

The Mirror of Simple Souls

Contents

Prologue	5
Chapter 2. Of what is Love’s undertaking, and why Love had this book made . . .	6
Chapter 3. Here Love speaks of the precepts of Holy Church	6
Chapter 4. Of the noble virtue of Charity and how she obeys no-one but Love . . .	7
Chapter 5. Of that life which is called the peace of charity in a life brought to nothing	7
Chapter 6. How the Soul, in love with God, living in the peace of charity, takes leave of the virtues	8
Chapter 7. Of how this Soul is noble, and how she takes heed of nothing	8
Chapter 8. How Reason is astounded that this Soul has abandoned the Virtues, and how Love praises them	9
Chapter 9. How such Souls have no will at all	10
Chapter 10. How Love names this Soul by 12 names for actives, at the request of Reason	10
Chapter 11. How at the request of Reason Love gives knowledge of this Soul to contemplatives by making nine points clear which have already been mentioned .	11
Chapter 12. The true meaning of what this book says in many places, that the Soul brought to Nothing has no will at all.	13
Chapter 13. How Reason is content with this explanation for contemplatives and actives, but she asks other questions for the sake of ordinary people.	14
Chapter 14. How this Soul has knowledge of God through faith.	16
Chapter 15. This speaks of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.	16
Chapter 16. Here Love replies to Reason about what she has said, that the Soul knows everything and knows nothing.	17
Chapter 17. Here Love replies to Reason concerning what she has said, that these Souls give to Nature what it asks.	18
Chapter 18. How such creatures do not know how to say anything about God. . .	18
Chapter 19. How Faith, Hope and Charity ask from Love knowledge of such Souls.	19
Chapter 20. Love replies to Reason about what she has said, that no-one knows such Souls except God.	19
Chapter 21. Love replies to Reason’s objection, because this book says that such Souls take leave of the Virtues.	20
Chapter 22. How this Soul is compared with the eagle, and how she takes leave of Nature.	20
Chapter 23. How this Soul has two crutches, and how she is drunk with what she never drinks.	21
Chapter 24. When such Souls are in the true freedom of Pure Love.	22
Chapter 25. Reason asks Love if such Souls feel any joys within them.	22
Chapter 26. How this Soul loves nothing except for the love of God.	23
Chapter 27. How Meditation of Pure Love has only one intention.	23
Chapter 28. How this Soul swims in the sea of joy.	23
Chapter 29. Reason asks Love when this Soul is in the pure freedom of Love. . . .	24

Chapter 30. How Reason asks Love to satisfy this Soul by saying all that she could say or tell of God.	24
Chapter 31. How Love pacifies the Soul for having given to her spouse all that she has.	25
Chapter 32. How Love makes such Souls to remain in their senses.	26
Chapter 33. The Soul is filled with confusion when she reflects upon the gifts of the goodness of God.	26
Chapter 34. How the Soul says that she of herself can do nothing.	27
Chapter 35. How this Soul raises objections against Reason and says that she has been loved by God from all eternity.	27
Chapter 36. How the Soul is free and released from her subjection to Reason. . . .	28
Chapter 37. The Soul says here that in Paradise, to her great glory, her sins will be known.	29
Chapter 38. How the Soul recognizes Love's graciousness in recognizing perfectly her poverty.	29
Chapter 39. How Reason wishes to serve and to be this Soul's slave.	30
Chapter 40. How Love calls this Soul supremely wise, and why.	30
Chapter 41. How the Soul has no disquiet because of sin, nor hope in any good I which she ever did.	31
Chapter 42. How the Holy Spirit reveals what such a Soul knows, and what she wishes for, and what she has.	31
Chapter 43. How such Souls are called Holy Church, and what Holy Church can say of them.	32
Chapter 44. What are the customs of the Soul who languishes for love, and where the Soul has advanced to who has died for Love.	33
Chapter 45. How those who have no will at all live in the freedom of charity. . . .	33
Chapter 46. How the Soul has the knowledge of the more, because in her own opinion she knows nothing of God.	34
Chapter 47. How the Soul has come to knowledge of her nothingness.	34
Chapter 48. How the Soul is not free who longs for God's will to be done in her to his honor.	35
Chapter 49. How the Soul who has no will at all is noble.	35
Chapter 50. How this Soul receives the imprint of God as does the wax of a seal. . .	36
Chapter 51. How this Soul is like the Deity.	36
Chapter 52. How Love praises this Soul, and how she dwells in the abundance and affluence of divine Love.	37
Chapter 53. How Reason asks for an explanation of what has just been said. . . .	37
Chapter 54. Reason asks how many deaths the Soul must die before one can understand this book.	38
Chapter 55. How Love answers to Reason's questions.	38
Chapter 56. How the Virtues complain of Love, who holds them in so little honor. .	39
Chapter 57. Of those who are in the state of the forlorn, and how they are slaves and tradesmen.	39
Chapter 58. How the Souls brought to Nothing are in the fifth state with their beloved.	40
Chapter 59. Upon what this Soul has lived, and how and when she is without herself.	41
Chapter 60. How one must die three deaths before one attains to a life that is free and brought to nothing.	41
Chapter 61. Here Love speaks of the seven states of the Soul.	42
Chapter 62. Of those who are dead to mortal sin and born into a life of grace. . . .	42

Chapter 63. How Love calls those men base-born who are content with being saved.	43
Chapter 64. Here it tells of the Souls who are mortified in the life of the spirit. . . .	43
Chapter 65. Here it tells of those who are seated upon the high mountain, above the winds.	44
Chapter 66. How the Soul rejoices that she has taken leave of Reason and of the other Virtues.	44
Chapter 67. This tells of the land where this Soul lives, and of the Trinity.	45
Chapter 68. How by divine operation this Soul is united to the Trinity, and assesses those who live by the counsel of Reason.	45
Chapter 69. The Soul says here that the practice of the Virtues is nothing but care and labor.	46
Chapter 70. How such a Soul is by the grace of God that which she is.	46
Chapter 71. How this Soul no longer performs any works for God or for herself or for her neighbors.	47
Chapter 72. This tells of the distance of the land of those become lost and the forlorn from the land of freedom, and why the Soul has will.	47
Chapter 73. How the spirit must die before it loses its will.	48
Chapter 74. Why Love calls this Soul by so lowly a name as 'Soul'.	49
Chapter 75. How the Enlightened Soul gives understanding of what is said before by example of the transfiguration of Iesus Christ.	49
Chapter 76. Here it is shown, by the example of the Magdalene and of the saints, that the Soul has no shame for its sins.	50
Chapter 77. Here the Soul asks if God has placed any end and limit to the gifts of his goodness.	50
Chapter 78. How those who have not obeyed the teachings of perfection remain encumbered by themselves until death.	51
Chapter 79. How the Free Soul counsels that one should not refuse what the good spirit asks.	52

You who will read this book that I have writ,
 If you will please your heed to it to lend,
 Consider well what you may say of it,
 For it is very hard to understand
 But let Humility lead you by the hand,
 She, keeper of the key to Learning's treasure-chest,
 She, the first virtue, mother to all the rest.

Men of theology and scholars such as they
 Will never understand this writing properly.
 True comprehension of it only may
 Those have who progress in humility;
 You must let Love and Faith together be
 Your guides to climb where Reason cannot come,
 They who this house as mistresses do own.

Reason herself to us will soon proclaim
 And in the thirteenth chapter witness give;
 She says it openly and without shame,
 That it is Love and Faith who make her live,
 And she will not against their bondage strive.
 These ladies are her liege lords, and for this
 Always she must herself to them abase.

So you too must abase your learning now,
 Built only upon Reason, and your true
 And perfect trust completely you must show
 In the rich gifts which Love will make to you,
 And Faith will cause to shine in brightest hue.
 So understanding of this book they'll give
 Which makes the Soul the life of Love to live.

Explicit

Prologue

The Soul, touched by God and stripped bare of sin, in the first state of grace has ascended through divine grace to the seventh state of grace, in which state the Soul has the fullness of her perfection through her enjoyment of God in the land of life.

Here Love speaks: I pray you both actives and contemplatives, and those who may be brought to nothing by true Love, who will hear some of the powers of that pure love, that noble love, that exalted love of the Soul set free, and of how the Holy Spirit has set his sail in her as if she was his ship - for love I pray, says Love, that you listen with great attention of the subtle understanding within you, for otherwise all those who hear it will misunderstand it, if they are not so themselves.

Now listen humbly to a brief story of worldly love, and understand that it applies also to divine love.

The Story. Once there was a damsel, a king's daughter, great-hearted and noble and worthy of heart; and she lived in a distant land. It happened that this damsel heard tell of all the graciousness and nobility of king Alexander, and at once she wanted to love him for the great fame of his gentle breeding. But this damsel was so far off from this great lord, on whom of her own will she had set her love, that she could neither see him nor possess him; and because of this she

was often sad of heart, for no other love than this sufficed her. And when she saw that this far-off love, which within her was so near to her, was without her so far away, she thought to herself that she could comfort her sorrowful heart by making some imagined likeness of her loved one, for love of whom her heart was many a time sorely wounded. So she had a picture painted to represent the likeness of the king whom she loved, as near as she could to the appearance under which she loved him, by the affection of the love with which she was overcome; and by means of this picture and of her other rites of love she could imagine that the king himself was present.

The Soul. Truly, says the Soul who had this book made, I speak to you of matters similar to this. I heard tell of a most mighty king, who through his graciousness and his most gracious nobility and generosity was a noble Alexander; but he was so far away from me and I from him that I could find no comfort for myself; and to remind me of him he gave me this book, which in some rites represents the love of him. But even though I have this picture, still I am in a distant land, and far from the palace where the most noble loved ones of this lord dwell, they who are all pure and made perfect and free by the gifts of this king with whom they dwell.

The Writer. Therefore we shall tell you how our Lord is in no way freed by Love, but Love is freed by him for our sakes, so that the little ones through you can hear of this; for Love can do all things, and not do wrong to anyone.

And so Love says for you: There are seven states of noble being, from which the creature receives being, if she disposes herself to every state, before she attains to perfect being; and we shall tell you how before this book ends.

Chapter 2. Of what is Love's undertaking, and why Love had this book made

Love. Children of Holy Church, says Love, it is for you that I have made this book, so that you may hear of and so hold in greater worth the perfection of life and the state of peace, to which the creature can attain by the power of perfect charity, which gift is made to it by the whole Trinity; and you will hear this gift described in this book by the replies of Understanding of Love to Reason's questions.

Chapter 3. Here Love speaks of the precepts of Holy Church

Love. And so we will begin here, says Love, with the precepts of Holy Church, so that everyone may be able to find his nourishment in this book with the help of God, who commands us to love him with our whole heart, our whole soul, and our whole strength, to love ourselves as we ought, and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

First, that we should love God with our whole heart - that is to say that our thoughts should always be truly directed towards him: and with our whole soul, that is that we should say nothing but what is true, even though we die for it: and with our whole strength, that is that we should perform all our works solely for him; and that we should love ourselves as we ought, that is that doing so we should not look to our advantage but to the perfect will of God: and that we should love our neighbors as ourselves, that is that we should not do or think or say towards our neighbors anything that we should not wish them to do to us. These precepts are necessary to all men for their salvation: by no lesser manner of life can anyone have grace.

Notice here the story of the young man who said to Jesus Christ that he had kept these precepts from his childhood, and how Jesus Christ said to him: there is one thing that you must do if you wish to be perfect. That is, go and sell everything that you have and give it to the poor, and then follow me, and you will have treasure in heaven. That is the counsel of the highest perfection of the virtues, and whoever kept it would abide in true charity.

Chapter 4. Of the noble virtue of Charity and how she obeys no-one but Love

Love. Charity is obedient to no created thing, but only to Love. Charity has nothing of her own, and even if she had anything, she does not say that it is hers at all. Charity abandons her own task and goes off and does that of others. Charity asks no return of any creature, whatever good or happiness she may give. Charity knows no shame or fear or anxiety: she is so upright and true that she cannot bend, whatever happens to her. Charity takes no notice or account of anything under the sun, for the whole world is no more than superfluity and excess. Charity gives to everyone everything that she possesses, and does not withhold even herself, and in addition, she often promises what she does not possess, in her great generosity hoping that the more one gives, the more one will have left. Charity is such a shrewd business woman that she makes a profit everywhere; when others lose, she escapes from the bonds in which others become caught, and so her store of those things that are pleasing to Love multiplies greatly. And notice that if anyone was to have perfect charity, he would have his affections mortified in the life of the spirit by the work of Charity.

Chapter 5. Of that life which is called the peace of charity in a life brought to nothing

Love. Now there is another life, which we call the peace of charity in a life brought to nothing. Of this we wish to speak, says Love, asking:

- i whether there can be found a soul
- ii who saves itself without works,
- iii who lives alone in love,
- iv who does nothing for God,
- v who does not refrain from doing anything for God,
- vi to whom one can teach nothing,
- vii from whom one can take nothing away,
- viii to whom one can give nothing,
- ix and who has no will at all?

Love. Alas, says Love, and who will give to this Soul what she lacks, for that was never given and never will be given?

Love. This Soul, says Love, has six wings, just as the Seraphim. She no longer wishes for anything which comes by an intermediary, for that is the proper state of being of the Seraphim; there is no intermediary between their love and God's love. Love is constantly made new in them without any intermediaries, and so too in this soul, for she does not seek for knowledge of God among the teachers of this world, but by truly despising this world and herself. Ah, God, how great is the difference between the gift that a lover makes to his loved one through an intermediary, and the gift made directly to his loved one by a lover!

Love. This book which says that this Soul has six wings, just as the Seraphim, has indeed spoken truly of her. With two wings she hides her face from Jesus Christ our Lord. That is to say that the more that she knows nothing of it, compared with one single spark of his goodness, for

God is not comprehended except by himself alone.

With the next two wings she covers her feet. That is to say that the more she knows of what Jesus Christ suffered for us, the more perfectly she knows that she knows nothing of it, compared with what he did suffer for us, for he is not known except by himself alone.

With the other two wings the Soul flies, and in the air she both hovers and takes her rest. That is to say that the wings with which she flies are all that she knows and loves and praises of God's goodness; and she hovers for she is always in God's sight; and she is at rest, for she dwells always in the divine will.

Ah, what and how would such a Soul fear? Indeed there is nothing which she could or should fear or be frightened of, since even if she is in the world, and it was possible that the world, the flesh and the devil, the four elements, the birds of the air and the wild beasts might despise and torment her or tear her to shreds, still she can lose nothing if God remains with her. For he is all, everywhere, all powerful, all wisdom, all goodness. He is our father, our brother, and our true lover. He is without ending, three Persons, and one only God; and this is he, says this Soul, who is the lover of our souls.

Chapter 6. How the Soul, in love with God, living in the peace of charity, takes leave of the virtues

Love. This Soul, loving thus, says Love herself, can say to the Virtues that for long, and for many a day, she has been in their bondage.

The Soul. I confess to you, Lady Love, says this soul, that there was a time when I was so bound, but now that time has changed: your graciousness has set me free of their bondage. And therefore I can well say to them and sing:

Virtues, I take my leave of you for evermore,
And so my heart will have more joy and be more free;
Your service is a lifelong yoke as well I see.
Once I set all my heart on you with never no or nay;
You know that I was pledged to you, to me it seemd for aye.
There was a time I was your serf but now I break away.
All of my heart was set on you, the truth is clear to me.
There was a time when all my life seemed nought but misery,
Suffering so many cruel pains, so many torments, welaway,
That it is marvel I escaped alive for in such servitude I lay.
But so it is, I have no cares, your ransom now I pay,
And the great Lord above I thank that I might see this day.
Now I have left your bondage, I have paid you my last fee:
I never knew till free of you that there could be such liberty.
Your bondage I have left, and now I am at peace, and peaceful I shall be.

Chapter 7. Of how this Soul is noble, and how she takes heed of nothing

Love. This Soul, says Love, takes no heed of shame or honor, of poverty or of riches, of comfort or of hardship, of love or of hate, of Hell or of Paradise.

Reason. For God's sake, Love, says Reason, what is the meaning of what you say?

Love. What does it mean? says Love. The one to whom God has given understanding of it knows that, and no-one else, for no book contains it, nor can man's intelligence comprehend it, nor can any creature's laboring be rewarded by understanding or comprehending it. Rather this is a gift given by the Most High, into whom this creature is ravished through fulness of knowledge, and in her understanding she remains nothing. And such a Soul, having become nothing, at once has everything and has nothing, wishes for everything and wishes for nothing, knows everything and knows nothing.

Reason. And how is it possible, Lady Love, says Reason, that this Soul can wish for what this book says, when it has already said before that she has no will at all?

Love. Reason, says Love, it is not at all her will which wishes this, but rather it is the will of God which wishes it in her; for this Soul does not dwell in Love, for Love would make her wish for this through any longing; rather it is Love who dwells in her, who has taken her will from her, and so Love works her own will in the Soul, and Love performs her works in her without her help, as a result of which no anxiety can remain in her.

This Soul, says Love, is no longer able to speak of God, for she has been brought to nothing in all her external longings and inward feelings and all affections of the spirit, so that whatever this Soul does she does because it is some accustomed and commendable practice, or because Holy Church commands it, but not through any longing of her own, for the will which prompted longing in her is dead.

