 21 THE SPIRIT LEADS ME TO LIVE AT THE HOSPITAL

The Spirit obliged me to take another step. This required great submission. She led me and my husband to live at the hospital. I devoted myself to the sick. Here, I was like a servant to those in charge. I lived quietly in an apartment and was obedient. I fulfilled any task quickly,

even though the residents held me in no special esteem. I did not even commend myself. I was totally lifted up and said to Spirit.

Human Nature: If you want me to do these tasks, then give me some interest. I refuse no task but I must do them with love or they will not be done.

Then, I got interested in my work, but this interest was only when I needed it to complete the work. Otherwise, Spirit removed any interest or even a memory of the work. This led me in a poverty of spirit for many years.

The Spirit's Discipline

When Spirit had disciplined me by many trials, I could accept what I had formerly loathed. Then, the Spirit had another trial. He put me in charge of the hospital, to see if my human nature would take advantage of my promotion.

Although He did this for many years, he also helped me with many suggestions to fulfill these tasks. In spite of these external duties, I remained recollected in that divine love which was destroying my human nature. As Self-love was destroyed, pure love possessed me, according to the degree that I died to self.

Burning with pure love, I melted in the divine flame. I was always consumed because the fire continually increased. I took no rest from my duties so I could forget the flame that was devouring me. I did not speak of this to anyone. The Spirit took possession of me, and said, "I will no longer call you a human creature because you are in God, with nothing human remaining."

DIALOGUE **PART TWO**

WHAT GOD AND THE SPIRIT SAID TO THE SOUL

CHAPTER 1 **GOD GIVES A NEW LOVE**

After God had taken away all my affections and possessions, he deprived me of myself. By acute sufferings (that are hard to describe unless they are experienced), God separated my soul from its spirit. He infused a new love which absorbed my Soul with all its powers. I was raised above my natural condition, and could not delight in anything of heaven or earth.

Unable to Respond

I could not respond with my body, which did not know what to do or to say. By this unknown method, God brought about new works. God used some chain to draw my spirit and to absorb it. My body was deprived of its natural relationship to the soul and was removed from its natural state. The spirit, stripped of everything, was made fit for God and rested in him as long as the body could endure it. Then, the soul and body returned to their natural condition, refreshed by this repose in the spirit.

God elevated the body and, little by little, destroyed its animal imperfections. The cleansed soul remained pure spirit. The body was purged of its evil inclinations and was ready to

be united with the spirit. God does all this by love alone, incessantly seeking the good of his beloved, the Soul.

God performs this special work without the Soul's help. First, he fills her with a secret love which deprives her of natural life. In this way, His work is supernatural. She remains in the sea of this secret love, which overpowers her memory, understanding and will. Submerged in God, these three faculties have no natural life and perceive all created things as hell.

God's Hidden Action

Although the Soul shares in the happiness of heaven, this is hidden from her. She cannot comprehend this high gift. Everything exceeds her faculties, which are submerged in love.

Concerning created things, her faculties are lifeless. Everything is hidden in God. As the Soul advances, it becomes more content to accomplish God's will. The soul, as if dead, knows nothing and does nothing. How can the body exist while God is bringing the soul to perfection? It cannot use its powers for earthly purposes and it cannot enjoy spiritual things. It is in torment. God wants to do this work himself.

CHAPTER 2 HOW GOD KEEPS THE SOUL OCCUPIED IN LOVE

When this work of love was lessened, the Spirit could communicate with the Soul and Body. Receiving help from created things, they revived. However, whenever God drew the Spirit into himself, the body became as dead, estranged from its natural state. After returning to normal, the body was exhausted and could receive no help. Humanity showed no sign of life, not eating or drinking. Like a child, it could only weep, because it had no natural desires.

The Soul's Complaint

Having remained in this condition, the Soul lamented to the Lord:
Soul: O Lord, I was in a place of total contentment and delight. I was enjoying Your love as if I were in Paradise. Now my powers are driven from their home and find themselves in a strange land. Formerly, my powers were conscious of Your love, gaining great satisfaction and joy in every act. Now I am naked, deprived of the power to love and to act. I am living, yet dead, without use of my faculties, and without love. How can I live when I was created to love God?

This work of God deprives me of love and joy. I do not know what to say or do. This is intolerable. I see all my powers resting in God. In their ignorance, they are content, but how shall abandoned human nature live? My eyes do not see. My ears do not hear. My mouth does not taste. True life is found in this hidden love but that love brings death to human nature, because the senses do not function.

Human Nature lamented, "How shall I love? I will be alone in the world. No one will have compassion on me. They will not see this as a work of God. I will have to live differently from everyone else, religious or lay. I will be seen as a fool. I will have no order in my life and this will be a scandal."

Sweet But Cruel

I am like in a heated furnace, about to be reduced to ashes. Yet, I do not complain for I am in God's will. My Soul does not comprehend his plan but I see that God's actions bring forth great effects. However, human nature feels the torments.

O sweet but cruel purgatory on earth! Sweet compared to the purgatory to come. Cruel when compared to other earthly sufferings. Yet, this is God's great mercy, hidden and unsuspected. Only a blind person would want to escape it. Far better for us sinners to be cleansed here, than hereafter! Whoever pays here, pays just a small portion because his free will cooperates with infused grace. God gives this discipline only after He receives the free consent of the person who places himself in God's hands so he can act according to his pleasure.

The Spirit gives consent and binds the Soul to himself. These bonds are never broken. Being totally subject to the Spirit, Human Nature has no say. In this subjection, it cries aloud, like someone who is wounded. God pays no attention and continues his work.

CHAPTER 3 HUMAN NATURE WANTS TO KNOW THE CAUSE

Menaced by various sufferings and unable to defend itself, my human nature wanted to know the reason for its martyrdom. God responded that I would be released at the right time. I was like a prisoner sentenced to death who accepts his sentence and sometimes escapes it.

God Explains

God said, "In my ever-active love, I always seek to guide souls to eternal life. Illuminating them, I lead them in diverse ways. When man accepts my inspirations, I increase the light. Then, he sees himself imprisoned and surrounded by snakes, which try to destroy him. Because of darkness, he did not see this before. By my light, he understands the danger he is in and seeks my mercy to be free. As I keep increasing the light, he sees the dangers even more clearly."