Chapter 8. How Reason is astounded that this Soul has abandoned the Virtues, and how Love praises them

Reason. Ah Love, says Reason, who understands only the obvious and fails to grasp what is subtle, what strange thing is this? This Soul experiences no grace, she feels no longing of the spirit, since she has taken leave of the Virtues, which give to every pious soul a form of good life, and without these Virtues no-one can be saved or attain to perfect living, and with them no-one can be deceived; and none the less this Soul takes leave of them. Is she not out of her mind, this Soul who talks like that?

Love. No, not at all, says Love, for souls such as she possess the Virtues better than any other creature, but they do not make use of them, for they are not in their service as they once were; and too, they have now served them long enough, so that henceforth they may become free.

Reason. And when, Love, says Reason, did they serve them?

Love. When they remained bound in love and obedience to you, Lady Reason, and also to the other Virtues; and they have stayed in that service so long that now they have become free.

Reason. And when did such souls become free? says Reason.

Love. Once Love dwells in them, and the Virtues serve them with no demur and with no effort from such souls.

Love. Ah, truly, Reason, says Love, such souls who have become so free have known for long the bondage which Lordship is wont to exact. If anyone were to ask them what is the greatest torment which any creature can suffer, they would say that it is to dwell in Love, and yet be subject to the Virtues. For one must yield everything they ask to the virtues, at whatever cost to Nature. And so it is that the Virtues ask honor and possession, heart and body and life. That is that such souls should give up everything, and still the Virtues say to this Soul, which has given all this to them and has held back nothing with which to comfort Nature, that only with great suffering is the just man saved. And therefore this wretched Soul, still subject to the Virtues, says that she would be willing to be hounded by Dread and suffer torment in Hell until the day of judgement, if after that she was to be saved. And it is true, says Love, that the Soul over whom the virtues have power lives in such subjection. But the souls of whom

we speak have brought the Virtues to heel, for such souls do nothing for them: but rather the Virtues do all that such souls wish, humbly and with no demur, for such souls are their mistresses.

Chapter 9. How such Souls have no will at all

Love. If anyone were to ask such souls, untroubled and at peace, if they would want to be in Purgatory, they would answer No: if they would want here in this life to be assured of their salvation, they would answer No: if they would want to be in Paradise, they would answer No. Why would they wish for such things? They have no will at all; and if they wished for anything, they would separate themselves from Love; for he who has their will knows what is good for them, without their knowing or being assured of it. Such Souls live by knowing and loving and praising; that is the settled practice of such Souls, without any impulse of their own, for Knowledge and Love and Praise dwell within them. Such Souls cannot assess whether they are good or bad, and they have no knowledge of themselves, and would be unable to judge whether they are converted or perverted.

Love. Or, to speak more briefly, let us take one Soul to represent them all, says Love. This Soul neither longs for nor despises poverty or tribulation, Mass or sermon, fasting or prayer; and gives to Nature all that it requires, with no qualm of conscience; but this Nature is so well ordered through having been transformed in the union with Love, to whom this Soul's will is joined, that it never asks anything which is forbidden. Such a Soul is not concerned about what it lacks, except at the needful time; and none but the innocent can be without this concern.

Reason. For God's sake. what does this mean?

Love. I tell you in reply, Reason, says Love, as I have told you before, and yet again I tell you that every teacher of natural wisdom, every teacher of book-learning, everyone who persists in loving his obedience to the Virtues does not and will not understand this as it should be understood. Be sure of this, Reason, says Love, for only those understand it who should seek after perfect Love. But if by chance one found such Souls, they would tell the truth if they wanted to; yet I do not think that anyone could understand them, except only him who seeks after Perfect Love and Charity.

Sometimes, says Love, this gift is given in the twinkling of an eye; and let him who is given it hold fast to it, for it is the most perfect gift which God gives to a creature. This Soul is learning in the school of Divine Knowledge, and is seated in the valley of Humility, and upon the plain of Truth, and is at rest upon the mountain of Love.

Chapter 10. How Love names this Soul by 12 names for actives, at the request of Reason

Reason. Ah Love, says Reason, name this Soul by her rightful name, and let actives have knowledge of her. **Love.** She can be called, says Love, by twelve names, which are:

The Very Wonderful:
The Unknown:
The Most Innocent of the Daughters of Jerusalem:
She upon whom all Holy Church is founded:
The Enlightened by Knowledge:

The Adorned by Love:
The Quickened by Praise:
The Brought to Nothing in All Things through Humility:
The One at Peace in the Divine Being through the Divine Will:
She who wishes for nothing except the Divine Will:
The Filled wholly and Replete and lacking no Divine Goodness through the work of the Trinity:
Her last name is: Forgetting.

These twelve names Love gives to her.

Pure Graciousness. And without doubt, says Pure Graciousness, it is right indeed that she should be so called, for these are her rightful names.

Reason. Ah Love, says Reason, you have called this Soul by many names, whereby actives can gain some knowledge of her, if only by hearing the very noble names by which you have called her.

Chapter 11. How at the request of Reason Love gives knowledge of this Soul to contemplatives by making nine points clear which have already been mentioned

Reason. Now Love, says Reason, I ask you, for the sake of contemplatives, who always long to grow in divine knowledge, and who live and dwell in longing for Love, that you in your graciousness explain the nine points of which you have spoken previously, which nine points are possessed by the Soul who seeks for Perfect Love, in whom Charity dwells and rests through a life brought to nothing into which Perfect Love has delivered her.

Reason. The first point, says Reason to Love, of which you spoke is that one cannot find such a Soul.

Love. It is true, says Love. It means that this Soul knows in herself only one thing, and that is the root of all evils and the abundance of all sins, which cannot be numbered, be weighed, be measured. And sin is nothing, and this Soul is so completely overwhelmed and terrified by her horrible faults, which are less than nothing; and so, interpreted in this way, this Soul, in as much as she is, is less than nothing, and so we can conclude that one cannot find this Soul, for such a Soul is so brought to nothing by humility that no creature which ever sinned deserves so great torment, such great unending confusion as does she in her own true judgement, if it were so that God wanted to take vengeance for only one thousandth part of one of her faults. Such humility, and only such, is true and perfect humility in a soul brought to nothing and in no-one else.

Love. The second point is that this Soul is saved by faith without works.

Reason. Ah, for God's sake, says Reason, what does this mean?

Love. It means, says Love, that such a Soul brought to nothing has such great inward knowledge through the virtue of Faith, and is so occupied in maintaining in herself what Faith gives to her of the might of the Father, of the wisdom of the Son, and of the goodness of the Holy Spirit, that no created thing can remain in her recollection, but passes quickly away, because the understanding of this Soul brought to Nothing is beset and occupied with other matters. This Soul is no longer capable of works, and undoubtedly she is well excused and discharged, for believing without works that God is good and incomprehensible. Such a one is saved by faith without works, for faith surpasses every work, as Love itself testifies.

Love. The third point is that she is alone in Love.

Reason. Ah, for God's sake, says Reason, what does this mean?

Love. It means, says Love, that this Soul finds no comfort, sets no affection or hope in any creature made by God, not in heaven nor on earth, but only in the goodness of God. Such a Soul begs or asks nothing from any creature. She is the solitary phoenix, for this Soul is alone in Love, and satisfies herself with herself.

Love. The fourth point is that this Soul does nothing for God.

Reason. Ah, for God's sake, says Reason, what does this mean?

Love. It means, says Love, that her works are of no concern to God, and that this Soul is only concerned with that with which God is concerned. She cares nothing for herself: let God care for her, who loves her more than the Soul loves herself. This Soul has such great faith in God that she has no fear of being poor, so long as he whom she loves be rich. For Faith teaches her that what she hopes God to be she will find him to be, and through faith she hopes that he is rich in all things, and so she cannot be poor.

Love. The fifth point is that this Soul does not refrain from doing anything for God which she can do.

Reason. Ah, for God's sake, says Reason, what does this mean?

Love. It means, says Love, that she can do nothing but the will of God, nor can she will anything else; and because of this she does not refrain from doing anything for God, for she allows nothing to enter her mind which is against God, and so she does not refrain from doing anything for God.

Love. The sixth point is that one can teach her nothing.

Reason. Ah, for God's sake, says Reason, what does this mean?

Love. This means that this Soul is so very constant that, though she had the knowledge of every creature which ever was and which is and which will be, all that would see nothing to her in comparison with that which she loves, which never was known and never will be known. She loves more that which is in God, which was never given, than she loves what she has and what she would have, if it were that she might have all the knowledge that all creature will have which are and which will be.

The Soul. And still this is nothing, says that Soul, in comparison with what is in God, but of that no-one can say anything.

Love. The seventh point is that one can take nothing away from her.

Reason. Ah, for God's sake, says Reason, what does this mean?

Love. What does this mean? says Love. What could one take away from her? If anyone was to take away from this Soul honors, riches and friends, heart and body and life, still he would take nothing away from her, if God remains with her; and by this it is plainly seen that no-one can take anything away from her, however powerful he may be.

Love. The eighth point is that one can give nothing to her.

Reason. Love, for God's sake, Reason says, what does this mean, that one can give nothing to her?

Love. What does this mean? says Love. What could one give her? If anyone gave to her everything that was ever given and ever will be given, still that would be nothing in comparison with what she loves and will love, if it were not God himself.

And the Soul says: It is Lady Love who loves in me, and will so love

Love. With all respect, says Love, I am not such a one. We shall says, says Love, for those who hear, that God loves better the more of this Soul that is in him than the less of her which is herself.

But this Soul says: There is no 'less', there is nothing but 'all': this I can well say, and I say the truth.

Love. I say further, says Love, that if this Soul had all the knowledge and the love and the praise which ever were given and will be given of the divine Trinity, this would be nothing in comparison with what she loves and will love; nor will she ever attain to this love through knowledge.

The Soul speaks to Love. Ah, truly, no, sweet Love, says the Soul. I shall not attain the least point of it, without help of what surpasses it. For there is no God, other than he of whom one can know nothing perfectly; and he alone is my God of whom one cannot say a word, nor can all those in Paradise attain to one single point, for all the knowledge that they have of him. And in this more, says this Soul, is enclosed the supreme mortification of my spirit's love, and that is the whole glory of my soul's love, and will be forever, and of all who were ever intent upon such a course. This is a little thing to hear, says this Soul, in comparison of the great matter of which no-one speaks. But I wish to speak of it, and I do not know what to say. But none the less, Lady Love, she says, my love is of such a mind that I had rather hear what is not true of you than that people should say nothing about you. And that without doubt is what I do. I say of you what is not true, for everything which I say of you is nothing but untruth about your goodness. But you must pardon what I say which is not true of you. For, Lord, the Soul says, anyone who always speaks of you and yet never says anything of your goodness says indeed what is not true about you; and what I say is true about me. I never cease to speak of you, either asking questions, or meditating, or listening if someone would tell me something of your goodness; but the more I hear tell of you the more I am bewildered. It would be a great wrong if I were to be persuaded that they could tell me anything of you, for they are mistaken, believing that they can speak so, for I know for certain that no-one can say anything of you, and, please God, I shall never be deceived, and I never wish to hear lies about your divine goodness, but only to finish what I have undertaken in this book, of which Love is the instructress, and she has told me that I shall bring to an end in it all my undertakings. For so long as I ask for anything of my own initiative from Love for her own sake, I shall be by myself in the life of the spirit, in the shadow of the sun, where the subtle imaginings about how we are drawn by divine love, and about how the divine begetting can be seen. And what is this I say? says this Soul. Truly it is still nothing even if I had all that has been told, in comparison with what I love in him, which he will not give to anyone, but only to himself, since it is fitting to reserve that for himself, according to his divine justice. And so I say, and what I say is true, that no-one can give me anything, whatever that thing might be. This lament that you hear me making, Lady Reason, says this Soul, is all that I can do, and it is the best that I can do, when properly understood. Ah, how sweet this understanding is! For God's sake, understand this fully, for Paradise is nothing else but to understand this very thing.

Love. The ninth point, Lady Reason, says Love, is that this Soul has no will at all.

Reason. Ah, for the love of the God of love, says Reason, what are you saying? Are you saying that this Soul has no will at all?

Love. Ah, truly, no. For everything which she wills by her consent is that which God wills that she should will, and this she wills so that the will of God may be accomplished, not at all her own will; and she cannot will this of herself, but it is the will of God which wills it in her; and so it is clear that this Soul has no will at all that she has to will.

Chapter 12. The true meaning of what this book says in many places, that the Soul brought to Nothing has no will at all.

Love. Now hear and understand well, you who listen to this book, the true meaning of what it says in so many places, that the Soul brought to Nothing has no will at all, and cannot want to have any at all, and in this the divine will is perfectly accomplished, and the Soul does not have its fill of divine Love, nor does divine Love have its fill of the Soul, until the Soul is in God and God is in the Soul, and when the Soul is in such a state of divine rest, from God and through God, then she has all her fill.

Reason's Understanding. Granted, says Reason's Understanding, but it seems that the ninth point says exactly the opposite, for it says that the Soul brought to Nothing wants for nothing to

be compared with what she would want to wish for, and that she cannot have, for God wants her to wish that she should wish for nothing, compared with what could be her fill, and what she wishes for shall on this account never be given to her. **Reason.** By this I understand, says Reason, that the Soul wants to wish, and that God wants that she should wish for one thing, which she cannot have, and from this she knows deprivation and does not have her fill.

Reason's Understanding. It seems to me, Lady Love, says Reason's Understanding, that this ninth point gives me to understand this, contradicting the book when it states as the truth that the Soul set Free has no will at all, cannot have any will at all, cannot want to have any will at all, that the divine Unity does not want her to have any will at all; and yet in all things, as this book says, she has her fill through divine Love.

The Soul. Ah, Reason's Understanding, says the Soul brought to Nothing, what strange conclusions you reach! You take the straw and leave the grain, because your understanding is too base, and so you cannot exercise the exalted understanding that he must apply who truly wants to understand the state of being of which we speak. But Understanding of Divine Love, who dwells and is in the Soul brought to Nothing and set free, she understands this at once, for she is this very thing.

Exalted Understanding of Love. Now, Reason's Understanding, says Exalted Understanding of Love, now see how crude is your misunderstanding. If this Soul brought to Nothing wishes to have God's will – and the more one wishes for it the more one would want to wish for it – she cannot, have it, because she is only a puny creature; for God preserves to himself the greatness of his divine justice. But God wills that she should wish for this, and that she should have such a will, and such a will is the divine will, and this will gives their being to free creatures; and it is this divine will, which God makes them wish for, which draws into them the veins of divine knowledge and the heart of divine love and the union of divine praise. But if this Soul itself wills anything, that impedes this.

Love. Then, says Love, how can the Soul have any will, since Illumined Knowledge knows that there is one state which among all the states of being is the most noble, which no creature can have unless she can have it through wishing for nothing? Now Reason has heard, says Love, the answer to her questions, except to that where she said that the Soul set Free has in her a lack of what would fill her. It is from wishing for the divine will, for the more that anyone wishes for this, the less he has his fill of such a will. But this self same wishing is God's only will and the glory of the Soul.

Chapter 13. How Reason is content with this explanation for contemplatives and actives, but she asks other questions for the sake of ordinary people.

Reason. Now, Love, says Reason, you have deigned to fulfill our request, and you have explained the things mentioned above for actives and contemplatives; but I ask you further, to explain them for ordinary people, for some of them will perchance manage to attain to this state of being; for there are several words here of two meanings, which as we seek understanding we find hard to understand; and if you explain them, this book will show to all the very light of truth, and the perfection of charity, and who they are who have received God's precious election and call, and are loved by him above all things.

Love. Reason, says Love, I shall reply to your questions to help those for whose sake you offer such powerful and precious petitions. Reason, says and explain for the benefit of those on whose behalf you ask so humbly, and also for those who hear this book, which we shall call *The Mirror of the Simple Souls who dwell in wishing and in longing?*

Reason. To this I reply, Lady Love, says Reason, that this book says astonishing things about

the Soul. It says in the seventh chapter that this Soul takes no heed of shame or of honor, of poverty or of riches, of ease or of hardship, of love or of hate, of Hell or of Paradise. And in addition it says that this Soul has everything and has nothing, she knows everything and knows nothing, she wishes for everything and wishes for nothing, as it says above in the ninth chapter: and so she longs for nothing, says Reason, not contempt or poverty, not martyrdom or tribulations, not Masses or sermons, not fastings or prayers, and so she yields to Nature all that Nature asks with no qualms of conscience. And, indeed, Love, says Reason, no-one who understands as I do could understand this unless they learn it from you by your instruction; for my understanding and my intelligence and all my advice, as well as I can advise, all tell me that one should long for contempt, poverty, and every kind of tribulation, and Masses and sermons and fastings and prayers, and that one should fear all kinds of love, whatever they may be, because of the dangers which may be in them, and that one should long above all for Paradise and fear Hell, and that one should refuse every kind of honor and temporal goods, and every ease, denying Nature what it asks, except only that without which it could not exist, following the example of the sufferings and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the best, says Reason, which I can say and advise to all those who live in my obedience. And therefore I say to all that no-one who understands as I do will understand this book unless he understands it by the strength of Faith and the power of Love, who are my mistresses, for I obey them in all things. And then too, says Reason, I want to say this: that whoever has these two strings to his bow, that is the light of Faith and the power of Love, he has permission to do whatever pleases him, and the witness of this is Love herself who says to the Soul: Beloved, love, and do what you will.

Love. Reason, says Love, you are very wise, and very certain of what is your concern; and you wish for an answer to the words which have been said before. And since you have asked me to tell you what they mean, I shall reply to all your questions. It is well asked, says Love, and I shall satisfy all your prayers and questions. I assure you, Reason, says Love, that these Souls who are guided by Perfect Love value shame as highly as honor, and honor as dearly as shame, poverty as highly as riches, and riches as dearly as poverty, suffering at the hands of God and his creatures as highly as consolation from God and his creatures, being loved as highly as being hated, being hated as dearly as being loved, being in Hell as highly as being in Paradise, and being in Paradise as dearly as being in Hell, lowly estate as highly as great, and great estate as dearly as lowly, whether it be for soul or for body. And Truth knows this well, and knows too that they neither wish or do not wish to have any such prosperity or adversity, for such Souls have no will at all except what God wills in them, and the divine will does not trouble these exalted creatures with such burdens, as we have explained.

Love. Already, says Love, I have said that such Souls value every affliction of their heart – both for body and for soul – as highly as if it were prosperity, and prosperity as highly as adversity. And this is true, says Love, if such things came to them as highly as adversity. And this is true, says Love, if such things came to them without their will being the cause; and also such Souls do not know what is better for them, nor how God wants to provide their salvation nor the salvation of their neighbors, nor for what reason God wants to show justice or mercy, nor for what reason God wants to give to the Soul the exalted gifts of the goodness of his divine nobility. And therefore the Soul set Free has no will at all to will or not to will, except only to will the will of God, and to submit in peace to the divine command.

Reason. Lady Love, I ask yet one more question: why does this book say that this Soul has everything and yet has nothing?

Love. That is true, says Love, for through divine grace this Soul has God, and he who has God has everything, and it says too that she has nothing, because everything which this Soul has within her from God through the gift of divine grace seems nothing to her, and it is nothing, too, in comparison with what she loves, which is in God and which he will not give to anyone except only to himself. And it is in this sense that this Soul has everything and yet has nothing, she knows everything and yet she knows nothing.

Chapter 14. How this Soul has knowledge of God through faith.

Love. She knows, says Love, through the power of faith that God is allpowerful and all wisdom and perfect goodness, and that God the Father performed the work of the Incarnation, and the Son also and the Holy Spirit also, so that God the Father joined human nature to the person of God the Son, and the person of God the Son joined it to his own person, and God the Holy Spirit joined it to the person of God the Son. So that the Father has in him one single nature, which is a divine nature, and that the person of the Son has in him three natures, that is, the same divine nature as the Father has, and the nature of his own soul, and the nature of his body, and he is one person in the Trinity; and the Holy Spirit has in him this same divine nature as the Father and the Son have. To believe this, to say this, to ponder this is true contemplation: one power, one knowledge and one will, one single God in three persons, three persons in one single God. This God is ever where in his divine nature; but his humanity is glorified in Paradise, joined to the person of the Son, and otherwise only in the sacrament of the altar.

Chapter 15. This speaks of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

Love. Christians receive this divinity and this humanity when they take the blessed sacrament of the altar. How long this humanity dwells in them, Faith teaches and scholars know.

Light of Faith. And so we shall tell you, says Light of Faith, to what we can liken this sacrament, the better to understand it. Take this sacrament, put it into a mortar with other substances, and pound it until you can no longer see or perceive the person which you placed there.

Faith. I tell you truly, says Faith, that it is no longer there. So you can now ask: Has it therefore gone away?

Truth. Not at all, says Truth. It was there, but now it is not. Understand this properly, and not in any human sense. Now you can ask if the person has gone away, just as it once came. I tell you, says Truth, that the humanity of Jesus Christ does not come and go.

Temptation. Then what can this be? says Temptation.

Truth. He was there, says Truth, when one could see and perceive him, and now he is not there, for one cannot see or perceive him; and it is so that divine omnipotence has ordained it. Nor is this very same humanity, which is in the sacrament of the altar, seen in any other semblance: the angels and the saints and the Virgin Mary do not see him otherwise than we ourselves see him, and if they see him in the semblance in which we see him, it is through spiritual understanding, for to see the humanity of Jesus Christ glorified in the sacrament of the altar does not belong to the glory of those who are in glory. And so they do not see him glorified except through understanding.

The Soul of Faith. And we see him through the power of faith, giving the lie to what our senses tell us, which only see bread there, and which do not perceive or taste or smell anything else. But our faith contradicts them all, for faith believes firmly, without doubting, that here is no whiteness or smell or taste, but the precious body of Jesus Christ, who is true God and true man. And so we see him there through faith, but those who are in glory do not see him as we do. Thus has the divine Trinity ordained that the blessed sacrament of the altar ordained to be, says the Soul of Faith illumined by the divine Trinity, as God knows, and as I believe through his divine power.

Graciousness of the Goodness of Love. Do not be astonished, says Graciousness of the Goodness of Love, if out of love we say these things to you, for I can well say to you without being contradicted that no-one can set his foundations deep or build his house high unless he

does this by using the subtlety of his considerable natural intelligence and with the intense Light of Spiritual Understanding; and with this help one can then seek what is the divine will. For Understanding, which gives light, by its nature shows to the Soul what she loves; and the Soul, which through light of Understanding receives her closeness and her joining, and through harmony of her union in the abundance of love, the state of being to which she is drawn to take her rest and repose, listens gladly to Knowledge and to Light who bring her news of her love, for she came from Love, and therefore she wishes to be reunited with Love so that she may have, loving, one only will, which is the only will of him whom she loves.

Chapter 16. Here Love replies to Reason about what she has said, that the Soul knows everything and knows nothing.

Love. Reason, says Love, as to what I have said, that the Soul set Free knows everything and yet knows nothing, I tell you that she knows through the power of faith what is needful for her to know for her salvation; and so she knows nothing of what God has in her of himself for her, who will make such gifts to no-one but to her. And so it is in this sense that this Soul knows everything and yet knows nothing. She wishes for everything, says Love, and yet she wishes for nothing; for this Soul, says Love, wills so perfectly the will of God that in her will she knows nothing, she can do nothing, she wills nothing but God's will, so securely has Love imprisoned her. And yet she wishes for nothing, for what she wishes and what God wishes in her is so small a thing, in comparison with what she would want to wish, that she cannot have that which God wants her to wish. For her will is nothing in comparison with what would fill her, which because of this, never will be given to her, and it is by the will of God that she wishes it so, as has been said before. And so it is in this sense that this Soul wishes for everything and yet wishes for nothing.

Love. This daughter of Sion! does not long for Masses or sermons, or fastings or prayers.

Reason. And why Lady Love? says Reason. These are the food of holy souls.

Love. That is true, says Love, for those who beg; but this Soul begs for nothing, for she has no need to long for anything which is outside her. Now listen, Reason, says Love. Why should this Soul long for those things which I have just named, since God is everywhere, just as much without them as with them? This Soul has no thought, no word, no work, except for employing the grace of the divine Trinity. This Soul feels no disquiet for any sins which she once committed, nor for the suffering which God underwent for her, nor for the sins and the troubles in which her neighbors live.

Reason. Oh God, what does this mean, Love? says Reason. Teach me to understand this, since you have reassured me about my other questions.

Love. It means, says Love, that this Soul is not her own, and so she can feel no disquiet; for her thought is at rest in a place of peace, that is in the Trinity, and therefore she cannot move from there, nor feel disquiet, so long as her beloved is untroubled. But that anyone falls into sin, or that sin was ever committed, Love relies to Reason, this is displeasing to her will just as it is to God: for it is his own displeasure which gives such displeasure to this Soul. But none the less, says Love, in spite of such displeasure there is no disquiet in the Trinity, nor is there in such a Soul who is at rest within the Trinity. But if this Soul, who is in such exalted rest, could help her neighbors, she would help them in their need with all her might. But the thoughts of such Souls are so divine that they do not dwell upon past or created things, so as to apprehend disquiet in themselves, for God is good beyond all comprehending.

Chapter 17. Here Love replies to Reason concerning what she has said, that these Souls give to Nature what it asks.

Love. This Soul gives to Nature whatever she asks of her; and it is true, says Love, that this Soul does not have so much care or love for temporal things that she could profit by refusing what Nature asks; rather she would be troubled by robbing Nature of what is her own. But such creatures are so excellent that one dares not openly talk of this, especially of their customs, which give them a state of being where they understand as should be understood; but there are few who taste such understanding.

Love. I have said before, says Love, that one dares never openly speak of them. Truly not, for other creatures understand in so crude a way that they would misunderstand, and to their harm. Souls who are such as this book speaks of, telling a little of their customs, by right of their state of being, which is pure and divine, have themselves such a condition that if they had nothing and were sure that they were to live until the Day of Judgment, still they could not be troubled at heart for a single moment about anything they lacked, not for all the gold in the world, except only for the times when Nature has need of what it does not have, so that they can give Nature what is its own. And if Souls such as these – few men know where they are, but it is fitting to the just goodness of Love, that there should be such Souls, to uphold the faith of Holy Church – if they had anything and knew that others had greater need of it than they, such Souls would never hold it back, not even if they were certain that bread and wheat and other food were never to grow on earth again. And this is true, says Love, let no-one doubt it. Such is the nature of this Soul, and it is so through perfect justice, and such justice is divine justice, which has imparted its allotted portion to this Soul.

Divine Justice. This is right and proper, says Divine Justice. It is fitting that all justice should be accomplished in her. If she withheld from her neighbors what they need, she would withhold what is not her own, according to the perfection of the peace of charity, on which she lives in all things, for it is that which is her proper food. Furthermore, why should such Souls have scruples about taking what they need when necessity asks it of them? That would entail for such Souls a loss of innocence, the peace in which this Soul has rest from all things. Who should have scruples about taking what he needs of the four elements, of the brightness of heaven, of the heat of fire, of the moisture of water and of the earth which supports us? We take the service of these four elements in every way that Nature needs, and Reason does not condemn it; these bounteous elements are made by God, as are other things, and so such souls use all things made and created of which Nature has need in as much peace of heart as when they use the ground on which they walk.

Love. Their foundation is firm says Love, their building is high, and in it they have rest from all things.

Chapter 18. How such creatures do not know how to say anything about God.

The Soul. Such creatures can no longer say anything about God, for they can no more say who God is than where he is. For whoever speaks of God, when and to whom and where he pleases, must never doubt but must know beyond doubt, says this Soul, that he never once tasted the real kernel of divine Love, which in all men, truly, once tasted, robs the Soul forever of her senses without her knowing it. For this is the true and pure kernel of divine Love, in which there is no created matter, and it is given to the creature by the Creator; and it is the custom of such Souls to comprehend much and to forget it quickly, so subtle in his dealings is he who loves them.

Chapter 19. How Faith, Hope and Charity ask from Love knowledge of such Souls.

Faith, Hope and Charity. O holy Trinity, say Faith, Hope and Charity, where are there such sublime Souls as this book describes? Who are they, and where are they, and what do they do? Reveal them to us by Love, who knows everything, and so they will be set at rest who, hearing this book, are dismayed. For all Holy Church, if she were to hear it read, would be dismayed by it, say these three divine virtues.

Faith. That is true, says Faith herself.

Love. Truly, this is Holy Church the Less, says Love, who is ruled by Reason, and not Holy Church the Great, says Divine Love, who is ruled by us.

Love. Now tell me, says Love to the three divine virtues, why do you ask us who these Souls are, and where they are, and what they do? Truly, if you do not know this, says Love, nothing which God has created would be able to find them. All three of you know where they are, for you are with them at every moment of time, for it is you three who ennoble them. And what they do you also know. But who they are – to speak of their worth and dignity – neither you nor they know that, and so Holy Church cannot know it.

Reason. Then who in God's name knows it? says Reason.

Love. That God alone knows, says Love, who has created and redeemed them, and, it may be, re-created them again and again, for whose love alone they live in exile, brought to nothing and forgotten. How, says Love, can Holy Church be astonished if the Virtues serve these exalted and celestial Souls? Why should they not? Are not all the Virtues praised and written about and commended because of these Souls, not the Souls because of the Virtues? Thus such Virtues are made so as to serve such Souls, and such Souls are made so as to obey God, and to receive the unique gifts of the pure graciousness of his divine nobility, which gifts God gives to no creature who dwells in longing and willing. But let no-one who wants to have these gifts keep company with longing or will, for so he will never have them.

Love. And why should Holy Church, says Love, know these queens, these king's daughters, king's sisters, king's brides? Holy Church could not know them truly unless Holy Church were within their souls. And no created thing enters into their souls but God alone, who created the souls. So that no-one knows such Souls except God, who is within them.

Chapter 20. Love replies to Reason about what she has said, that no-one knows such Souls except God.

Reason. Ah, Love, says Reason, do not be displeased that I must ask yet another question; and if you do not answer me I shall be confused.

Love. Well, says Love to Reason, say what your question is.

Reason. I shall tell you, says Reason. This book says that no-one knows these Souls except God, who is within such Souls. And yet earlier it has said that no-one can find them or know them except him or her who seeks Perfect Love; but if anyone were to find such Souls, they would tell the truth, and this is what this book has said already; from which it seems that those who are such, whether they once were so or are now so, know those that are the same.

Love. It is true, says Love, for those that are such, whether they were so or are so, would know their fellows by their customs, but even more through the power of the gift which is given to them, which is unique. Reason. Unique, says Reason – indeed it is unique, for I feel singularly amazed when I hear of it.

Love. Reason, says Love, one and the same word has two meanings, for if those who are such have knowledge of the customs of such Souls, and if this is the most perfect state of being which

God gives to any creature, still such Souls cannot know the dignity of these Souls, for that God alone knows who created them.

Chapter 21. Love replies to Reason's objection, because this book says that such Souls take leave of the Virtues.

Reason. Now, Love, says Reason, I have still another question to put to you; for this book says that this Soul takes leave of the Virtues in all matters, and you say that the Virtues are always with such Souls, more perfectly than with anyone else. These are two contradictory statements, it seems to me, says Reason; I cannot understand them.

Love. I shall set your mind at rest, says Love. It is true that this Soul has taken leave of the Virtues, in that she does not use them, and does not long for what they require, but the Virtues have not taken leave of such Souls, for they are always with them, but they are in perfect obedience to such Souls. It is in this sense that this Soul takes leave of them, and that yet they are always with them. For if a man serves a master, he belongs to him whom he serves, but his master does not belong to him; and it can sometimes happen that this servant earns and learns so much from his master that he becomes richer and wiser than his master, so that this servant leaves his master to find someone better; and when he who was his master sees for certain that his former serving-man is worth more and knows more than he does himself, he goes to dwell with him, to obey him in all things. You can and must understand that it is just so with the Virtues and such Souls; because at the beginning this Soul did everything which Reason indicated to her, whatever it cost her in heart and body, when Reason was her mistress, and Reason always said to her that she should do everything which the Virtues wished without demur, though it cost her her life. So Reason and the other Virtues were the mistresses of this Soul, and this Soul was truly obedient in all that they wished to command, because she wanted to live the life of the spirit. But now it has come about that this Soul has earned and learned so much from the Virtues that she is above them, for she has within her every-thing which the Virtues are able to teach, and infinitely more, for this Soul has within her the mistress of the Virtues who is called Divine Love, who has wholly changed the Soul into herself and united her to herself, so that this Soul no more belongs to herself or to the Virtues.

Reason. To whom, then, does she belong? says Reason.

Love. To my will, says Love, who have changed her into me.

Reason. And who are you, Love? says Reason. Are you not also one of the Virtues, and one of us, even though you be above us?

Love. I am God, says Love, for Love is God, and God is Love, and this Soul is God through its condition of Love, and I am God through my divine nature, and this Soul is God by Love's just law. So that this my precious beloved is taught and guided by me, without herself for she has been changed into me. And this is the outcome, says Love, of being nourished by me.

Chapter 22. How this Soul is compared with the eagle, and how she takes leave of Nature.

Love. So this Soul is compared with the eagle, because she flies high, and extremely high, higher even than any other bird, for Perfect Love has given her wings. She sees ever more clearly the fairness and radiance of the sun and its radiance's splendor, which gives her as food the sap of the tall cedar.

The Soul. So this Soul says to unhappy Nature, which has kept her in bondage these many

days: Lady Nature, she says, I take leave of you. Love is now near me, I consider myself set free by her, without fear and in despite of everyone.

Love. This Soul is not alarmed at tribulation, she does not pause to seek consolation, she does not falter because of temptation, she does not diminish because of loss. She is common to all by the generosity of pure charity, and yet she takes nothing from anyone because of noble graciousness, of pure goodness, with which God has filled her. At all times she is composed without gloom, joyful without wantonness, for God has sanctified his name in her, and the divine Trinity has in her its dwelling place. You little ones, who in wishing and in longing snare the prey on which you feed, yearn to be like these, for anyone who can long for the less and not the more is not worthy that God should give him the least of his good things, because of the faint-hearted timidity into which he allows himself to slip, and so he finds that he is always hungry.

Chapter 23. How this Soul has two crutches, and how she is drunk with what she never drinks.