My Prayer

I prayed, "O God, do with me whatever you will. I will endure everything if you free me from these dangers." God seemed to be deaf to my cries. He increased the light. This caused my anguish to deepen because I saw no way to escape the dangers. I continued to cry out. God gave me no reply but took heed of my perseverance. He enkindled a hidden fire and revealed my imperfections. For a time, I was overwhelmed by my sinfulness. I ate nothing and lived in continual sorrow. As the light increased more, my flesh was consumed. I was so weakened, I could hardly move. "O God, have mercy on me."

God Responds

When God saw that I was totally abandoned to his mercy, he revived me by a ray of pure love. I saw again the greatness of my sins and that I deserved hell. When I perceived God's special grace, I was pierced again because I had sinned against his great goodness. I confessed my sins with extraordinary contrition and was ready to perform any penance. Contrition, confession and satisfaction are the soul's first tasks after being enlightened.

CHAPTER 4 GOD SENDS ANOTHER RAY OF LOVE

God sent another ray of love and my body was refreshed. I thought I was in paradise. I continued in this state until every love that was not of God was consumed. Then, in my true love, I was totally absorbed in God. He sent me every consolation and spoke words that were like flames penetrating my heart. These also inflamed my body and it seemed as if my soul was going to leave my body. This season of great consolation came from the food of eternal life.

The Great Gift

In this state, I did not fear martyrdom, hell or any adversity that could happen. In this love, I could endure anything. O happy soul, that has tasted this love! You can enjoy nothing else because you gained the joy for which you were created. O secret love! Whoever tastes you, hungers for nothing else. O man, you were created for this love and cannot be at peace without it. This love contains all that you can desire and gives a satisfaction that must be experienced to be conceived. O love, in which all happiness is gathered!

If anyone could describe this love, he would wound every heart, even the hardest. O flame of love, you remove all rust. Every shadow of the least imperfection disappears. O God, You work so perfectly that the soul is cleansed, even of those imperfections which only you can see.

O Love, you totally purify us, enlighten our intellect, and perform your works. The Soul, seeing that God is in love with her, questions him.

CHAPTER 5 THE SOUL ASKS QUESTIONS

Soul: What is there in my soul that you love so greatly, even though I often act against you? Our Lord replied, "If you knew how much I love your soul, you would continue to live only by a miracle. If you could compare your own wickedness with my goodness toward you, you would live in despair. Knowledge of my love would annihilate your body and even your soul (if that were possible).

My love is infinite and I must love what I created. Even someone who did not understand would see every other love as an aberration. Only love itself is the cause of my love. So, be at peace. Do not seek what you cannot find. My love is best comprehended by your interior sense. To gain this understanding, love must detach you from yourself (for you are the greatest obstacle). Only love prepares you to understand love.

Light to the Right Degree

O Love, you gave God to me so I can do all that is needed to gain perfection. God gives all grace and light, increasing them gradually to the right degree. If this light fell short, the soul could complain that it lacked grace. If the grace exceeded my capacity, I would not be punished for what I failed to accomplish.

Grace increases grace as I use it. So, each day, God gives what is needed. No more and no less, according to each person's capacity. We, however, are negligent. We want to arrive quickly at perfection and grace seems insufficient. However, we are the ones at fault. Because we do not cooperate with what we receive, our grace cannot increase.

O man, how can you be excused for not cooperating with God's grace? At death, you will know all this and be astonished. You will not be able to contradict the plain truth. Because you failed to respond, shame will overpower you.

CHAPTER 6

GOD REVEALS THAT HER BODY WILL BE HER PURGATORY

The Lord: You will best understand the course of your suffering by experience, not by reason. Know this. To increase your glory, I made your body the purgatory of your soul. I always knock at the door, and if you consent, I will lead you to the degree of glory for which I created you. If you saw all my care, you would abandon yourself totally to me.

To the Highest Glory

So my loving care would lead you to the highest glory, you would accept any martyrdom. I draw you by pure love and faith. These oppose fear and self-interest which cannot co-exist with that pure love which must absorb you. As you are absorbed, you can enter pure love. Otherwise, it would be a hell for you.

To purify yourself, you have only this life and my grace. Is not anything else a loss of precious time? Once passed, time never returns. Listen, O Soul, to my voice. Open your ears to the Lord who loves you so. Steeped in sin and burdened with evil habits, you will never know your woes until my light reveals them and frees you.

Soul: Lord, give me persuasive reasons why I must suffer. Please teach me the cause of these sufferings. I need this for those moments when your vehement love overpowers me.

Reasons For Suffering

The Lord: When you gave me your will, you were very low. You knew that you would have fallen into hell without my support. You were in sin, bound hand and foot. By my light and your contrition, you made a good confession. Then, you made sacrifices to satisfy for your sins and you did not want to fall back into sin. I let you struggle until you were established in virtue. By practicing virtue, you were confirmed in goodness."

At this point, I began to delight in spiritual things. God allowed me to be assailed by temptations, so I would be firm in his ways. I saw God's Providence in the many trials that I experienced from the world, the devil and myself. I was used to doing wrong, so I fought all my enemies until I destroyed them.

I had no evil habits and God allowed me to be tempted only to gain an increase of grace. Here, there was no danger because God supported me.

CHAPTER 7

THE SOUL BEGINS TO REST IN THE LORD

After removing my evil habits, God clothed me with virtue and instructed me in the spiritual life. I began to rest in the Lord. My battles were ended and I rejoiced because God showed me how he had helped me and had protected me against my enemies, (visible and invisible), and from myself (the worst enemy of all).

Finding myself free of interior trials, I turned to the Lord. He lifted me to a higher state. With the eye of divine love, I saw the work he had accomplished in me. When I saw his watchful care, I was lost in wonder, realizing what God was and what I was. I saw how low I was in my sins and how his goodness rescued me and prepared me to receive divine love.

This vision caused me to confess my sins with bitter tears. Meanwhile, God's love so inflamed me that I could speak of nothing else. I stayed in this state until all other loves, (natural and spiritual), were consumed.

Love of God, being remote from other loves, is much greater. It occupies the soul more vehemently, always increasing and working secretly. Being in this state, I enjoyed all peace and delight (interior and exterior). I did not yet know how God would lead me, although I was approaching that special moment.