Love. This Soul set Free, says Love, supports herself upon two crutches, one on the right and the other on the left. With these two crutches the Soul stands firm against her enemies, like a castle built upon a rock rising out of the sea which cannot be undermined. One of these crutches, which keeps the Soul firm against her enemies and which guards the gifts of her wealth, is the true knowledge that she has of her own poverty. The left-hand crutch upon which she supports herself at all times is strength. And the right-hand crutch is the exalted knowledge which the Soul receives from the pure Deity. On these two crutches is the Soul supported, and so she need pay no heed to her enemies to the right or to the left. Yet still she is so filled with confusion, says Love, at the knowledge of her poverty that she seems all confusion to the world and to herself. Indeed, she is so drunka with knowledge of the love and the grace of the pure Deity that she is always drunk with knowledge and filled with praise of Divine Love. And she is not drunk simply with what she has drunk, but extremely drunk and more than drunk with what she never once drank and never will drink.

Reason. Ah, for God's sake, Love, says Reason, what does this mean, that this Soul is drunk with what she never once drank and never will drink? It seems, says Reason, from what I can understand of these words, that the Soul becomes more deeply drunk upon what her loved one drinks and has drunk and will drink of the divine drink of his own goodness, than upon what she herself has drunk and will drink of the divine drink in this same cask.

Love. That is quite right, says Love; it is this more that makes her drunk, not because she has drunk of this more, as has been said, though indeed she has, because her loved one has drunk of it, for through the transformation of love there is no difference between him and her, whatever their differences of nature be. Love of its own right causes this transformation into itself Love who has made her drunk with the more of its drink, nor will it ever be otherwise. Sometimes it does happen that there are several spigots in one cask, but the wine that is clearest, newest, best, sweetest and most intoxicating is the wine drawn from the topmost spigot. This is the drink above all drinks, of which no-one drinks except the Trinity. And by this drink the Soul brought to Nothing, the Soul set Free, the Soul Forgotten is made drunk, without ever rinking of it, but extremely drunk, but more than drunk, and by that which she never drank and neverwill drink. Now listen to a plainer explanation, and understand it. In this cask of the divine drink there are certainly several spigots. This is known to the humanity which is joined to the person of the Son of God, who, after the Trinity, drinks from the finest spigot; next, the Virgin Mary drinks from it, and this most noble lady is drunk with the drink from the highest spigot. And after her there drink the burning Seraphim, upon whose wings these Free Souls fly.

Holy Church. Ah, God, says Holy Church, how purely we should love, how zealously we

should guard a Soul who flies so high!

Love. Such a Soul, Love says, has an abyss for her memory, understanding and will, through her humility, and yet through her subtlety her knowledge is very penetrating, and she is very free in every place through her love of the Deity.

Chapter 24. When such Souls are in the true freedom of Pure Love.

Reason. Ah, Love, says Reason, when are such Souls in the true freedom of Pure Love?

Love. When they have no longing, no feeling, and at no time any affection of the spirit; for such customs would enslave them, being too far away from the peace of freedom in which few men permit themselves to dwell. And also they do nothing, says Love, which is opposed to the peace of their inner being, and so in peace they bear the orders of Love. Those who are such as this are thus inwardly filled, for without begging outside themselves they have within them the divine sun, and so they can preserve their purity of heart; and except them no others, says Love, have any knowledge of the more. If these Souls had not such knowledge of it, they could beg for what is less, and so they could not have their fill. Such Souls are solitary in all things and common in all things, for they do not deprive their being of its freedom for anything which may happen to them. For just as the sun takes its brightness from God, and shines upon all things without ever receiving from them any impurity, so such Souls have their being from God and in God, without receiving into themselves any impurity, whatever they see or hear outside themselves.

Chapter 25. Reason asks Love if such Souls feel any joys within them.

Reason. Now tell me, Love, says Reason, do such Souls feel any joys, within or without themselves?

Love. No, says Love, to answer what you ask, for their nature is mortified and the spirit is dead in them. For all will has left them; and so such a soul lives and remains and is, only on account of such mortification in the divine will. Now listen, Reason, says Love, to understand better what you are asking about. A man who is on fire feels no cold, a man who is drowning knows no thirst. Now this Soul, says Love, is so burned in Love's fiery furnace that she has become very fire, so that she feels no fire, for in herself she is fire, through the power of Love which has changed her into the fire of Love. This fire burns of and through itself, everywhere, incessantly, without consuming any matter or being able to wish to consume it, except only from itself; for whoever feels some perception of God through matter which he sees or hears outside himself, or through some labor which he there performs of himself is not all fire; rather, there is some matter, together, with the fire. For men's labors, and their wanting matter outside themselves to make God's love grow in them, is only a blinding of the knowledge of God's goodness. But he who burns with this fire without seeking such matter, without having it or wanting to have it, sees all things so clearly that he values them as they must be valued. For such a Soul has no matter in her which reverts her from seeing clearly, so that she is alone in It through the power of true humility; and she is common to all through the generosity of perfect charity, and alone in God, since Perfect Love has taken possession of her.

Chapter 26. How this Soul loves nothing except for the love of God.

Love. Such a Soul no longer loves anything in God or will love it, however noble it may be, except only for God and because he wishes it, and she loves God in all things, and things for love of him; and through such a love this Soul is alone in the pure love of the love of God. Such a Soul has such a clear knowledge that she sees herself as nothing in God and God as nothing in herself. Now listen, you sirs who love, to what follows, with Love's meditation and not with your creature's ears; for such meditation, which the Soul gets from Love without wishing for any of Love's gifts which are called consolations and which comfort the Soul through a feeling of sweetness in prayer, teaches this to the Soul, and no other custom does it teach her than pure love. For if anyone were to wish for God's comforts through feelings of consolation, they would impede Perfect Love from taking hold.

Chapter 27. How Meditation of Pure Love has only one intention.

Love. Meditation of Pure Love has only one intention, that she might always love faithfully without wishing for any reward, and the Soul cannot do this unless she is deprived of herself, for Faithful Love would not deign to have any consolation which came by the Soul's seeking. Truly not. Meditation of Love knows well that it is for the best that she must not exert herself except in what is her task, and that is to will perfectly the will of God, and she leaves God to work and to order his will as he pleases; for whoever wills that God might fulfill his wish to experience his comforts does not place his trust solely in God's goodness, but trusts rather in those gifts which he has to give out of his riches.

The Soul. And without doubt, says this Soul, whoever was to love well would have no thought of receiving or asking, but would rather always wish to give, not withholding anything, so as to love faithfully; for if anyone were to have two intentions in the one, single work, the one would lose its urgency for the sake of the other. And therefore Faithful Love has only one single intention, and that is that she may always love faithfully, for she has no doubt that her beloved in his love will do that which is best, so long as she does what she must do; and so she wishes for nothing but that the will of God be done in her beloved.

Love. She is right, says Love, for that is everything, as she too has no power to wish for anything, for her will is not her own nor in herself, but it is rather in him who loves her, and this is not his work, but it is rather the work of the whole Trinity, who work in this Soul according to their will.

Chapter 28. How this Soul swims in the sea of joy.

Love. Such a Soul, says Love, swims in the sea of joy, that is in the sea of delights flowing and streaming from the Divinity, and she feels no joy, for she herself is joy, and so she swims and flows in joy without feeling any joy, for she dwells in joy and joy dwells in her; for through the power of joy she is herself joy, which has changed her into itself. Now they have one common will, like fire and flame, the will of the lover and that of the beloved, for love has changed this Soul into itself.

The Soul. Ah, sweetest, pure, divine Love, says this Soul, how sweet is this changing by which I am changed into the thing that I love better than I love myself! And I am so

changed that I have therein lost my name for the sake of loving, I who can love so little; and I am changed into that which I love more than myself that is, into Love, for I love nothing but Love.

Chapter 29. Reason asks Love when this Soul is in the pure freedom of Love.

Reason. Now, Lady Love, says Reason, I pray you to tell me what it means when you say that the Soul is then in the true freedom of Pure Love when she does nothing which is opposed to the demands of the peace of her inward being.

Love. I shall tell you, says Love, what it means. It means that she should do nothing which is opposed to the perfect peace of her spirit. This is how the truly innocent do, says Love, and the state of being of which we speak is true innocence. Reason, says Love, I will give you an example. See an infant which is purely innocent: does it do anything, does it refrain from doing anything, for the sake of the great or the small, if it does not please?

Reason. Indeed, Love, no, that I can see well; and so now I know the answer to my question.

Chapter 30. How Reason asks Love to satisfy this Soul by saying all that she could say or tell of God.

Reason. Ah, Lady Love, says Reason, I beg and entreat you that you satisfy this Soul by telling her at least all that one can say of him who is all in all things.

Love. She knows that, says Love, for that is where she always finds him, that is, in all things; for one can only find a thing where it is, and because, everywhere, he is all, this Soul finds him everywhere. And therefore all things are opportune to her, for she does not find anything anywhere without finding God there. Now, Reason, says Love, why do you want me to satisfy this Soul by saying all that one can say about God?

Reason. So that she may rest peacefully, says Reason, in her state of innocence, without having cause to move or bestir herself so as to hear you spoken of.

Love. I shall gladly tell you, says Love. I assure you, says Love to Reason, and upon myself I swear that everything which this Soul has heard about God, and everything which one can say of him, is nothing – to speak properly – compared with that which is knowable, lovable and laudable in him, which yet has never been said nor ever will be said – rather than anything.

Love speaks to the Soul. But Love says still more to the Soul, to increase her joy and her sorrow, and to bring her satisfaction in all her undertakings: Lady Soul, says Love, I tell you once for all, to forestall your asking further of me, for you would waste your time, that all creatures, no-one excepted, who dwell and will dwell in the vision of the sweet face of your spouse, have understood less and will understand less of him, compared with how it befits him to be known and loved and praised, and with what he knows of himself less than one can truly say that one can know or love or praise anything in him.

The Soul. O, alas, Love, says this Soul, then what shall I do? Truly, I never believed anything better than what you tell me now. But there is one thing, Lady Love, that I would gladly say to you, says this Soul, if I could.

Love. Then, sweet Soul, says Love, say what you please, for I will listen. The Bewildered Soul. Ah, most sweet Love, says this Bewildered Soul, for the love of God tell me, why did he take such pains to create me, to re-deem me, to re-create me, only to give me so little, he who has so much to give? Yet one does not presume to speak to the Almighty of what he may please to do. Truly, says this Soul, I do not know, but if ever I did have anything to give, I would not give to him in so small a measure, I who am nothing while he is everything. Indeed, I would not be

able to hold anything back from him, but I could do no less than give him everything, if I had anything to give; and, little though I do possess, I have kept none of it back from him, not body or heart or soul, and that he knows well. Now I have given him everything, I who have nothing to give, and so it is clear indeed that I would willingly give to him if I had anything to give. Now he has taken whatever I possessed, and he has given me nothing, he has kept it all. Ah, Love, for the love of God, is this how a lover shares?

Love. Ah, sweet Soul, says Love, you know more than you say. If you have given him everything, that is the best that can happen to you; and even you give him nothing which is not his own before you give it to him. So consider now what it is that you do for him.

The Soul. What you say is true, sweet Love, says the Soul; I cannot nor do I wish to deny it.

Chapter 31. How Love pacifies the Soul for having given to her spouse all that she has.

Love. Ah, sweetest Soul, says Love, what do you want him to give you? Are you not a creature? Do you want your beloved to give you what is not fitting for him to give to you or for you to take? Calm yourself, sweet Soul, if you will trust me; for he does not give to any creature other than what you have, and such gifts as are fitting for you.

The Soul. Ah, Lady Love, says this Soul, you did not speak thus to me when I first knew you. For you said to me that when lover and loved one are together, there is no mastery; but it seems to me that indeed there is, since one of them has everything, and the other has nothing in comparison with his everything; but if I could change this I would change it, for if I could do as much as you can do, I would love you as much as you deserve to be loved.

Love. Ah, sweetest Soul, you cannot say more. Be at peace: your will is enough for your beloved. He makes this known to you through me, that you should trust in him, and that **I should tell you that he will not love anything without you, nor yet you without him.** This is indeed a great privilege. And if you believe me, sweet Soul, be content with this.

The Soul. Ah, Lady Love, in God's name, say no more of this, says this Soul, for indeed I cannot be silent about it to save the whole world, if it were to be saved thereby; for I love nothing greater than that which suffices me, for if that which I love did not suffice me, I would slip or fall away from that little love which I have. But even so, Lady Love, says the Soul, one thing suffices me, which I shall tell you, and that is that he whom I love better than myself – nor do I love any other thing except only for his sake – has in himself that which you have told me, which no-one knows except himself. And so, since I love him better than myself, and he is the sum of all good things, and my Lord and my God and my all, he is all my comfort, says the Soul. And thus if I am disconsolate for what I lack, none the less I am consoled again because he lacks nothing. For in him is the abundance of all good things, without any lack; and that is the sum of my peace and my thoughts' true repose, for I do not love except for his sake. So, since I do not love except for his sake, I lack nothing, whatever I may have said before. Truly not, when rightly understood; but I wanted to speak of him, for no-one told me anything of him when I would gladly have listened to such speech, and Lady Love has said the truth to me about him, which is that I should cease to be agitated about him. **For the best that anyone could say to me about him is nothing, compared with what he is in himself. And so I needed to hear no more said of him, except to be told that my beloved cannot be comprehended.** And it is true; for one could not comprehend the least thing with which he might be compared. And so my love would never reach an end of loving, for it always will have new love from him who is all love, immense though he be. This is all, says this Soul, that anyone can say to me of him, nor would anything have given me peace about him, except what Love has said of him. Therefore I say to all that now I have all that I ask for, since no-one can say anything to me of him; and this is how he is, the beloved of my soul,

says the Soul herself.

Chapter 32. How Love makes such Souls to remain in their senses.

Discretion. For God's sake, think, says Discretion, how such Souls can remain in their senses.

The Soul. I know how, says the Soul. Love makes them remain, who is the mistress of this undertaking. I have said before, says the Soul, that I lack nothing, because my beloved has from all time sufficient, out of his just nobility, and will have enough for evermore. What then should I lack? I do not love myself or him, or his works, except only for him. And what he has, which I do not have and shall not have, is more my own than what I do and shall have in my possession from him himself.

Reason. Prove this, says Reason.

The Soul. It is easy to prove, says the Soul. See, here is the proof. I love the abundant riches which dwell in him a hundred thousand times more than I love the gifts which I have and shall have in my possession from him. And because I love better what is in him, beyond my understanding, than I love that which is in him and within my understanding, for this reason what he knows which I do not know is more my own than that which I know of him and which is mine; for where the more of my love is, there is the more of my treasure. And because I love better the more of him which I shall never know than I love the less which I shall know, this is more mine because of the more of my love, as Love herself testifies. This the end, says the Soul, of the love of my spirit. And furthermore, Lady Love, says the Soul, I wish to say that if any one of his creatures could have in her so much power and will from him that she could give me joy and glory such as all those receive who form his court, if he himself did not give it to me of his own self, I would rather be without it for evermore than receive it or wish to receive it from anyone else than from him – no, not even if I were to die eternally! And moreover I would not be able to do this, for he has so taken hold of me with himself that I can wish for nothing without him. Sweet Love, says the Soul, for the love of God, bear with me, for I am all filled with confusion because of him, so much that I do not know what to ask. What am I to ask of him? Truly I know that no more than one could count the waves of the sea when the wind blows strong can anyone describe or express what his spirit comprehends, however little it may comprehend of God; and this is no wonder, for the body is too gross to speak of what the spirit has grasped. But in the world they say: "Little is better than nothing;" and so likewise I say to you, says this Soul, that it is better to hear what can be described and told of this than not to hear anything said at all.

Chapter 33. The Soul is filled with confusion when she reflects upon the gifts of the goodness of God.

The Soul. Ah, Lord, says the Soul, how have I managed to remain in my senses when I have reflected on the gifts of your goodness, you who have given to my soul the vision of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, which my soul will see without end? Now that I shall see so great a thing as the Trinity, the knowledge of the angels and of the holy souls will not be taken from me, nor the vision of lesser things, that is to say of all the things that are less than God. Ah, Lord, says the Soul, what have you done for me? Truly, Lord, I am so filled with confusion at what I know of this that I do not know at what to be confused, I have no other custom, nor can I have one to preserve me in this knowledge. Lord, if I had no other reason for feeling confusion than that you have given my soul the vision of the whole Trinity, of the angels and of the holy souls, a vision which you have not given to your precious body, which is joined to the nature of

the Father in the person of the Son, it is a wonder that I can still live. Yet further, Lord, it is so great a thing to see the angels and the souls of the saints to whom you have given the vision of your sweet face – and no human being is worthy enough to gaze on what the angels and holy souls see; and by so much the more no human body can see the Trinity, since it cannot see the angels or the souls; and none the less you have given this gift to my spirit, to have forever, so long as you will be forever God.

Chapter 34. How the Soul says that she of herself can do nothing.