CHAPTER 8 THE SOUL MERITED NOTHING

Lord: With my grace assisting you, you have been purged of sins, filled with virtue and touched by the life of love. You are united with me, and filled with such delight that it seems like paradise.

No Merits

Please understand that you have merited nothing. You were obliged to fast, give alms and pray. You did them to cancel your debt. I gave these graces to you because you had no riches to satisfy your debts. All this time used to satisfy for your sins was like time that is wasted. This time was supposed to be used to increase in love and glory. Really, you merited nothing even though you did great works that others highly esteemed.

Other Needs

To prepare you for greater light, you needed to be clothed in virtues. Knowing that you were incapable of any good work, I gave you a hidden love by which your faculties and your body were disposed to make satisfaction.

I have given you the power to love me and to detach yourself from other loves. I have brought you to the doors of my perfect and true love. You have not entered these doors. This is beyond your strength. You also do not rest. You have an instinct to advance but you do not exactly know the goal.

CHAPTER 9 AS THE SOUL REACHES THE DOORS OF DIVINE LOVE, SPIRIT DECIDES TO SUBJECT BODY AND SOUL TO GREAT SUFFERING

Spirit saw that Soul had reached the doors of divine love but was able neither to go ahead or to draw back. God had done this by occupying her faculties without satisfying them.

Spirit: Now I must repay Soul for what she has done to me. For years I have been subject to her. With great cruelties, she has kept me from my home. She was restrained by earthly things and I could not use my powers to gain my spiritual goals.

I reminded Soul of the certainty of death, the hope of heaven and the fear of hell. I recalled all the help of the Church and God's inspirations. I used sickness, poverty and other trials to detach her from earthly desires. I did all of this so she would call upon God. Certainly, in her necessities she turned to God and promised to do great things. However, when the trial was over, she would return to her usual practices. I returned to my prison.

Spirit's Intentions

Now, I see that Soul, (with her senses and her body), has arrived at a point where she cannot go forward nor go backward. So, I will bind up all her faculties so they cannot impede me.

I will listen to no complaints. These faculties will be my servant, as I was theirs. I will not be as cruel as they were. They never helped me, even when all my enemies surrounded me. I will keep Soul in restraint and inflict upon her all the suffering she can accept. She is in my hands and I will leave her naked and desolate. She will not know where to turn. She will receive only the bare necessities that will keep her alive for a longer martyrdom.

I will do this in secret so no one helps her. Every part of her will suffer until I finish my work. Whoever sees these torments will want her to die. If she could die without sinning, she would choose death.

Soul: I know what I will have to suffer but I have not been told the reason for this suffering.

Stealing God's Works

Spirit: Now, I will explain with words. Later, I will use deeds and you will envy these deeds. By his gentle means, God has led you to this threshold. However, you have appropriated these graces to yourself, as if they were yours. You would not believe this is true unless God told you.

By experience, you will gradually understand that you always took your share. You did this with your prayer, your penances and your virtuous acts. When God's work deadened your bodily senses, you took this as your own.

God sustained your faculties and you seemed to be in heaven. You enjoyed all this within your soul, as if it belonged to you. You thought that this was given to you because of your merits. You did not give God all the glory, as you should have done. In all of this, you have been dishonest and, therefore, must suffer.

God Comes Close

To purge the soul here on earth and return her to her original purity without using purgatory is a gigantic task. When God wants to lift a soul to a high degree of glory, she must be purified and pass through many sufferings to gain merit.

When the time came, God brought my Spirit so close to himself that it no longer communicated with the Soul. Also, the Soul did not communicate with the Body. Both were left so dry that they could hardly live. The Soul and the Body went from the extreme of experiencing heaven to the extreme of experiencing nothing. In all of this, God was secretly attracting them.

Then a bombshell exploded. The Soul was inflamed with divine love. Suddenly, she could not sense the presence of that love. She was like a musical instrument which sent forth sweet music. Now, it was silent. Both Soul and Body had put forth sweet music. Now they were mute. Being pressed by the Spirit with no relief, I cried out.

CHAPTER 10

THE SOUL SEEMS ABANDONED BY GOD

The Secret Robbery

Soul: Lord, I must atone for taking your spiritual graces to myself. I have also consented to sin with my body. These must be expiated by my sufferings until I pay the last penny. I have secretly robbed you and delighted in many spiritual graces, as if they were mine. These include all your consolations in prayer and action. This robbery is serious because I stole what was most precious. These spiritual consolations do not belong to me but to you. Only what you give by grace has any true value. So, I need to learn that every grace comes from you and must be returned to you. Otherwise, I am a robber. The devil himself began this robbery.

Alive or Dead?

Yet, how can I satisfy when I have no strength or feeling? Am I alive or dead? Feeling abandoned and deserted on every side, I asked for help. God comforted my human nature and protected her. The body grew infirm because Spirit had the Soul's powers suspended. It was starved and naked, not realizing that God was working. As it grew weaker, the body felt every pain as a calamity. The infirmity increased because the Soul was occupied with God and the body could not support itself.

Fortunately, God gave me a director who understood God's interior work. He consoled me greatly. Alone, I could not have supported these indescribable trials. Even if seen by bodily eyes, they would not be understood, because the interior sufferings were much greater than the exterior. At times, God sent relief to human nature, but the interior trials were always increasing. I wandered about the house, ignorant of this illness because God's work was subtle and hidden.

Greater Afflictions

Suddenly, I was assailed in a different way with strange, new afflictions. However, when God afflicted the body, he strengthened the mind. When he afflicted the mind, he strengthened the body. I continued this way for ten years; always more unaware of what God was doing within.

Then, God took away my confessor and the Spirit drew me forcibly to himself. This was penetrating and powerful, but had no delight. The love melted into my spirit and soul while my body was absorbed by God.

This hidden love purged all my secret sins of robbery. The purging was done secretly and the cause was never revealed. Human nature was so oppressed, she cried out: "O God, you have abandoned me to cruel trials. However, amid the torments, I am unable to complain. I am satisfied by a sharp flame of love, which is consuming all my natural and spiritual energy. How strange to see myself deprived of my vital force. I have lost my confessor and have become so weak I can turn to nothing. Inside, my secret strength is decaying. I am as one dead, but I must continue to live. I cannot even receive the help that You offer me."

CHAPTER 11

A GLIMPSE OF ETERNAL GLORY

Toward the end, God helped me in a different way. As the soul's desires and the body's appetites became weaker, God revealed a ray of his glory which supported me for many days. Although just a passing impression, it remained within me. God held my spirit and did not let it waiver so the impression lasted longer. It became harder to withdraw, a difficulty too great to express.

Higher and Deeper

My spirit ascended higher to God and was drawn into deeper depths. I continually lost strength and was more and more absorbed. Then God spoke to me.

Lord: I will not let you interfere with my work. Instead, I will finish my work and you will not be conscious of what I do. I will separate you from your spirit so he can be lost in the abyss.

When I heard this I said: "I do not live, yet I cannot die. Every day I am consumed. When I saw that I, a miserable creature, was to be centered entirely in God, all my flesh was in torment. To be totally in God, without a moment's wavering, belongs to the saints in heaven who live only for God. For me to live on earth while my spirit is in heaven, goes beyond anything I have known. This is the most terrible suffering in the world."

To Avoid Purgatory

To avoid purgatory and enter directly into heaven, I had to die to the world while still living in it. All my imperfections had to be purged so I could be absorbed in God. Oh, human nature, by complaining, you show that you are not dead. You will live until you find a life with no impediment. When your liveliness and sensibility are weakened, you will have less suffering. You will not anticipate your sufferings as you do now. You will abandon yourself to God who works so secretly that the person is not aware.

God does this so the person experiences the sufferings. Otherwise, he would feel it less and would be guilty of robbery. However, God knows that man cannot live with these trials, so he provides for him secretly, according to his needs. At first, this help is evident so the soul can persevere and form spiritual habits. When God sees the man can endure the battle, he withdraws his helps. If the soul has great strength, he will endure much. God helps until death, more secretly than openly.

DIALOGUE

PART THREE

THE LOVE OF GOD FOR MAN

CHAPTER 1

THE SOUL ASKS GOD WHY HE LOVES MAN

Soul: Lord, why do you have such a great love for man? Man so opposes your will and acts so often against your works. He is blind and stupid, unable to act according to your will. What is man that you are so thoughtful? Are you his master or his servant? Has love blinded you so you do not see his wickedness? Please answer me.

Lord: You ask what is beyond your understanding. Yet, I will show you the tiniest part of my love. This would kill you if I did not support you. I do not change and I loved man before I created him. I loved him with an infinite and pure love, without any cause and only for my glory. I must love whatever I created.

Also, I have given man enough natural and supernatural means to gain his end. I never fail him. I always surround him with my infinite love and bring him under my care. Nothing in him is against me except his free will. This I am always combating his free will by love. I do this until he yields to me. By my secret workings, I reform his will. I never abandon him until I have brought him to his goal.

The Mystery of God's Love

Why do I love man even when he opposes me and his sins are hateful in my sight? By my infinite goodness, I cannot see his defects nor fail to do my work in him. I cast a light and he must see his defects. When he bewails them, he purges himself. He offends me only when he places the hindrances of mortal sin in my way. Then, I cannot accomplish my goal. You cannot comprehend my love that is without limit. You can know it only slightly from its effects, (small or great.)

God Changes Man

If a person of faith wanted to see what a spark of love accomplishes in man's heart, they would be so inflamed that they could not live. Its power would melt them away. Some are ignorant of my love. Others abandon everything because of it.

Men sacrifice their lives as my love leads them to martyrdom. By participation, this love transforms the hearts of men into of angels and angels into God. Men devote themselves body and soul to spiritual things. Their whole life is changed. All are surprised but agree that this change is good.

Only experience can show someone how this happened. The man feels a penetrating love which he understands only by his desires. He is so much in harmony with his body, that he has nothing and desires nothing. He remains quiet, knowing only this love in his heart. He is secretly bound to God by a subtle thread. This allows him to struggle with the world, flesh and devil. He is weak and fearful but God does not let him fail.

How God Purifies

This true love is evident when I consume all man's imperfections by every kind of human trial. Concerning what cannot be seen, I do the following. I use a slender, golden thread of my love which carries a hook to wound man's heart. He is taken prisoner, but he does not know by whom. He has no desire to move because I (who am his goal) am drawing him. As I draw him even closer, he is conquered and taken out of himself.

The feet of a hanged man do not touch earth but his body remains attached to the cord. So, the Spirit remains suspended by the thread of love which kills all man's imperfections. He can love everything, but only by the love which holds him.

All actions are done by love. God acts alone without man's assistance. Having drawn man to himself, he enriches him with favors and, at his death, draws him into the divine abyss. In this state, he appears lifeless and lost, yet his life is hidden in God amid eternal treasures. When I heard this, I was inflamed and excited.

CHAPTER 2 THE SOUL'S EXCLAMATIONS

Soul: O my tongue, do not speak, because you cannot express the love in my heart. O heart, why do you not consume my body? O Spirit, why are you bound to earth? Do you not see that God attracts you to heaven by vehement love? Destroy this body, so I might go to God.

When God saw this, he wanted to restrain me. So, he showed me just one spark of his love for men. Seeing this, I was overwhelmed and the Lord made his demands.

Lord: Why are you changed? What have you seen that enkindles such a love? Until now, you wanted to leave your body, and because of great delight, to find your love. You did this in union with many others, who were bonded to you. But now, I see you bewildered, and not wanting to speak with anyone.

Before This Gift

Until now, I always wanted to speak about divine love with my spiritual friends, as if we were already in paradise. How sweet were these conversations in which both the speaker and the hearer fed upon delicious spiritual food. All were disappointed that the time fled so quickly. Everyone was burning with love and did not want to end the conversations. O feast of love! O exquisite food! What sweet union! What divine company! We spoke only of God's love and God's works, and how to remove all obstacles. All came from God and benefitted our souls. I responded to the Lord's question.

CHAPTER 3 HER ACTIONS WERE FROM SELF-LOVE

Soul: You showed me a light and I saw that what I thought was done for you, O God, really came from Self-love. These conversations were my doing and I secretly took them to myself. This truth was hidden beneath the shadow.