The Soul. For God's sake, Love, says this Soul, I pray you tell me what I am to do, I who know this and the gifts of the goodness of my beloved. Love. I shall tell you says Love, and beyond this ask me no more. And the best that I can say to you is that if you know perfectly your own nothingness, you will do nothing, and this nothing will give you everything. And if you cannot fully achieve this knowledge of your nothingness, which exists in truth, since it is found in you, there is a thing which you must then do, and that is to recognise, as well as you can, what it is that you have grasped in your spirit, or else you will lose some of it. Even if God has changed you into himself, still you must not forget your nothingness, which in truth is all that you are, when he first created you, what you would have been if he had paid attention to what you have done, and who you are and what you would be, were it not for that which is of him in you. The Soul. Ah, Lord, says this Soul, I am certain that all I possess is my dreadful faults, for which faults you suffered death, so as to give me life. But, Lord, still more it is my understanding, my intention and my hope, and this is true, that even if no-one but I alone had sinned, still you would have redeemed my soul, turned away from your love, by dying all naked on the Cross for me, using the power ordained for destroying sin. So, Lord, all that you have suffered in your sweet humanity you have suffered for me, just as if no-one had sinned except me alone; and therefore, Lord, this is a debt which I alone owe to you. And, Lord, I owe you yet more, that is to say that over and above what I have, I owe you as much as you are worth more than I, for whom you gave yourself And always you know, Lord, that I can do nothing, and still you have put me so deeply in your debt; but I pray you, sweet and gracious beloved, forgive me this debt, you who have the power to do everything. And without doubt, Lord, you will do this, says the Soul, provided that from now on I will that in all things your perfect will be done.

Chapter 35. How this Soul raises objections against Reason and says that she has been loved by God from all eternity.

The Soul. Now, sweetest Love, says the Soul, I pray you, show me how it is that I have the work of the Trinity.

Love. Then say what is in your mind, says Love, for that you must not conceal from me.

The Soul. Lady Love, says the Soul, I shall tell you. You have told me **that he who is in himself of himself from all eternity will never love anything without me, nor without himself.**

Love. It is true, says Love, I warrant it.

The Soul. Then, since he who is to all eternity will never love anything without me, I say that it follows that never did he love anything without me. And also, since he will be in me to all eternity through love, I have therefore been loved by him from all eternity.

Reason. Watch what you say, Lady Soul, says Reason. Have you forgotten how short a time it is since you were created, that until then you did not exist? For God's sake, sweetest Soul, take

care that you do not fall into error!

The Soul. If I err in holding this opinion, Lady Reason, says the Soul, Love errs with me, who makes me believe and think and say this.

Reason. Well then, Lady Soul, says Reason, prove what you say.

The Soul. Ah, Reason, says the Soul, how wearisome you are, what trouble and what difficulty they suffer who live by your advice! Reason, says the Soul, if I am loved to all eternity by the three persons of the Trinity, I have also been loved by them from all eternity. For just as in his goodness God will love me to all eternity, just so I have been known to his wisdom as she who would be created by the work of his divine power. So therefore, since from the time that God, who is without beginning, has existed, I have been present in the divine knowledge, and shall be there without end; from that time, says the Soul, did he in his goodness love the work which he would perform in me by his divine power.

Love. It is true, says Love, for from that time onward he would not have been willing to refrain from loving you, any more than he is now.

The Soul. Now then, says the Soul, you have heard the witness of Love; so from now on be silent, and do not meddle with me.

Reason. Be it so, Lady Soul, says Reason, since Love guides you and you do not guide Love; that is, since Love dwells in you, performing her will in you without you, I would no longer dare to meddle or interfere with you. Rather, Lady Soul, from now on I promise you obedience, and I shall do all I can for your peace, for that I am constrained to do, and since Love wills it I can- not go against her, but rather I submit in all things to you, says Reason.

Chapter 36. How the Soul is free and released from her subjection to Reason.

The Soul. Now indeed it is you who are in debt to me, says the Soul to Reason, and rightly so, for my spouse's noble courtesy would not deign to leave me any longer in your bondage nor in anyone else's; for the spouse must needs also free his bride whom he has chosen by his will.

Love. That is true, sweetest Soul, I grant and confess it.

Reason. Ah, for God's sake, Lady Soul, says Reason, think and say and do all you wish, since Love wishes it and grants it.

The Soul. Ah, Reason, says this Soul, how lacking in subtlety you are! Love grants to me and wishes me to say and think and do all I wish; and why should it not? says the Soul. What is done Love's own self does, for of myself I can do nothing, unless my beloved himself do it in me. Are you amazed, says the Soul, that he wishes what I wish? Yet it is fitting that he must wish, for I do not wish, except alone for what he wishes in me, and what he wishes for me to wish. In his graciousness he has placed me in this situation, where he wishes what I wish, and wishes nothing which I do not wish. And therefore, Reason, I have peace, says the Soul, since we have this agreement between him and me. Ah, sweetest master; of this work, how can I have such peace, I who see how much of my work perishes? Yet truly, Lord, I can have it, for it is the wish of your graciousness and your nobility that since you have peace I too should have it. And, Lord, I know well that you have fully paid this debt – I mean this gift of peace to me – for whatever I find, whatever happens or has happened to me through my sins, always your peace remains with me.

Chapter 37. The Soul says here that in Paradise, to her great glory, her sins will be known.

The Soul. Lord, says the Soul, no-one can know my sins in this world for the ugly and hideous sight that they are, except for you. But, Lord, in Paradise all those who will be there shall know them, not to my confusion but to my very great glory; for when they see that I have offended you by my sins, your mercy, Lord, and your generosity, full of graciousness, will be known.

Love. Which graciousness, says Love, gives peace of conscience to this Soul, whatever she does or refrains from doing in willing our will, for to will perfectly our will is perfect charity. And whoever had always perfect charity in his will would never have remorse or qualms of conscience. For remorse or qualms of conscience in the Soul is nothing else than lack of charity; for the Soul is not created for anything else than to have within her, endlessly, the state of pure charity.

The Soul. Ah, Lord, says this Soul, what have I said about you?

Love. Reflect upon it, says Love, and then you will be able to know what were your words.

The Soul. Ah, Lady Love, says this Soul, you have given me the knowledge, so listen to it. This work is nothing, since it is fitting that it be nothing; and so it is fitting, says this Soul, that I be certain that what I have said is less than nothing. But what is in me or comes through me, which is from divine knowledge, you yourself, Lady Love, have said it in me or through me out of your goodness, for my profit and that of others; and therefore the glory of it is yours and the profit is ours, if the hearers who will read this books do not demur.

Chapter 38. How the Soul recognizes Love's graciousness in recognizing perfectly her poverty.

The Soul. O rejected and abandoned Love, you are gracious to me beyond measure, as I must indeed realize, says this Soul, since you are willing to persist. Indeed, it is yet your will to persist, more willingly than anyone can tell, while I remain in my desert, that is, in this wretched body, for endless ages; and still, for all the mercy that is in you, I cannot recover the time past which I have lost, for, sweet Love, your justice must be observed. So, none the less, it cannot be that this lost time will ever be restored to me, that I shall not for this be distant from loving and knowing and praising you. How much time have I spent in idleness, into how many faults have fallen, I who am an abyss of utter poverty! And nonetheless, it is into this abyss of poverty that you are willing to put, if I do not offer any resistance, the gift of that grace which you have described above. Described? says the Soul. Truly, Lady Love, all that you have said of this grace through the mouth of any creature would be the merest stammering, in comparison with your work.

Reason. Ah, for God's sake, Lady Love, says Reason, I have indeed heard what has been said, and never did I hear anything more willingly, provided I understood it perfectly, says Reason; but, Love, that cannot be, except for you alone, to whom this gift is given.

Love. Truly, says Love, by such a person, as by the Holy Spirit himself.

Reason. And therefore I say, says Reason, that I cannot understand it, except only that it seems to me that everything which this Soul has done, which is from you, is very well done.

Chapter 39. How Reason wishes to serve and to be this Soul's slave.

Reason. Now, Lady Love, I says Reason, I pray you to guide me so that can serve her in all things as her humble slave, for I know that I can have no greater joy or honor than to be the slave of such a lady.

Love. I tell you that this is so, says Love, and that you cannot do better than to admit and say it.

Reason. Ah, sweetest Love, says Reason, what shall I do about the people whom I have to rule, who will no longer see any order in this Soul's outward customs and actions?

Love. Why do you say that? says Love. Is there any better order than that of this Soul?

Reason. None whatever, says Reason, for those who can see or for those who are so called; but of them there are few upon earth, I do not fear to say. Love. Then, Reason, says Love, what do you call order?

Reason. Order I call, says Reason, the constant life of the works of the Virtues, by my counsel and that of Discretion, after the example of the works of our Lord Iesus Christ.

Love. Reason, says Love, what the humanity of Iesus Christ suffered, his divinity did not feel; and I tell you that it is like this with this Soul as it was with him, for she takes no heed of what you say of the Virtues, says Love, or of yourself. She can do better, for Love, who has changed her into itself dwells in her. So that this Soul is herself Love, and Love has no distinction in it; though in all things such distinctions should be preserved, but only not in Love. I will give you an example. If a lord wants to receive in his land the tribute which is rightfully owed to him, the lord does not owe tribute to his serfs, although the serfs owe it to their lord. Iust so, I say to you, Reason, says Love, that everything owes me tribute if they are the works of the Virtues counselled by Reason and tending to Discretion, except only the one who is overwhelmed by Love and changed into Love; and this one owes me nothing but love, and therefore is discharged of debt, because Love pays it.

Chapter 40. How Love calls this Soul supremely wise, and why.

Love. I call this Soull supremely wise among those whom I have called, but a small wit is incapable of knowing a thing of great worth.

Reason. Ah, Lady Love, says Reason, what do you call wise?

Love. Being lost in the depths of humility, says Love.

Reason. Ah, Love, says Reason, and who is lost in the depths of humility?

Love. The one, says Love, who is wrong in no thing, and who yet knows that in no thing is he right. The one who has this knowledge that he is wrong sees so clearly that he sees himself to be beneath all creatures, in an ocean of sin. And because devils are the slaves of sin, and this Soul has long since seen that she is beneath them, a slave of sin, though making no comparison between herself and them as concerns herself and her works, so seeing, this Soul has become nothing and less than nothing in all her concerns. Long ago she heard it said by the Holy Spirit that God will exalt the smallest to be the greatest, by his single and faithfuli goodness.

Chapter 41. How the Soul has no disquiet because of sin, nor hope in any good I which she ever did.

Love. Therefore this Soul has no disquiet because of any sin which ever she committed nor hope in anything which she may do, but only in the goodness of God. And the secret treasure of this single goodness has so brought her to nothing within herself that she is dead to all feeling from within and without, so that such a Soul no longer performs any works, not for God or for herself and in following this custom she has so lost all her senses that she is incapable of seeking God or finding him, or of directing her actions.

Love. This Soul, says Love, is not with herself, and therefore she must be excused by all men; and **he in whom she is performs his work through her, and for this reason she is freed of any obligation in this matter, witness God himself says Love, who performs this work to the profit of this Soul, who in herself has no work.**

Dread. Ah, Love, says Dread, where then is this Soul, since she is never with herself?

Love. She is where she loves, says Love, without knowing it in her senses. And therefore this Soul lives without reproach from her conscience, because she does nothing from within herself; for whoever does anything of his own initiative, he is not, says Love, without himself, but rather he has Nature with him and Reason. But he, says Love, who is dead through Love neither feels nor knows Reason or Nature. And so such a Soul wishes for none of the joys of Paradise, however much choice be offered her, nor refuses any of the torments of hell, as though ever thin was to her liking.

Holy Church. Ah, then, what does she wish for, for God's sake? says Holy Church.

Love. That which she knows that she is, says Love.

Holy Church. And what is such a Soul? says Holy Church. Sweetest Holy Spirit, teach this to us, for this word surpasses our writings, and we cannot understand through Reason what it conveys; and we are so filled with confusion, says Holy Church, that we dare not withstand her.

Chapter 42. How the Holy Spirit reveals what such a Soul knows, and what she wishes for, and what she has.

The Holy Spirit. O Holy Church, says the Holy Spirit, do you wish to know what this Soul knows, and what she wishes for? I shall tell you, says the Holy Spirit, what she wishes for. This Soul knows nothing but one thing, and that is that she knows nothing, and she wishes for nothing but one thing, and that is to wish for nothing. And this knowing nothing and wishing for nothing give her everything, says the Holy Spirit, and they enable her to find the secret and hidden treasure which is eternally enclosed in the Trinity. In no way, says the Holy Spirit, through any divine nature, for that cannot be, but through the power of Love, for so that must be.

Love. Now, Holy Church, says Love, you have heard why this Soul has all things.

The Holy Spirit. Indeed, says the Holy Spirit, she has truly everything which I have from the Father and the Son. And since she has everything which I have, says the Holy Spirit, and the Father and the Son have nothing which I have not in me, so this Soul has in her, says the Holy Spirit, the treasure of the Trinity, hidden and enclosed within her.

Holy Church. Therefore, since it is so, says Holy Church to the Holy Spirit, it must be that the Trinity dwells and lives in her.

The Holy Spirit. That is so, says the Holy Spirit; since she is dead to the world, and the world is dead in her, the Trinity will always dwell in her.

Chapter 43. How such Souls are called Holy Church, and what Holy Church can say of them.

Holy Church. O, true God, Holy Spirit! says Holy Church.

Love. In truth, Holy Church, says Love, you are inferior to this Holy Church! For such Souls, says Love, are properly called Holy Church, for they support and teach and nurture the whole of Holy Church: not they, says Love, but the whole Trinity through them; and this is true, says Love, let no-one doubt it. O Holy Church, inferior to this Holy Church, say now, says Love, what do you wish to say of these Souls, who are thus commended and praised above you, you who in all things act by the advice of Reason?

Holy Church. We wish to say says Holy Church, that such Souls are in an existence superior to ours, for Love dwells in them and Reason dwells in us; but this existence is not at all in opposition to us, says **Holy Church the Less**, but rather we commend and praise it for this through the glossa of our writings.

Reason. But, Lady Love, says Reason, we would indeed wish to be told, if it pleased you, more clearly of this gift which the Holy Spirit gives to such Souls out of his pure goodness, provided that no-one should suffer harm because of his lack of subtlety in hearing this divine lesson.

Love. Ah, Reason, says Love, you will always see with one eye only, you and all those who are nurtured by your doctrine. For the man is indeed one-eyed who sees the things which are before his/eyes yet does not know what they are; and this is the case with you.

The Holy Spirit. If I have said, says the Holy Spirit, that I shall give to this Soul all that I have, I shall give it, says the Holy Spirit; yet rather everything which we have is promised by all the Trinity and granted by its goodness in the knowledge of its everlasting wisdom; and so it is right indeed, says the Holy Spirit, that we should not withhold from such Souls anything which we have. For this Soul, says the Holy Spirit, has given us everything which she possesses. And whatever we have, she herself has given us, in a manner of speaking; for it is said, and it is true, that good intention is counted as the deed. And this Soul, says the Holy Spirit, is of such a condition that if she had in her that which we have she would return it to us, as we have it, without wishing for any reward in Heaven or on earth, but only to do our will alone. Now we have all this, says the Holy Spirit, by our proper and divine state of being, and this Soul gives it to us by means of her will, which is enclosed in unpretentious love. And because this Soul has given us all that she has, and all that is, and that which she does not possess by the intention of her will, it is fitting, says the Holy Spirit, that we give her what we have, according to the just law of Love. And just as what we have in us, says the Holy Spirit, we have by divine nature, so the Soul has it in her from us by right of Love.

Holy Church. Ah, sir, says Holy Church, we understand and believe as true that your great nobility gave such a gift to her in the reward of love, for Love cannot be sufficiently rewarded in any way except by Love.

Love. This Soul, says Love, has long since seen and known that there is no wisdom so great as temperance, no riches so great as sufficiency, no power so great as love. This Soul, says Love, has buried her memory and her understanding and her will, deep down in one single being, that is God; and it is that being who gives her her being, without her knowing or feeling or wishing for any being except only for what God ordains. This Soul, says Love, has languished for Love for many a day.

Chapter 44. What are the customs of the Soul who languishes for love, and where the Soul has advanced to who has died for Love.

Reason. Ah, Lady Love, says Reason, what are the customs of a Soul who languishes for Love?

Love. She makes war on the vices, says Love, by fostering virtues.

The Soul. Ah, sweetest Love,¹ says this Soul, what a great and dangerous war this is! And indeed, says this Soul, this toilsome life may well be called languishing and a life of warfare.

Love. Now she has so languished for Love, says Love, that she is dead for Love.

Reason. Ah, Love, says Reason, for God's sake, tell us where the Soul has advanced to who is dead for Love.

Love. She has made an end of it with the world, and the world has made is an end of it with her and said farewell; and so she lives in God, and sin and vice cannot find her there. She is so hidden and laid away in God that the world and the flesh and the devils cannot harm her, because they cannot find her occupied in their works; and so such a Soul lives in the repose of peace, for she takes no heed on her own account of any created thing. And because such a Soul has such peace, she lives in the world with no reproach.

Reason. Such a Soul, then, says Reason, has no will at all, and such a state of being should be our state, for we have no more merit before God except as we abandon our will for the sake of his will, and also as we surrender perfectly our will, without wishing for any thing, except only as it accords to his work, as his goodness ordains.

The Soul. I hold fast to this, says this Soul, and therefore, I lack nothing, because I wish for nothing. For no souls have perfect peace except those who have no will at all.

Love. How can you know this, Lady Soul? says Love.

The Soul. I know it indeed for certain, Lady Love, says this Soul, for I have experienced it in various trials, so much that I nearly died for it. And dead I should have been, had not wishing for nothing set me free, through the teaching of divine goodness. The one who wishes for nothing has no will at all; and he and no other has given away his will, and so has nothing to wish with, except the will of him to whom he has given his will.

Chapter 45. How those who have no will at all live in the freedom of charity.

The Soul. Such men live in the freedom of charity who have no will at all; and if anyone was to ask such men what they wish for, truly they would answer that they wish for nothing. Such men have come to the knowledge of their nothingness; that is to say that whatever thing may be in them, they can know nothing about their nothingness, for their knowledge was too small to know such an absence, and they have come to believe in the more, and the knowledge of this belief is that one can know nothing of it.

Reason. Nothing? says Reason.

Love. No, says Love, for if one were to know even as much more of it as one will know of it in Paradise, still that would be nothing in comparison with what is in itself wholly incomprehensible to us, for in such comparison we cannot weigh his power, his wisdom and his goodness, but only, so to speak, a spark of his pure goodness, and that would fill be nothing. Whoever were to comprehend this much more of him, beyond that which will be comprehended of it, as is said in this comparison, that still would be nothing, compared with the smallest portion of what is in him, which can be comprehended by no-one but himself. That is, to explain more clearly, that if anyone were to know everything about God which is said about him, still this would be

nothing, in comparison with that great knowledge which dwells in him, beyond our knowing. Truly, the smallest part of his goodness which one could speak of by way of comparison would still be nothing, truly, compared with the greatness of the smallest part of his goodness, and even smaller than a spark compared with the whole of him.

The Soul. O Lord God, says this Soul, what shall the Soul do who believes this of you?

God. She shall do nothing, says God; but I shall do my work in her without her. For her knowledge of her nothingness and her faith in me have so brought her to nothing that she can do nothing. So the knowledge of this nothing, compared with the greatness of this all, have altogether excused and freed her, for she lacks nothing, since she wishes for nothing.

Chapter 46. How the Soul has the knowledge of the more, because in her own opinion she knows nothing of God.

Love. Now this Soul has fallen and come to knowledge of the more, truly, only because she knows nothing of God in comparison with his all.

Reason. O, alas, says Reason, dare one really call that nothing, that thing which is of God?

The Soul. Ah, alas, says this Soul, how else should one call it? Truly it is nothing, indeed, whatever is given or shall be given to us from him; in truth, even if he gave us the very same thing which has already been mentioned in this writing, by comparison, even if it were the truth, still it would be nothing compared with a single spark of his goodness, which remains in his goodness, beyond our knowing.

The Soul. O, o, says this Soul, and what then is this all of him, since one can say so many good things about the less of him? Ah, sweetest love, says this Soul, you alone know this, and that suffices me.

Chapter 47. How the Soul has come to knowledge of her nothingness.

Love. Now you have heard how this Soul has come to knowledge of the more. And now I shall tell you, says Love, how she has come to knowledge of her nothingness. It is because she knows that not she or anyone else knows anything of her horrible sins and faults in comparison with what God knows of them. Such a Soul, says Love, has not retained any will, but has fallen and come to a state of wishing for nothing, and to a certain knowledge of knowing nothing, and this knowing nothing and this wishing for nothing have excused and freed her, Such a Soul, says Love, follows the counsel of the Gospel, where it says "Let your eye be single, and so you will not sin." So this Soul is at peace in all which God bears from her, for she has a true intention in all she is intent upon and a tranquil repose among the acts of her neighbors. For she makes no judgment upon anything which is not what she intends, unless it be always favorable. This Soul has peace everywhere, for she carries peace always with her, and so, because of peace, all places are pleasing to her, and all things too. So, without moving, this Soul is seated in the seat of peace, in the book of life, testifying to a good conscience, and in the freedom of perfect charity.

Chapter 48. How the Soul is not free who longs for God's will to be done in her to his honor.

Love. So the Soul wishes for nothing, says Love, since she is free; **for he is not free who wishes for anything by his own inner will, whatever the thing be that he wishes for.** For wishing God to do his will for God's own honor, he is thereby a slave to his own self; and he who wishes this wishes it only so that God's will be accomplished in him and in others. It was for such men, says Love, that God refused his kingdom.

Reason. Ah, without doubt, says Reason, so they would act; so they would, too.

The Soul. Indeed, says this Soul, for they have to do this; otherwise they would lose the little they possess.

Reason. That is true, says Reason, Lady Soul, I confess it to you.

Love. Such men, says Love, have no real peace, however much they believe that they are at peace, yet because they believe this, they are satisfied with their state of being.

The Soul. They are not well enough endowed, says this Soul, to believe that there is anyone greater than they, and this prevents them from achieving anything better, and so they remain imprisoned in their good intentions.

Love. Such men were never once satisfied, says Love.

The Soul. No, indeed, says this Soul, for since their will remains in them, **they are the slaves of their will.** It is into such slavery, says this Soul, that that Soul enters who has complete faith in these two Virtues, that is Reason and Dread, and in that fearful tyrant-mistress Will; but he alone is free, says this Soul set Free, who is governed by Faith and Love, for they bring him out of all bondage, so that he has no fear of what is fearful, nor longing for any of the things that delight.

Chapter 49. How the Soul who has no will at all is noble.

Love. Such a Soul has no will at all, and therefore it does not care what God does, so long as he always does his will. For this Soul, says Love, is set free and is content. It has no need of Hell, or Paradise, or any created thing. It neither wishes nor does not wish for any thing which is named here.

Holy Church the Less. And what then, for the love of God? says Holy Church the Less.

Love. Nothing, says Love, she wishes for nothing. But to say this seems strange indeed to those who wish for great impediments in the complications of love; and this is no wonder. But, truly, no-one could think or believe that this brings them great harm, which seems very strange to them!

The Soul. Such men, says this Soul, are so blinded that great things seem small to them.

Love. It is true, says Love, sweet Soul, what you say; for as much as God's work exceeds in worth the work of the creature, so much more is this wishing for nothing in God worth than having fine intentions for God. And truly so, says Love, even if through such good intentions they could perform miracles and receive martyrdom every day for the love of God, still, says Love, there is no comparison, since will remains in them. Not even, says Love, if they were rapt into Heaven every day through such wishing, into the vision of the Trinity, as was St. Paul the Apostle!

Chapter 50. How this Soul receives the imprint of God as does the wax of a seal.

Love. This Soul receives the imprint of God, and has retained his true imprint through the union of love; and just as the wax takes the shape of the seal, so this Soul has taken the imprint of this true exemplar.

The Soul. For however much God loves us, says this Soul, as he has shown by his divine works and his human sufferings, still he did not love us against his will, says this Soul; and if he died for us and took human flesh, that was of his own accord, to testify to his goodness, which had to do this for me, since it was willed by his divine will; and yet, says this Soul, he did not love us against his will. For if everything which the Trinity had ever created was in its knowledge to have been damned without end, still Jesus Christ the Son of God would never have departed from the truth, in order to save us all.

Alas for me! says this Soul, where have I found what I have said? and does not everyone know that this cannot be?

Yes, says Love, sweet love, those who love me know it well, that this cannot be.

God the Father. But you sayit, you who are my dear love, says the person of God the Father, for my eldest daughter must be such, who is the heiress to my kingdom, and who knows the secrets of the Son through the love of the Holy Spirit, who has given himself to this Soul.

Chapter 51. How this Soul is like the Deity.

Love. It is fitting, says Love, that this Soul be like the Deity, for she has been changed into God, says Love, through which she has preserved his true form; and this was granted and given to her from all time by one alone, who in his goodness always loved her.

The Soul. Ah, Love, says this Soul, the meaning of what has now been said has made me nothing, and the nothingness of this alone has placed me in an abyss, below what is immeasurably less than nothing. And the knowledge of my nothingness, says this Soul, has given me everything, and the nothingness of this everything, says this Soul, has deprived me of orison and prayer, and I do not pray at all.

Holy Church the Less. And what then do you do, sweetest lady and mistress over us? says Holy Church the Less.

The Soul. I rest wholly in peace, says the Soul, alone and nothing and altogether in the graciousness of the single goodness of God, without stirring myself, not with one single wish, whatever the riches that he has in him. This is the end of my work, says this Soul, always to wish for nothing. For as long as I wish for nothing, says this Soul, I am alone in him, without myself and wholly set free, and when I wish for something, she says, I am with myself, and so I have lost my freedom. But when I wish for nothing, and have lost everything beyond my will, then I have need of nothing; being free is my support; and I want nothing from no-one.

Love. O most precious being, says Love, who have lost all your former customs, and having lost them, now have the custom of doing nothing, now are you truly most precious; for in truth this custom and this loss have been accomplished in the nothingness of your beloved, and you dwell in this iothingness, says Love, in all things in his will; it is his chamber, and it pleases him to remain there.

Chapter 52. How Love praises this Soul, and how she dwells in the abundance and affluence of divine Love.

Love. O most highly born, says Love to this precious pearl* , you have indeed entered into that one free dwelling place where no-one enters if he is not of your kind and of no base birth.

This Soul, says Love, has entered into the abundance and affluence of divine Love, not at all, says Love, through attaining to divine knowledge, for it can never be that any understanding, however illumined, can attain to any of the affluence of divine Love; but the love of such a Soul is so joined to the affluence of the more of this utterly divine Love (not by attaining the Understanding of Love, but by attaining to its Love which is utterly divine) that she is adorned with the ornaments of this complete peace, in which she lives, and remains, and is, and was, and will be without any being. For, says Love, just as the iron is clothed in the fire, and has lost its own appearance, because the fire, which has changed it into itself, is the stronger, so this Soul is clothed in this more, is fed by and is changed into this more, because of its love of this more, without paying heed to the less, but dwells and is changed into this more of a peace that is ultimate and everlasting, where no-one can find her. This Soul loves in the sweet land of complete peace, and so there is nothing which can help or hurt those who love there, no created being, no given thing, not anything which God promises.

Reason. And what is there, then? says Reason.

Love. That which never was nor will be given, that which has stripped her naked and has brought her to nothing, without her caring for anything that is, without her wishing to be helped or spared by its power or its wisdom or its goodness.

The Soul speaks of her beloved and says: He is, says this Soul, and does not lack this; and I am not, and so I know no lack. And he has given me peace, and I do not live except by peace, which is born in my soul of his gifts, without any thought; and so I can do nothing if this be not given to me. This is my all and my better. Such a state of being makes one love and one will and one work to be in two natures. This is the power possessed by the bringing to nothing in union with divine justice. This Soul lets the dead bury the dead, and the forlorn exercise the virtues, and she rests from the less in the more, but she makes use of all things. This more shows her that she is nothing, naked, without covering, and her nakedness shows her the Almighty, through the goodness of divine justice. What she sees makes her deep, wide, sublime and towering, for they make her always naked, and all and nothing, so long as they have her in their keeping.

Chapter 53. How Reason asks for an explanation of what has just been said.

Reason. O sweetest one, says Reason, plunged deep in the unfathomable depths of complete humility, most noble rock set in the wide plain of truth, solitary and towering above all, except those who are of your dominion, pray you to tell us the meaning of these hidden words, upon which Perfect Love touches.

The Soul. Reason, says this Soul, if anyone were to tell you, and you were to listen to him, you would never understand him. It is so that your questions have shamed and spoiled this book, for there are several who would have understood it if expressed briefly; and your questions, because of the answers you have required, made it long, for the sake of you and those whom you have nourished, who go at a snail's pace. You have revealed it to those of your fellowship who travel at a snail's pace.

Love. Revealed? says Love. That is so, since not Reason nor all her pupils can deny that it

* =Margaret.

seems to them to be well expressed, whatever their understanding of it may be.

The Soul. It is true, says this Soul, for he alone understands who conquers Perfect Love; and such a one must have died by every death of mortification who understands it perfectly, for no-one tastes of this life if he has not died every death.

Chapter 54. Reason asks how many deaths the Soul must die before one can understand this book.

Reason. Ah, treasurer of Love, says Reason, tell us how many kinds of death you had to die before you came to understand this book perfectly.

The Soul. Ask Love, says the Soul, because she knows the truth.

Reason. Ah, Lady Love, for the love of God, says Reason, tell us, not just for me alone, not just for those whom I have nourished, but also for those who have taken leave of me, to whom this book will bring light, if it be God's will.

Love. Reason, says Love, those who have taken leave of you will still have need of nourishment for the two deaths which this Soul has died; but no man living can understand the third death which this Soul has died, except him who is of the mountain.

Reason. Ah, for God's sake, says Reason, say who these are who are of the mountain?

Love. On earth they have neither shame nor honor, nor fear of anything which may happen.

Reason. Ah, God, Lady Love! says Reason, for his sake, answer our questions before you go further with what you are saying, for it fills me with terror and fear to hear of the life of this Soul.

Chapter 55. How Love answers to Reason's questions.

Love. Reason, says Love, those who live as this book says, that is, those who have attained to the state of being of such a life, understand this in a few words, with no need of explaining the glosses. But I shall give some explanation for your questions: so listen now.

There are two kinds of people who live a life of perfection through works of virtue in spiritual affection.

The first are those who in all things mortify the body, performing the works of charity, and they have such pleasure in their works that they do not perceive that there can be any better state of being than that of works of virtue and a martyr's death, longing to persevere in it through the help of many prayers, always increasing their good intentions, always preserving this way of life, always holding fast as they do to it and convinced as they are that this is the best of all the states of being that can be. Such people, says Love, are blessed, but they become lost in their works, because of the satisfaction which they have in their state of being.

Such people, says Love, are called kings, but that is in a land where men see only with one eye, for truly those who have two eyes consider them as slaves.

The Soul. Slaves they are indeed, says this Soul, but they do not know it. They are like the screech-owl, who believes that there are no birds in the wood prettier than her owlets.

It is just so, says this Soul, with those who always live in longing. For they think and believe that there can be no better state of being than that of longing, in which they dwell and wish to remain, and so they become lost on the way because of their satisfaction with what longing and wishing give to them.

Chapter 56. How the Virtues complain of Love, who holds them in so little honor.

The Virtues. Ah, God, alas! say the Virtues, Lady Love, who will hold us in honor, since you say that those who live wholly by our counsel become lost? Truly, if anyone said this to us, say the Virtues, we should hold him for a heretic and a bad Christian. For we cannot understand that anyone can become lost who follows to the full our teaching through the ardor of longing which imparts a true experience of Jesus Christ; and yet, Lady Love, we believe perfectly and with no element of doubt in all that you say.

Love. Truly says Love, but it is in the understanding that lies the mastery, for there is the grain of divine sustenance.

The Virtues. We believe it, Love, say the Virtues, but understanding it is no part of our office. We have fulfilled it well if we believe what you say whatever the understanding we have, for we are made by you to serve such Souls.

The Soul. Ah, indeed, says this Soul to the Virtues, it is well said, and one must indeed believe you. And so I say to all who will hear this book: Whoever serves a poor lord for long can expect a poor reward and little a ent. Now it is so, that the Virtues have realized and perceived clearly, as those who have been willing to hear have heard, that they have no understanding of the state of being of Perfect Love. And so I say, this Soul says:

How ill the Virtues teach their subjects what they do not have and never will have! But if anyone wants to understand and learn how those men become lost who remain in the service of the Virtues, let him ask it of Love; and, indeed, of that Love who is the mistress of Knowledge, not of that Love who is Knowledge's daughter, for she knows nothing of this; but, best of all, let him ask of that Love who is the mother of Knowledge and of Divine Light, for she knows the all of it, as being the more of that all, in which more this Soul remains and dwells, nor can she dwell elsewhere than in that all.

Chapter 57. Of those who are in the state of the forlorn, and how they are slaves and tradesmen.

Love. Now you have heard who they are who have become lost, and how and why and for what reason. Now we shall also tell you who they are who are forlorn, who are slaves and tradesmen; but yet they act more wisely than those who have become lost.

The Soul. Ah, for Love's sake, Lady Love, says this Soul, you who render everything so simple, tell us why they remain in the Virtues, just as they do who have become lost and serve them, and feel and long through the ardor of the keenness of the spirit's work. Those who have become lost do this just as do the forlorn. Is there, therefore, some better reason for which you praise them more highly than those who have become lost?

Love. Is there? says Love. Indeed there is, and it enables them to attain to that state of being from which those who have become lost can no longer have any help.

The Soul. Ah, love of the Divine Love, says this Soul set Free, I pray you to tell us why these forlorn ones are wise compared with those who have become lost, since they all follow the same customs, except only in this one sense for which you value them more than you do the others.

Love. Because, says Love, they hold that there is a state of being better than their own, and yet they know well that they have no knowledge of this if better state in which they believe. But this belief gives them little knowledge of their own state of being and little satisfaction in it, for they consider themselves wretched and forlorn. And so they are, truly, compared with the state of freedom of those who have attained to that state from which they never stir. And because they believe and know truly that they are astray they often, in their burning longing, ask the way

from the one who knows it - that is, from the damsel Knowledge, illumined by divine grace. And this damsel has compassion upon their requests, as they know who once were astray. And so she shows them the king's straight highway through the land of Wishing for Nothing. This is the right path to take; and he who follows it knows whether I tell the truth. And those who are forlorn and who consider themselves wretched know this too; for if they are forlorn they can attain to the state of the free, of which we speak, through the directions of this Divine Light, from whom this poor little forlorn Soul asks the way and where her way is to be found.