Now that I see how pure love works, I am bewildered. All other loves seem selfish. Where can I find the words to speak to you? You have conquered me. Dying in love, I feel nothing. I am annihilated in love and yet, do not know love. Love acts within, but I do not understand. My heart burns but I see no flame. I must search for the signs of your love.

All-Conquering

This new light has overpowered me, yet I do not despair of knowing this pure love which contains every good. It satisfies without satiating because it increases my appetite. This pure love is gentle and adapted to my heart. After enjoying just a small portion, I would always search for it, (even if I lived a thousand lives.)

What is this all-conquering love? All words fall short. Yet you have given me a burning desire to penetrate this love. I know the search will not be in vain. You promise me a fuller satisfaction than what I now have. You have shown me a spark of pure love and kindled a flame that devours me.

Incomprehensible

On earth, I find no rest. Pure love causes me to be lost, led wounded and captured to my death. I must wait for your divine providence to satisfy all my desires. This is the order of salvation.

Lord: You cannot comprehend pure love naturally, because your desires are supernatural. Love is the beginning, middle and end. You cannot live without love. It is life both on earth and in heaven. You are consumed by your desire to know love, but you cannot understand it with your intellect, your spirit or by your natural love. Even the saints in heaven know love only by the measure of grace and charity which they had in this life.

Love is God Himself. You can know him only by what his great love does within you. When I reveal one spark of pure love, its power forces you to return love to me, even if this means you must endure a thousand deaths.

Helpless and Absorbed

Seeing what men have done for me shows how much love I have infused into them. Now, you do not seek the effects of love but the gentle drops of love itself which melt the powers of Soul, Spirit and Body. By these drops, you become helpless. You are lost and far from any creature, serene in your heart, passive and absorbed with a love that nourishes.

Soul: O food without taste, O taste without flavor. O flavor without food. O bread of love that feeds men and angels. Whoever tastes you, cannot realize what you are. You satisfy the appetite and destroy all other desires.

Whoever eats you in even the smallest amount sees himself as blessed. If he received more, he would die, because your penetrating love would kill the body. O divine love, you have sealed my lips. I do not know how to speak. I will not seek what cannot be found. You have conquered me.

CHAPTER 4 A PURE HEART KNOWS GOD'S LOVE

Lord: Do you know who uses my love? The one whose heart is empty of every other love. When he finds pure love, he is content, even though he does not understand my workings or his own condition. Pure love works secretly, with no exterior display.

The Prison of Love

This soul is kept busy and bound, without knowing who binds him. She is in a prison without doors, unable to use her understanding, memory or will. She is blind and dumb. Divine love has overpowered all her faculties. Soul and Spirit discover that they cannot act as usual, because some higher love secretly moves them. They cry out "Love, what kind of love is this, always changing us from good to better, and continually bringing us closer to our goal?"

Sighing For Heaven

As we approach this love, it plunges us deeper into confusion. Only God's rays of love keep this man alive. God pierces his heart and his sighs return to heaven. This is his only relief. Otherwise, the vehemence of the fire would kill him. Sometimes the fire is so strong that he cannot speak or sigh. Then love's work gets done more quickly. This condition does not last long because he could not remain there and live. Inflamed with divine love, the Soul exclaims:

Soul: O love, whoever feels you, begins to possess eternal life. Yet, you, O Lord, hide this love, so the person possessing it does not spoil love by claiming it as his own. O Love, whoever feels you does not understand you. Whoever desires to understand cannot know you.

Dying From Love's Wounds

Divine love brings every good and banishes every evil. O heart, touched by pure love, you cannot be cured. You are dying of a sweet wound that leads to unending life. O fire of love, you purify man like gold in a fire and you lead him to that country for which he was created.

Love is a divine flame. Like a natural flame, it consumes and always seeks to benefit whoever cherishes it. Whoever does not know love's power can blame only himself because God's love is always doing good for man and has the most tender love.

Unable to Speak

O Love, I can no longer be silent. Yet, I cannot speak because your love deprives me of any power. I speak within my heart, but when I try to produce words, something blocks my tongue. I would be silent but my instinct to speak urges me on. If I could say the words, even the coldest heart would be inflamed. Before I die, I hope to speak just once of this love, of its effects, of what it demands of me, of its sweetness, and of its riches. They are so great that I would willingly be burned alive for love. This love brings a zeal that causes me to disregard every contrary power.

O Love, happy the person whom you possess, for you preserve me from all ills of body and soul. You guide all and abandon none. You give light to overcome the devil's deceits, the world's evil and our own self-love. This efficacious love draws all imperfections from their secret hiding places in order to purge them.

Effects of Love

This love governs our wills and makes them resist temptation. It fills the intellect and emotions, so they desire only the good. It engrosses the memory and satisfies the will so that love alone possesses them, allowing nothing else to enter. Love gives off a perfume which allures man. Love empowers a man to pass through all the torments of martyrdom to gain salvation.

O Love, my words cannot express the delight that fills my heart and remains within. When I speak, it is inflamed. Those who have no love in their hearts will hear my words and take no notice. To the beloved heart, however, these words will bring a joy and they will quickly surrender.

This love is adapted to the human heart, which opens at love's first touch. However, man only receives this love when free from other loves. By receiving a single drop, the person considers all the world's goods as nothing. By love, a man conquers all evil habits and stands ready to perform every good work.

CHAPTER 5 OTHER EFFECTS OF LOVE

O Love, by your sweetness you break the hardest heart and melt it like wax in the fire. You cause great men to see themselves as the least, and the richest, as the poorest. You cause wise men to seem like fools because you give an understanding that surpasses all understandings.

Effects of Divine Love

You banish all depression and hardness. You remove all natural inclinations and worldly attachments. You make bad men, good and proud men, simple. When you guide, you make self-willed men content to follow. You change earthly men into heavenly beings. You accomplish our salvation. For this, we have neither the knowledge or the strength.

O Love, your name imparts a sweetness which makes man kind, generous, and ready to serve all. Whenever you penetrate a heart with your darts, (if no other love is there), your slightest flame can make him abandon everything for you.