Reason.Reason. Little? says Reason. That is so. Little she still is.

The Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit says: She is little still, and in truth little will she stay so long as she persists in making any requests of Knowledge or of Love or pays heed to anything which may be in loving or knowing or praising; for no wise man asks without cause, nor is he concerned about that which cannot be. And therefore it can indeed be said that he is little or poor who asks often, indeed in truth, who asks for anything. For every state of being, whatever it may be, is nothing but a game of ball, a child's sport, compared with the supreme state of Wishing for Nothing, in which the free dwell and from which they never move; for he who is free in his true state of mind could not ask or wish for or propose anything, whatever anyone could give him, but would wish to give everything to preserve his fidelity.

Chapter 58. How the Souls brought to Nothing are in the fifth state with their beloved.

Reason. Ah, for God's sake, says Reason, what have Souls so brought to Nothing to give?

Love. To give? says Love. Truly, Love says, whatever God possesses. The Soul who is such is neither lost nor forlorn but rather is in rapture with her lover in the fifth state of being. There she does not falter; indeed, often she is rapt up into the sixth state, but this does not last with her for long. For it is an opening swift as a lightning flash and a rapid closing in which one cannot remain for long, nor could she ever have a teacher able to speak of this.

The rapture of this opening as it is made, and widens by the peace of its work, makes the Soul, for as long as that peace lasts which is given to her in this opening, when once again it closes up, so free and so noble and unburdened by all things that, whoever preserved herself in freedom in this fifth state after this had befallen her and did not fall back into the fourth would find herself in great peace, for in the fourth state there is willing, and in the fifth state there is none. And because in the fifth state, of which this book speaks, there is no will, and the Soul remains there after the work performed by the Far-Near of Rapture, whom we term lightning from its manner of openings and rapid closing, no-one could believe, says Love, the peace upon peace of all peace which such a Soul receives, if he himself was not so.

Understand these words in a spiritual sense, for Love's sake, hearers of this book! This Far-Near, whom we call lightning from its manner of opening and rapid closing, takes the Soul from the fifth state and places her in the sixth, for so long as its work lasts and remains, and so her state is changed; but the life of this sixth state does not last long in her, for she is set back, down into the fifth. And this is no wonder, says Love, for the work of the lightning, so long as it lasts, is nothing else than the manifestation of the Soul's glory. This does not last long in any creature, but only for the time of its passage. And this is why such a gift is so noble, says Love, for it performs its work before the Soul has any sight or perception of the work. But the peace, says Love, of the work that I work, and which remains in the Soul when I work is so delectable that Truth calls it a glorious food; and no-one can be fed upon it who remains in longing. Such men, says Love, could rule a land if that were needed, and all would be without any initiative of their own.

Chapter 59. Upon what this Soul has lived, and how and when she is without herself.

Love. In the beginning this Soul lived by the life of grace, which life of grace was born out of the death of sin. Afterwards, says Love, she lived by the life of the spirit, which life of the spirit was born out of the death of nature; and now she lives by a divine life, which divine life was born out of the death of the spirit.

Love. This Soul, says Love, who lives by a divine life, is always without herself.

Reason. Ah, for God's sake, says Reason, when is such a Soul without herself?

Love. When she does not belong to herself. **Reason.** And when does she not belong to herself?

Love. When, of herself she is nowhere, neither in God nor in herself, nor in her neighbors, but she is in the bringing to nothing which is the work of this lightning, drawing her close by its working, which is so precious noble that only she can speak of that opening, in a single motion of glory, which the noble lightning gives. Only then is any Soul capable of speaking of this precious closing, for she has lost all memory through the bringing to nothing of her knowledge, which such a bringing to nothing accomplishes in itself.

The Soul. Ah, God, says this Soul, how great a lord would he be who could understand the benefit of a single motion of such bringing to nothing!

Love. It is true, says Love, that would he be.

The Soul. If you have heard exalted matter in these words, says this Soul to the hearers of this book, do not be displeased if afterwards I speak of little things, for I must do this, if I wish to accomplish what I set out to achieve, not, she says, for the sake of those who have attained this, but for those who have not attained it, but who will continue to beg for as long as they are as they are.

Chapter 60. How one must die three deaths before one attains to a life that is free and brought to nothing.

Love. Reason, says Love, you have asked me how many deaths one must die, before one attains to such a life. And I answer you that before the Soul can be born into this life, it must die three entire deaths. The first is the death to sin, as you have heard, which death the Soul must wholly die, so that there remains in her no shade or taste or smell of anything which God forbids in the Law. Those who so die are men who live by the life of grace, and this suffices them, that they keep themselves from doing what God forbids, and that they can do what God commands. Ah, you, most noble beings, brought to nothing and exalted in your great wonder and astonishment when you are joined in union with Divine Love, do not be displeased that touch upon some matters for the sake of the little, for soon I shall speak of your own state of being. For none the less when it happens that black and white are set together, the two colours can be better seen because of their conjunction, rather than each by itself.

Now you who are chosen and called to this state of being, understand and hasten, for it is a very long way and a great journey from the first state of grace to the final state of glory which the Noble Far-Near gives. I have said, says Love, that you must understand and hasten, for to understand this (those of sanguine complexion are naturally helped to it) is hard and subtle and very noble; and those of choleric complexion have nature's help, without being spurred on by the keen will of the spirit's ardent longing. And when these two natures meet, that is, nature and the ardor of the spirit's longing, it is of great benefit, for such men unite and join themselves so powerfully to what they undertake that they all reach their goal, through the power of the spirit and of nature; and when these two natures agree, and with them the third nature, which by right must be forever joined to these other two – that is the abyss of glory, which by right draws it by

nature into its nature – this agreement is exceedingly noble. And to make it better known, I ask this: which is the more noble, the abyss of glory, which draws the Soul and adorns it with the beauty of its nature, or the Soul which is joined to such glory?

The Soul. I do not know, says this Soul, whether this displeases you, but forgive me, for I cannot do otherwise. For zeal of love and the labor of charity, by which I was encumbered, have made me make this writing, so that you might be like this without delay, at least in will, if that is still in you; and if you are already freed from all things, and are without will and living a life beyond your understanding, so that you may at least provide the glosses for this book!

Chapter 61. Here Love speaks of the seven states of the Soul.

Love. I have said, says Love, that there are seven states, each more advanced to the understanding than the last, beyond comparison; for just as a drop of water is to the vastness of the sea, so is the first state of grace compared with the second, and so with the others, beyond comparison. And even so there is no one of all the first four states so great that the Soul does not live in it in great bondage; and the sixth is glorious, for the opening of the sweet movement of glory, which the noble Far-Near gives, is nothing else than a manifestation which God wishes the Soul to have of her own for which she will have forever. And therefore in his goodness he gives her in the sixth state this manifestation of the seventh. This manifestation is born of the seventh state, which gives the sixth state. This manifestation is given so swiftly that the very one to whom it is given has no perception of the gift which is given to her.

The Soul. Is this any wonder? says the Soul herself. If, before such a gift were given, I perceived it, I should myself be that which is given by that divine goodness, if my body had relinquished my soul, when he will give it to me forever.

The Spouse of this Soul. This is not for her to do, says the Spouse of this Soul himself I have sent you my pledges by my Far-Near. But let no one ask me who is this Far-Near, nor what are his works which he performs and works when he manifests the glory of the Soul, for one can say nothing of this except that Far-Near is the very Trinity, and makes this manifestation, which we call 'movement' to the Soul; not so that the Soul should move, or the Trinity, but the Trinity makes this showing of its glory to this Soul. No-one is able to speak of this, except only the Deity himself for the Soul, to whom this Far-Near gives himself has such great knowledge from God both of him and of all things that she sees in God himself by divine knowledge; and the light of this knowledge takes from her the knowledge of God and of herself and of all things.

The Soul. It is true, says this Soul, and there is nothing else. And therefore, if God wishes me to have such great knowledge, let him keep and prevent me from knowing him; for otherwise, says this Soul, I should have no knowledge of him. And if he wishes me to know myself, let him also take away from me my knowledge of myself for otherwise I cannot have it at all.

Love. It is true, says Love, Lady Soul, what you say. There is nothing more certain to know, there is nothing more profitable to have than this work.

Chapter 62. Of those who are dead to mortal sin and born into a life of grace.

Love. Well then, Reason, says Love, listen now. For the sake of the little ones, I shall return to what we were considering. Such people, of whom we have spoken, who are dead to mortal sin and born into a life of grace, have no reproach or remorse of conscience, so long as they satisfy God solely in that which he commands. They dearly want honors, they are upset when they are despised, but they keep themselves from vainglory and impatience, which lead to death in sin.

And they love riches too, and lament that they are poor. And if they are rich, they lament when they lose their riches, but always they keep themselves from death in sin, since they do not wish to love their riches contrary to the will of God, whether they lose or increase them. And they love too to take pleasure in ease and rest, but they keep themselves from excess. Such men have died to mortal sin, and are born into a life of grace. **The Soul.** Ah, truly, says the Soul set Free, such men are small upon earth and very small in Heaven, and it is ungraciously that they save themselves.

Reason. Ah, Lady Soul, says Reason, take care what you say! We should never dare to say that anyone is small who will see God for evermore.

Love. Yet it is true, says Love, that no hand could depict their smallness, compared with the greatness of those who die the death in nature and who live by the life of the spirit!

Reason. I well believe it, says Reason, and so they do, for if they were to say otherwise they would be lying; but none the less they do not wish to do anything about it. They say indeed to me, to Reason, that they are not bound to do so if they do not wish to, for God has not so commanded them, but has simply recommended it to them.

The Soul. What they say is correct, says this Soul; but they are ungracious.

Desire. Ah, truly, says Desire, ungracious they are! They have forgotten that Jesus Christ was not satisfied with what he did for them, until he had done all that his humanity could bear, even to death.

Chapter 63. How Love calls those men base-born who are content with being saved.

The Soul. Ah, sweetest Jesus Christ, says this Soul, pay no heed to such men! They are solely concerned for themselves, so much that with it they forget you in that crude way of life in which they find contentment.

Love. Ah, truly, says Love, it is base indeed.

The Soul. This is the custom, says this Soul, of tradesmen, who are called base in the world, because base they are, for well-born men are incapable of involvement in matters of trade or of living solely in their own interests. But I shall tell you, says this Soul, how I shall lose my discontent with such men. It is because they are expelled from the court of your secret friends, just as one base-born would be expelled from the court of a noble at a trial among peers, where no man can be if he is not of good family – not, at least, in the king's court; and because of this I am appeased, says this Soul, for just so are they expelled from the court of your secret friends, to which the others are called who will never forget the works of your sweet graciousness, that is, the shame and the poverty and the intolerable sufferings which you have endured for us: they will never forget the gifts of your suffering, which is always their mirror and exemplar.

Love. For such men, says Love, all things necessary are prepared, for Jesus Christ has promised this in the Gospel. Such men, says Love, save themselves with much greater graciousness than do the others; yet even so, says Love, they are little, but even so little that one cannot express their littleness, compared with the greatness of those who are dead to the life of the spirit.

Chapter 64. Here it tells of the Souls who are mortified in the life of the spirit.

Love. No man tastes this life, if he has not died this death. Truth. This bears with it, says Truth, the flower of the love of the Deity. There is no means between these Souls and the Deity, nor do

they wish for any. Such Souls cannot endure the remembrance of any human love or the wish for any divine feelings, because of the pure divine love which this Soul has for Love.

Love. It is Love's single mastery, says Love, which gives her the flower of the well-spring of love, as Love itself testifies. It is true, says Love. This love of which we speak is the union of lovers, and the kindling of fire which burns without breath.

Chapter 65. Here it tells of those who are seated upon the high mountain, above the winds.

Love. Now, reason, says Love, you have heard something of these three deaths, by which one comes to these three lives. Now I shall tell you who it is that is seated upon the mountain, above the winds and the rains. It is those who on earth have neither shame nor honor, nor fear for anything which may happen. They are untroubled, says Love, and their gates are open, and no-one can injure them, nor dare any work of charity break in upon them; these are those seated upon the mountain, and none but they are seated there.

Reason. Ah, for God's sake, Lady Love, says Reason, tell us what will become of Shame, who is the loveliest daughter Humility has, and also of Dread, who has done so much good and so many fair services to this Soul, and of me too, says Reason, who have not slept when they had need of me? Alas! says Reason, are we therefore to be thrust out of her dwelling, now that she has become the mistress?

Love. Not at all, says Love; rather you three will still remain of her household and keep her gate, so that if anyone sought to break into her dwelling who was opposed to Love, each of you would raise the alarm. You shall have no other duty except this alone, to show yourselves therein as portresses, for otherwise you would be confounded; and in no other matter would you be listened to but only in this, if indeed it were so that the Soul was so feeble that there were need or call for this. Such a creature, says Love, is better invested with that divine life of which we have spoken than with her own spirit, which was put into her body when it was created. And the body is better invested with its spirit than the spirit with its body, for the body's grossness is taken away and lessened by divine works. So that such a Soul is in that sweet and unknown land, there where she loves, rather than in her own body to which she gives life. Such is the power of the freedom of Love.

Chapter 66. How the Soul rejoices that she has taken leave of Reason and of the other Virtues.

Holy Church the Less. Ah, sweetest Divine Love! says Holy Church the Less.

The Soul. And truly she is 'the Less' for it shall not be long until she reach her end, says this Soul, at which she will have great joy.

Reason. None the less, says Reason, tell me what causes you both most joy?

The Soul. Lady Love, says this Soul, will say it for me.

Love. Because, says Love, she has taken leave of you and of the works of the Virtues. For when this Soul was mantled in Love, she took lessons in your school, longing to perform the works of virtue. But now she has been initiated and has advanced in divine instruction so far that she starts her reading where you leave off but this lesson is not written down by any man's hand, but by the Holy Spirit, who writes this lesson down in a miraculous way, and the Soul is the costly parchment; and there, with no words ever spoken, is conducted that divine teaching

which human wit cannot put into words.

Chapter 67. This tells of the land where this Soul lives, and of the Trinity.

Reason. Ah, Love, says Reason, I pray you to tell me something more of the land where this Soul lives.

Love. I tell you, says Love, that he who is where this Soul is, is of himself in himself through himself receiving nothing from anyone. And so this Soul, says Love, is in himself of himself for himself, receiving nothing from anyone except from him.

Truth. So she is in God the Father, says Truth. For we believe that there is no person in the Trinity who has not received from a person other than himself except only the person of the Father.

Love. This is true, says Love, for God the Father has his divine power from himself without receiving it from anyone; for he possesses from the outflowing of his divine power, and gives to his Son this which he has from himself and the Son receives it from the Father. And the Son is thus born of the Father, and is equal to him. And the Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son, one person in the Trinity; he is not born, but he is, for in a different way is the Son born of the Father, and in a different way is the Holy Spirit both from the Father and from the Son.

Chapter 68. How by divine operation this Soul is united to the Trinity, and asses those who live by the counsel of Reason.

Love. This Soul, says Love, is completely dissolved, melted, drawn and joined and united in the exalted Trinity, and she can wish for nothing except for the divine will through the divine operation of the whole Trinity. And a rapturous brilliance and light join her and drive her from ever closer at hand, And therefore this Soul says:

The Soul: O you people, puny, crude and not as you should be, she says.

Reason. To whom are you speaking? says Reason.

The Soul. To all those, she says, who live by your counsel, who are so stupid and asinine that because of their crudity I must be circumspect, not speaking in my language, lest they should receive death in that state of being in which I am at peace, without ever stirring I say, the Soul says, that because of these men's crudity I have to be silent and to be circumspect in my words which I learned to speak in secret places, in the secret court of that sweet land,

in which land
 Graciousness is law,
 Love rules and leads,
 and Goodness feeds.
 Its sweetness is my guiding light,
 its beauty is all my delight;
 its Goodness has my table dight;
 what else can I do, what might
 against my peace take arms and fight?

Chapter 69. The Soul says here that the practice of the Virtues is nothing but care and labor.

Reason. Ah, for God's sake, says Reason, sweetest and unblemished flower, what do you think of our practice?

The Soul. It seems to me, says this Soul, a labor full of troubles. Yet none the less man earns his food and his sustenance through his labor in such trouble; and Jesus Christ ennoble it by the toil of his own body, seeing the animal nature of those who would be saved by such labor, and for whom therefore some certainty was necessary. And so Jesus Christ, who did not wish them to be lost, of himself gave them this assurance through his death, and through his gospel, and through his Scriptures, to which those who labor turn for guidance.

Reason. And where do you turn for guidance, our sweetest lady, says Reason, you who take no part in this wearisome labor, unless it is by faith from which you have these gifts?

The Soul. No, truly, says this Soul, I am free of all this; my better is elsewhere, so far away from this that no comparison could be made. Its end is in God, who is timeless; but I am in time so that I might attain from him what is mine; and what is mine is that I be established in my nothingness. Now, Reason, says this Soul, you ask us to where we turn for guidance; and I answer you, says this Soul, that it is to him who alone is so mighty that he can never die, whose teaching is not written down either in books of examples or in the teachings of men, for his is a gift which cannot be given by formulation. He knows from all eternity that I indeed believed this without I any need for proof Is there, says the Soul, anything baser than to ask for proofs in love? Truly not, it seems to me, since Love is its own proof and that is enough for me. If I ask for more, then I do not believe this.