You make every trial appear easy. You belong to all. The more you are diffused the more fully your will is done and the more man feels your warmth. Enkindled by your desire, he asks no proof beyond his feeling. He cannot give any reason for his seeking you. Love carries its own reasons. It remains the lord of the whole man and subjects the will to its pleasure. Then, all the actions belong to love, which brings them about.

The Various Stages

At the first stage, God gets man to undertake many good and necessary actions. In the second stage, the soul works in God, with no motive of benefit to self or to neighbor. The soul just rests in God, with no selfish motive. In the third stage, the man perseveres in good works but God deprives him of any pleasure, so he acts with the purest intention. Love's works are more precious in this stage than in the other two because love has conquered man and he is drowned in a sea of love. He is lost in himself and has no power to act. Only love itself works in the man. These works of perfection are not done by human power but by sanctifying grace.

Absorbed and Possessed

This sweet love absorbs and possesses man, continually working for his benefit without any effort on his part. O Love, my sweet companion, no words can describe your excellence. Blessed is the heart possessed by you, for you console man and lessen his every sorrow.

All done through love is done with ease and gladness. Your sweetness lessens all toil. Working without love is a torment beyond belief. Having Love makes bad food taste good and good food taste better. It would be delightful to speak of this love if I could find the words. Every soul is immortal and can receive greater love than can be experienced in this life. The body cannot support the desires of the Soul, and the soul's cravings are never satisfied.

O Love, you fill hearts that cannot contain you. Not containing you, they are not satisfied. By taking the heart, you possess the entire man. You bind all the faculties and allow no one to enter except yourself. This slavery of love gives man freedom on earth and eternal life in heaven.

O Love, you join angels and saints with bonds that cannot be broken. United in this way, they have one will and one goal. They hold all things in common. In this union, there are no rich and poor. All contradictions are excluded because love makes crooked roads straight.

CHAPTER 6 THE SOUL ASKS QUESTIONS

Jesus, what has brought you to earth? What led you to suffer so much? What induced you to give yourself as our food? What continually moves you to send us your Holy Spirit? The answer to all is “Love”.

Through love, You appeared in this world as someone so poor and humiliated that you were not esteemed as God. Even with a promise of heaven, a faithful servant could not suffer so much for his master as you did for us. Without love, he could not patiently endure the torments.

The Martyrs

You brought from heaven this sweet manna, which contains strength for every trial. We see in the saints how much they suffered from the love infused into their hearts. No torture could separate them from you. In the middle of their sufferings, love increased their zeal, and they did not turn aside from their martyrdom.

The witnesses saw only their bodily weakness. They did not see the powerful love infused into their hearts. Once abandoned to that love, the martyr could never be lost. This nuptial robe of love is the shortest and safest way to salvation. It gives great confidence, and the soul enters God’s presence with no qualms.

If No Love at Death

Without this love at death, the soul would choose hell rather than come into your presence. You are pure love, and can receive only what is pure. No imperfections can exist in your sea of love. A soul who is bereft of all charity at death, would cast herself into hell rather than live in your pure presence.

O pure love, every stain of evil is a great hell to you, more cruel to you than to the damned. Only those who have experienced you, can understand this. Although this divine love is infinite, it can be described by its actions in the soul.

CHAPTER 7 OUR LORD QUESTIONS THE SOUL

Lord: O Soul, What do you have to say of my love which always speaks to you, comforts you, inflames you and reveals heavenly beauty, so that your desires become more ardent? Tell me love’s words to you.

Soul: I repeat certain words which only my heart understands. I, myself, do not understand these words and cannot express them because they are different than all other words.

The Soul’s Experiences

Love opens my heart and gives revelations which inflame me and dissolve me. Although not sensing words, actions (or even the flames of love itself), my heart is possessed and held fast by a loving satisfaction. I do not understand love’s actions even though I see that love bestows all the caresses which any true lover gives.

This flame melts the soul, detaches her, purifies her, strengthens her and draws her deeper. Although she cannot remain long in this penetrating fire (human nature cannot endure its vehemence.) Yet, the heart seems to live in that love every minute.

O love, you absorb the heart and leave human nature deserted on earth. It has no resting place and is a creature exiled from both heaven and earth. The soul is enamored and burning. How does this creature still live on earth? How can she speak with both heaven and earth? She lives differently from all others. We can admire her life but not practice it. She values nothing and has nothing. Yet, she is mistress of heaven and queen of earth. Few understand her. She is free and fearless, not anxious to possess anything. To her thinking, all things are hers.

The Lord Explains

Lord: I do not answer for men who are blinded by earthly attachments. Rather, I speak for those who, by divine love, can understand my words. My love delights the soul, and it destroys every other earthly joy. Tasting my love destroys every other taste. My light blinds all who see it. My love so possesses the soul that she is lost, and does not understand what she has done. Raised above herself, she is bereft of reason, memory and will.

These souls take part in the world only from necessity. They are always busy within themselves, keeping them from temporal things. God sends subtle and penetrating rays of flames and they do not know where they are. They are plunged in the depths of love. For a time, God removes this vehement love so they can stay in the body. Even after God leaves, the soul is still absorbed in him, seeing and knowing nothing. She remembers only what she has felt. Until this impression grows weaker, she cannot manage her own affairs, even if they are important.

CHAPTER 8 THE CONDITION OF THE LOVING SOUL

The loving Soul is very sensitive and unable to endure any imperfection because pure love does not remain where there is the slightest fault. Imperfections would cause intolerable pain. On earth, everyone has some imperfections. Sometimes, God hides these faults because the soul could not stand the sight. At other times, he reveals them to purify the soul.

If the Soul ever thinks she has sinned, she is not at rest until this is resolved. While living in pure love, the Soul cannot be disturbed (by herself or others). If any inner discord arises, she does everything to regain peace. If God permits these souls to be disturbed, they are like souls thrown out of Paradise. Unless God restored their peace, they could not live. They live in great liberty from earthly things, and are taken out of themselves, (especially toward the end of their lives). They remain immersed in the love they have experienced for so long. They want for nothing and God absorbs them, Soul and Body.

No Attention to Creatures

The Soul takes no heed of creatures, because she realizes that their help comes from God. Seeing all this clearly, she abandons herself, casts aside all creatures and finds her fullness only in God.

The Soul has no affection for exterior things. Unless God permits another love because of necessity, only God's love enters her heart. In this case, the earthly love does not touch the depth of her heart. Pure love is free of all concern. Where the Spirit is, there is freedom.

Effects of Love

In the burning flame of pure love, we cannot distinguish God and man because the heart becomes a paradise. God gives loving souls a foretaste of heaven, which he keeps hidden from all who are not absorbed in divine love. By possessing love, the soul becomes generous and would rather suffer martyrdom to gain God than have all the world's goods and lose him.

Those who do not know you, O God, cannot understand this. Because of his union with God, the soul sees all earthly riches as beneath him and all God's creation as its own. Outside of God, it sees and knows nothing. A heart united with God is unconquerable. Even hell does not frighten it. This soul receives all that comes from God's hands, remaining with him in unchangeable peace.

Soul: What name do you give these souls?

Lord: "You are Gods, children of the Most High".

Soul: Lord, you annihilate these souls. Then, you restore them to true liberty and make them masters of themselves. They will only what you will. All else is set aside.

Cannot Describe

O Love, no words can describe your joyful control, your strong freedom and your gentle goodness. Whatever the soul could express would not equal what it would want to say. Although seeking adequate words, he finds them nowhere because love is infinite, and his tongue is finite. The soul is always confused by this powerlessness to say what it wants to say. When he does speak, he is set at peace so he does not die.

Lord: The Soul is totally mine.

Soul: I have a wound in which I live joyfully and at peace.

CHAPTER 9 THE CONDITION OF THE BODY AND HUMAN NATURE

Having described the states of the Soul enkindled with divine love, I must speak of the Body's condition. The Body needs material food but God wants the Soul to participate in spiritual activity. Therefore, he separates the Soul from the Body. The Body is left without vigor and almost without nourishment. All communication between Body and Soul ceases. The Body becomes like the Soul when it is deprived of God. It is like one dead, without strength or comfort.

No Comfort For Human Nature

If God would keep the Soul in this vehement fire for a long time, the Body could not survive. However, God provides all the Body's necessities. Human nature gains little comfort from the Soul's union with God. It can neither eat or sleep, or delight in the emotions of the Soul. Yet, God gives human nature enough to survive. To purge all imperfections, God opens an artery to let out the blood of human nature. Meanwhile, the Soul remains as in a bath. When the body has no more blood and the Soul is totally transformed into God, then the Soul goes to God and the body goes to the grave.

Love alone does this work and accomplishes it in secret. Believe me, no creature suffers as greatly as this human nature. Because the suffering is invisible, no one thinks much of it. I say this. This person must live as one dead, like a man hanging but still living. Although the heart is contented, what enjoyment does the body have? Human nature cannot live by its own nature and is greatly tortured. It lives but on what food? It can only remain in God who pierces him with darts of love. Their penetrating ardor almost destroys the body and absorbs the Soul in some hidden satisfaction. The Soul never leaves this satisfaction. It is the peace for which God created her.

A Helpless Child

The body is forced to follow the Soul (because it cannot live without her). It becomes like a body without a soul and without any comfort. In this need, God secretly helps the Body. Otherwise it would be like a helpless child with no one to care for it. For such creatures, God must provide some persons to supply their needs. Otherwise, they would die. Did not Our Lord provide the Beloved Disciple for his mother? So, he provides these devout persons, with someone who helps in spiritual and temporal needs. Most people do not understand these divine workings, and God must provide very special people whom he leads by his light.

Those who see these tormented souls should admire them but not try to imitate them. Do not misjudge them. They are greatly afflicted and live only by God's grace. Her nature cannot provide life.

In earlier stages, the soul could return God's love and human nature experienced a certain satisfaction. Now, the Soul is deprived of all consolation and human nature is abandoned, like one dead. At this point, God performs another secret work which makes the Soul even more perfect. God leaves the Soul in nakedness so she abandons other helps and rests only in him.

CHAPTER 10 HOW GOD EMPTIES THE SOUL, HEART AND SPIRIT

Lord: O naked Soul, what will you do? O empty heart and mind, what will you do? You are in a state unknown to you.

Soul: I do not know where I am. I have lost all my will, understanding, memory, love and enjoyment. I cannot please myself or seek anything.

Deprived by God of all heavenly touches, the heart and mind exclaim: "Although we are absorbed in a divine work that is too secret to understand, a heavenly spirit fills our whole person. The Soul, heart, mind, and body (with every nerve and vein) are overflowing. All are absorbed by this secret force. Every sigh feels like a vehement flame).

The Body's Experiences

The body grieves because it cannot endure such a powerful flame and it can find no words to express its grief. Words arise from its heart, but are not said because the true conversation is taking place within. It is unbelievably pleasant. The heart has become God's tabernacle. He infuses graces, (both directly and through others) which give forth wonderful fruits and the soul feels it is in heaven. If these souls were known, they would be adored. However, God hides them until the hour of their death. At this time, both the true and the false saint are known.

Captured by Divine Flames

How few souls are led by this secret road of penetrating love which purifies them of every imperfection. Pure love tolerates no fault and perseveres in its purifying action, so the soul can reach heaven without passing through purgatory.

O Soul, captured by this divine flame, who can comprehend the beauty worked in you by pure love (a work filled with loving conversations)? Such an understanding would melt even a heart made of stone.

The Holy Spirit

You are called “love” until you complete your work. Then, the inebriated soul no longer knows what “love” is. Then, love becomes the Holy Spirit and unites with man’s Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit is invisible, man is conquered, no longer knowing where he is or where he should go. By this secret, intimate union with God, the Soul receives a firm impression which is so consoling that no torture can overpower it. Filled with zeal, the soul would sacrifice a thousand lifetimes for this hidden oneness. Even hell cannot destroy it.

The Soul’s States

O inebriated Spirit, you have become naked, and no one can take hold of you. Although your body is still on earth, you already dwell in heaven. On earth, you do not know yourself, nor are you known by others. By an interior power given by the Holy Spirit, you know all your kindred spirits who are in heaven.

I cannot find words to explain that vanished union. I say vanished because all the signs, (love, union, transformation) have vanished. All forms of speech and all manner of describing this absolute union cannot be expressed. Nothing remains except one Spirit, simple and incomprehensible.

CHAPTER 11 GOD’S SECRET MEANS TO PURIFY MAN

O Lord, in how many secret ways you purify man by means of a pure love which removes all rust. O vast country, unknown to man but for which God created him. O God, you are not known by the Soul because man has little taste or feeling for you. If man possessed you, he would leave all else behind.

Constant Care

What loving care, day and night, you have for man. He does not know you, even though you seek him with such diligence and wait for him with such patience. All from divine love!

You are the great, high God and we cannot even conceive of your glory, wisdom, power and infinite goodness. Man is lowly but you would make him great. You are always luring him with your love, and ask only that he accept you. By love and with love you work within him. Man must do all from love, and, without your love, do nothing.

You, O God and Lord, have set aside the comfort of your own body and soul to save man. You want man also to set aside the comfort of his body and soul to do your will. This is for man’s own good but he never comprehends this.

Nakedness of Spirit

I have not described well this nakedness of the Soul. The naked soul experiences a fullness of which she cannot speak. Yet, her vehement emotions force her to speak. They even provide a fitting language beyond her own powers. This language is like ink (black and unsightly). Yet, these words make clear, what otherwise would be unintelligible.

If a man could comprehend what he feels when he is in that state, they would not use words. What are these hearts to do when they cannot speak their thoughts? These revelations are so secret and hidden that it seems impossible to find anyone who could understand them. Will the soul stay in silent awe? No. He cannot be silent. His heart is too inflamed by love's actions. They bind him so closely that human nature can hardly endure it. The Soul sees the madness of men, absorbed with material things and unable to comprehend this divine work. Although man is blind to his own good, God continues to knock at his heart so he can enter, make a room for himself and exclude every other love.

CHAPTER 12 THE BLINDNESS OF MEN TO GOD'S LOVE

How few are those in whom God lives by these actions. O God, you keep your love to yourself because you cannot give it to those engrossed in earthly pursuit.

O earth, how you absorb people! The Soul is lost, the body corrupted, and all is lost in infinite torments. Reflect on this, O Soul, and lose no time in escaping these dangers. For now, your God is merciful to you, anxious for your salvation and seeking you with measureless love. His seeking you cannot be described or imagined. All the good that he has done and will do for you, will only count toward your damnation if you fail to cooperate. How we so undervalue this time on earth!

Soul: O Lord, how does your secret love work within man? How do you take him captive without his understanding your method? How does he become a prisoner of love and totally satisfied?

Lord: First, I give him light and he sees that I am inspiring him to do good. By that light, he begins to struggle against his evil inclinations.

Soul: How does this begin, when he has not even sought the grace?

Lord: My pure love for everyone impels me to knock at his heart and to see if he will open, so I can live there.

Soul: What is this grace?

Lord: It is an inspiration coming from the ray of love, which gives him the instinct of love. By this power, it is impossible for him not to love me. At first, he does not know this but learns it little by little.

Soul: What is this ray of love?

Lord: The sun's rays are so penetrating that a man who looks directly will lose his sight. Such are my rays of love. They deprive man of all knowledge and all desire for earthly things.

Soul: How do these rays enter a man's heart?

Lord: They are like darts touching his heart secretly, and inflaming it. The man does not know what he wishes. He is wounded by love and cannot describe his condition.

Soul: What is this dart?

Lord: It is a scintillation of love which softens his hardness, like wax in a fire. I also give him a tendency to refer all this love to me.

Soul: What is this scintillation?

Lord: It is an inspiration which sets the human heart on fire so that it can only love. The power of this love keeps a man's thoughts on me. It always admonishes him when he strays.

This inspiration works so secretly that it cannot be described. Ask the heart what it feels, or the intellect what it understands or the mind what it thinks. They cannot answer. Although God fills man with love, and gives him the power to overcome the world, the devil and himself, the man cannot put this love into words.

CHAPTER 13

ALTHOUGH NOT COMPREHENDED, LOVE CONTENTS THE HEART

Oh, my heart, what can you say? "Although God's words are an inner joy, I cannot say them. Neither words nor sufferings can make this love understood. Only someone who has experienced it can somewhat understand it. All that can be said is really nothing. The more the soul advances, the less he knows. However, the heart is satisfied with what it feels. His delightful, glowing words are so in accord with God's inspirations, that only souls united with God can understand. The heart feels but does not understand. The action belongs to God and the blessings belong to man. This loving relationship between God and man is a secret between him and the heart.

Lord: What have you to say?

Soul: My will is so strong and my freedom so vivid, that I find no obstacle between me and my goal. I am content. My intellect is enlightened and grows more calm each day. God reveals so many new workings that my intellect is fully occupied and seeks no other tasks. However, the intellect cannot explain these workings.

The memory is satisfied with spiritual things and has difficulty recalling others. Natural feelings, overshadowed by supernatural love, desire no other food. Yet, man cannot explain how this work, (which surpasses all of his powers), has conquered him.

God's Workings

What more can I say! I want to be silent, yet have an urgency to speak. Paul writes that experiencing these things let him leave behind all appearance of evil. When man cooperates, God infuses some gift of grace so that man is absorbed, transformed and overpowered. Although it is

difficult for man to abstain from evil, if he sees God's readiness to come to his help, he would do everything for God. When a man enters this straight road, he learns that God works all good in us. By his infused love, he mingles much satisfaction into all our toils.

God asks one thing. Man must not act against his conscience. God inspires all the good and gives strength to do it. Otherwise, man could accomplish nothing. God enables us to do all things (even the greatest penances), with pleasure.

Mercy On Earth

How great is the kindness which God shows to us on earth. Only after our death does he show justice. If the soul does not need purgation, God receives her immediately into heaven. She is transformed forever by his burning love. At that moment, she can also go to purgatory (if something needs to be purged) or to hell (if something must be punished). Every soul carries her own sentence within and is condemned by herself. Each soul goes to her proper place.

If the soul did not find its proper place (heaven, purgatory or hell), they would suffer greater torments for violating the divine order. God's mercy visits every place and makes their sufferings less than they should be. The soul is created by God for himself and finds no rest except in God. The souls in hell are in God's order through justice. If they were outside his justice, they would suffer greater torments. By their instinct for divine order they go to their appointed place. Elsewhere their sufferings would be greater. They do not go to suffer less. They are impelled by God's infallible decree.