Reason. Ah, Lady Soul, says Reason, you have two laws, your own and ours; ours for belief and yours for love; and therefore you say to us what you please, and so you have called those whom we nurture fools and asses.

The Soul. The men whom I call asses, says this Soul, seek God in creatures, through worshipping in churches, in paradises they create, in the words of men and in their writings. Ah, truly, says this Soul, in such men Benjamin is not born, for Rachel still lives in them; and Rachel must die at Benjamin's birth, and till Rachel is dead Benjamin cannot be born. It seems to beginners that men such as these, who seek God in this way up hill and down dale, think that God is subject to his sacraments and to his works. Alas, they suffer such trials that it is pitiful, and they will go on suffering them, says the Soul, so long as they maintain this way of life and such practices. But those men spend their time well and profitably who do not worship God only in temples and in churches, but worship him everywhere through union with the divine will.

Reason. Ah, most nobly born, says Reason, for God's sake tell us, where do you seek him and where do you find him?

The Soul. I find him everywhere, says this Soul, and that is where he is. He is one Deity, one sole God in three persons, and this God is all, everywhere; and that, she says, is where I find him.

Chapter 70. How such a Soul is by the grace of God that which she is.

Reason. Now, our sweet lady, says Reason, tell us what you are who speak to us.

The Soul. I am, says this Soul, by the grace of God that which I am. So I am that alone and nothing else which God is in me; and God is also that same which he is in me; for nothing is nothing. But what is, is. **And so I am not, if I am, except that which God is;** and there is no-one except God, and therefore I find no-one except God, wherever I enter, for, to say truly, there is no-one but him.

This Soul loves in Truth, that is in Deity; but Truth loves in him from whom this Soul has her being, and so every work of charity is fulfilled in her.

Love. It is true, says Love, for all others except her conceal themselves, because they lack innocency, through the sin of Adam.

Chapter 71. How this Soul no longer performs any works for God or for herself or for her neighbors.

Love. This Soul, says Love, no longer performs any works for God, or for herself, or for her neighbors either, as has been said, unless God, who can perform them, does this if it is his will; and if he does not will it, she is no more concerned for the one than for the other; she is always in the same state. So there is in this Soul the beam of divine knowledge drawing her out of herself without herself, into an astounding divine peace, supported upon a crest of the outflowing love of that Jealous Lover on high, who gives to her supreme freedom in all places.

The Soul. Jealous? says this Soul. Jealous he is indeed! That is seen by his works, which have despoiled me of my all, and have set me in divine pleasure without any action of my own. And this union of complete peace joins and secures me through the supreme excellence of the creation prepared by the divine being, that being from whom I have my being who is being.

Love. When this Soul, says Love, *is so drawn by him without herself, by God, for herself*, that is the divine operation; nor was ever once any work of charity performed by human body which approached or could approach to this work.

The Soul. Understand in their true sense, says this Soul, the brief words of Love, for they are hard to understand for anyone who has not the meaning of the gloss.

Love. It is true, says Love, for the work of the creature, that is to say the work performed by man, cannot be compared with the divine work, performed by God in the creature, out of his goodness for the creature.

Chapter 72. This tells of the distance of the land of those become lost and the forlorn from the land of freedom, and why the Soul has will.

The Soul. Understand in their true sense, says this Soul, the brief words of Love, for they are difficult to understand concerning the distance from the land of the forlorn to the land of freedom and of utter peace, in which land those who have being dwell!

Love. It is the truth, says Love, and I shall speak briefly to them.

The Soul. Truly it is, says this Soul, despite Will, in whom the forlorn and the sorrowful dwell, who yet lead a life of perfection, such as it is.

Love. When the divine Trinity created the angels by the graciousness of its divine goodness, those who were evil agreed, through their perverse choice, with the evil will of Lucifer, who wanted to have by his own nature that which he could not have except by divine grace. And as soon as they wished for this by their errant will, they lost their state of righteousness. Now they are in Hell, deprived of being, never to regain the mercy of seeing God. It was their will which made them lose this exalted vision, which they would have had if they had surrendered their will, which they clung to. Now consider the end they have come to!

Truth. Alas, alas! says Truth, why, o Souls, do you love such will, since it is through will that such a loss is incurred?

Love. I shall tell you, says Love, why the Soul has will; it is because she still lives in the spirit,

and in the life of the spirit there is still will.

Reason. Ah, God! Lady Love, says Reason, tell me why from the beginning of the book you have used the name 'Soul' for this chosen soul, so beloved by you, since you say that the forlorn have will because they still live in the life of the spirit, and you have so many times called her by so inferior a name as 'Soul' which is a lesser name than the name 'Spirit'?

Love. You should know, says Love, that this is well asked; for, to understand this well, all those who live in the life of grace through the fulfilment of the commandments, and who permit themselves to be content with this, truly have the name of 'Soul' not the name of 'Spirit' but the name of 'Soul' through the life of grace. For all the hierarchies of Heaven do not have one and the same name, if one wishes to use their greater names; they are all 'angels' but the first of the angels was not called 'Seraphim' but 'angel' only, whereas the Seraphim are called both the one and the other.

Understand without its being said, says Love, what this means. For it is just so, I tell you, that those who keep the commandments, and are content with this, are called 'Soul' and not 'Spirit' and their true name is 'Soul' and not 'Spirit' for such men are far from the life of the spirit.

Reason. And when is the Soul all spirit? says Reason.

Love. When the body is all dead, and the will finds joy in shame, in poverty and in tribulations; then it is all spirit, and not otherwise. Then such spiritual creatures have purity in conscience, peace in affection and understanding in reason.

Chapter 73. How the spirit must die before it loses its will.

Reason. Ah, for God's sake, says Reason, Lady Love, I pray you to tell me why the spirit must die before it loses its will?

Love. Because, says Love, the spirit is all full of spiritual will, and noone can live with divine life while he has any will, nor can he be content if he has not lost his will. The spirit is not perfectly dead until it has lost its feelings of love and until the will, which gave it life, is dead; and in this loss I the will is perfectly filled with content in the divine pleasure. And it is from this death that there arises that exalted life which is always either free or glorious.

Truth. Ah, for God's sake, Lady Divine Love, I pray you to show me, says Truth, a Soul which is perfect in this state of being.

Love. Gladly, says Love, and if she is not as I shall tell you, I bid you reprove her, and tell her that she is ill fitted and prepared to speak to me in my secret chamber, there where no-one enters unless he is well fitted, as you will hear me say. No-one is my beloved, says Divine Love, except her who does not fear to lose or to gain, except only to please me, for otherwise she would be concerned with herself and not with me, whom she would not be with; and no spouse of mine could be concerned with herself And if she had committed as many sins as ever did all the world, and if she had done as many good deeds as all those who are in Paradise, and if all her good deeds and all her evil deeds were manifest to the people, such a Soul, says Love, would feel for herself neither shame nor honor because of this, nor any wish to hide or to conceal her evil deeds; and if she did otherwise, says Love, she would be concerned for herself and with herself, and not for me, with whom she would never be. What shame, says Love, do those who are in my paradise have, even though men see their sins and my gifts of glory which they receive from me? Certainly they have no wish to conceal their sins nor even shame if men perceive them, nor if they show my glory.

Truth. Ah, truly not, says Truth, they leave that to the master, to hide or to show, according to his will. And so do the Souls of whom we speak, who are the vessels of this election.⁷ Far-Near brings to them this noble gift.

Chapter 74. Why Love calls this Soul by so lowly a name as 'Soul'.

Love. Now, Reason, you ask us why I have called this Soul by so lowly a name as 'Soul' Reason, says Love, because of your crudeness I have called her so often by her surname; and because by her surname we understand what is meant, we have made use of it, and we shall continue to do so; but her true name is a most noble one. Her name is 'Pure' 'Celestial' and 'Bride of Peace' For she is seated in the depths of the valley, whence she sees the peak of the mountain, and from there she sees the summit of the peak. No interloper can break in there, and there the wise one places his treasure of safety: that is divine Love's gift of union, and this union gives her the peace, and his lordship gives food only to those in the life of glory, and this is the food of my elected bride, says Love, who is 'Mary of Peace' and she is 'Mary of Peace' because she is fed by Perfect Love. Martha, you should know, is too burdened down, and does not know this. Her burdens trouble her, and so she is far from this life.

Chapter 75. How the Enlightened Soul gives understanding of what is said before by example of the transfiguration of Jesus Christ.

Understanding of Divine Light. Ah, for Love's Sake, says Understanding of Divine Light, tell me now, you who have reason to conceal yourself, what you understand in this.

The Soul. I shall tell you, says the Soul of Light, what I understand of this.

Those Who Have Reason to Conceal Themselves. We understand, they say, that Iesus Christ was transiigured on the Mount of Tabor, where there were only three of his disciples. He told them not to speak of this or say anything until he had risen again.

The Free Soul. This is well said, says this Free Soul, to those who are the slaves of Nature, who because of this hide themselves; you have given me the club with which I shall subdue you.

The Soul. Now I ask you, says this Soul, why did God do this? She Who Conceals Herself. He did it for us, says She Who Conceals Herself. And since he teaches us this, why should we not do it?

The Soul. Ah, you sheep, says this Soul, how like that of animals is your understanding! You leave the corn and take the straw. And I tell you that when Iesus Christ was transfigured before three of his disciples, he did it so that you might know that few men would see the brightness of his transfiguration, and that he does not show it except to his especial friends, and so there were but three of them. And this still happens in this world, when God sets himself in the heart of the creature in the ardor of light. So now you know why there were three; and I shall tell you why this happened on the mountain. It was to show and signify that no-one can see things which are divine so long as he is concerned or involved in temporal things, that is in everything which is less than God. Now I shall tell you why God said to them that they should not speak of this until he had risen again. It is to show that you cannot speak a word about the divine mysteries until you cannot be afflicted by vainglory; until then, no-one must say anything. But in this Iwarrant you, says this Soul, that whoever has something to hide or to con- ceal has something to show, but whoever has nothing to make known has nothing to conceal.

Chapter 76. Here it is shown, by the example of the Magdalene and of the saints, that the Soul has no shame for its sins.

The Soul. Ah, for God's sake, consider the repentant sinner. She had no shame, because Jesus Christ said to her that she had chosen the better and the safer part, and, what is more, that it would never be taken from her. And, also, she had no shame at all because her sins were known to all the people, as the Gospel itself witnesses, which says so that all hear it that God drove seven devils out of her. She had no shame for anyone, for she was overwhelmed and taken and seized; and therefore there was no-one that concerned her except him alone.

What shame did St. Peter have at God's restoring to life the dead upon whom his shadow fell after he had denied him three times? Indeed, he had no shame at all; rather, it was a great honor to him.

What shame or glory had St. John the Evangelist, at God's making by means of him his true Apocalypse, after he had fled from where Jesus Christ was taken prisoner?

The Soul. I believe, says this Soul, that he and the others had no shame or honor because of this, nor any wish to hide or conceal themselves; and also that they had no concern for what God did by means of them, and for them, and for the people, even though it was a divine work. These examples are sufficient, to those who have understanding, for them to understand the rest of what this means; for this book is not written for different men.

Chapter 77. Here the Soul asks if God has placed any end and limit to the gifts of his goodness.

The Soul. I have said, this Soul says, that they had neither shame nor honor because of what God did with them, nor any wish to hide themselves on anyone's account, as you can see by what has been said.

Truth. Ah, truly, says Truth, they would not have known any reason why, for they were unburdened of themselves and were, all of them, in God.

The Soul. Ah, for God's sake, says this Soul, since God gave them this grace, is he not still the same generous giver as once he was? Did he then put any end or limit to the gifts of his goodness? .

Graciousness. Indeed not, says Graciousness: his divine goodness could not suffer it. He is concerned with nothing else but to give, as generously as ever he did, the great gifts which he has to give, and also that gift which never was given, which never was spoken by mouth or thought in heart, if man was willing and able to dispose himself for this. For love's sake, Love entreats you, understand that Love has so much to give, and she puts no limits to the giving, so that in an instant she makes, of two things, one.

The Soul. But it is my pleasure to say one thing, says this Soul, not for the sake of those who are in this state of being, for this is no concern of theirs, but for those who are not and who yet will be, for this indeed concerns them: and that is that they should be on their guard, so that if Love asks back from them anything of what she has loaned them, they should not refuse it for anything which may happen, whenever this may be, whatever Virtue Love may send to them to bear her message. For the Virtues bear, instead of messages, the will of Love in sealed letters from their lord, as do the angels of the third hierarchy.

And also let all those to whom Love sends her messengers know that if they then refuse what the Virtues ask by their inward being, which must have mastery over its body, they will never make their peace with the ruler who sends the message, but they will be smitten and troubled in their knowledge and burdened down with themselves, because of their lack of trust. For Love says that it is when one is in great need that one sees who is one's friend.

Reason. Now, answer me this, says Reason: if he does not help her in her need, when will he help her? Tell me that.

Love. And if I cannot recall, says Love, what wonder? I must preserve the peace of my divine justice, and give to each one what is his; not, says Love, what is not his, but what is his. Now understand, says Love, the gloss of this book. For the matter is worth as much as it is valued and as it is needed, and no more. And when I wished, says Love, and when it pleased me, and when I had need of you ('need' I use for what I enjoin upon you), you refused me what I asked for, through several of my messengers; no-one knows this, says Love, except me, me alone. I sent the Thrones to you, to admonish and adorn, the Cherubim to illumine you, the Seraphim to enkindle you. By all these messengers, says Love, I asked my will of you, and they made it known to you; I required the states of being in which I asked you to be, and always you paid no heed. And when I saw this, says Love, I left you in your state of tutelage to save yourself and if you had been obedient to me, you would have been a different being, as you yourself bear witness; but still you will save yourself, even though this be in a life burdened by your own spirit, which will never be fully unburdened of itself. And because you did not obey my messengers and the Virtues, when through them I wanted to subject your body and set free your spirit, and also, says Love, because you did not obey them when I asked you by the subtle Virtues which I sent to you and by my angels through whom I charged you, I cannot give you rightfully the freedom which I have, for it would not be just to do so. And if you had obeyed, says Love, when I asked you, the wishes of the Virtues which I sent and my messengers through whom I urged you, you would have as a right the freedom which I have.

Love. Ah, Soul, says Love, how burdened down you are with yourself!

The Soul. Truly, says this Soul, my body is weak and my soul is fearful. For I am often troubled, she says, whether I seek it or not, by these two natures, when those who are free do not and cannot have such trouble.

Chapter 78. How those who have not obeyed the teachings of perfection remain encumbered by themselves until death.

Love. O, wearied Soul, says Love, what trials you suffer, how little gain you have! And all this because you have not obeyed the teachings of perfection, with which I urged you to set you free from your burdens in the flower of your youth. And yet you have never been willing to change, and you never have been willing to do anything about this. Rather, you have always refused what I asked, which I made known to you by such noble messengers, as you have heard before. And such men, says Love, remain encumbered by themselves until death.

Ah, truly, says Love, if they had been willing, they would have been set free from that through which they are and will be in such great bondage and with so little profit; from which, had they been willing, they would have been set free at so small a cost. Truly, so small, says Love, as to set themselves where I wished them to be, as I showed them through the Virtues, whose function this is.

I say Love says, that they would have all been free in soul and in body, if they had followed my counsel relayed by the Virtues, who told them my will and what they needed to do, says Love, before I could enter into them with my freedom. And because they did not do this, they have all remained with themselves, as you hear. And those who are set free and brought to nothing, those who are adorned with delights know this, and they see for themselves the bondage of these men; for the true sun shines in their light, and they see the atoms within the beam of the sun through the resplendence of the sun and its radiant beam. And when such a sun is in the soul, and such rays and such resplendence, the body has no more weakness and the soul no more fear, for never did the true Sun of Iustices heal or cure any soul without curing its body, when he performed his

miracles on earth; and still he often does this, but not to anyone who has not faith in this. Now in this you can see and hear how great and strong and free indeed and unencumbered by all things is he who places his trust in God: God sanctifies him.

I have said, says Love, that those whom I urged through their very inward beings to obey the perfection of the Virtues, and who have done nothing about it, will remain until death encumbered with themselves; and I further say that if they drove themselves by themselves every day to achieve by effort of the will the perfection of the apostles, they still would not be freed of the burden of themselves (let no-one expect that this would happen) or of their selves, that is, of their bodies and of their souls. No, truly, I say again, says Love, since the crudeness and the urging of their inner being do not produce this, one cannot rely upon it, but everything which a man does with himself merely burdens himself with himself. And all those know this who undertake to perform works with themselves, without the ardent impulse

Chapter 79. How the Free Soul counsels that one should not refuse what the good spirit asks.

The Free Soul. Therefore I say, this Free Soul says, to all those who live striving for the life of perfection that they should be on their guard and not refuse those things asked by the ardent longing of the spirit's will, however dearly they may want to attain to the better after this life, which is called a forlorn life and a life of the spirit.

Love. I have said that they should be on their guard, for this they need to be if they wish to attain and come to the better, to which this life is but a serving girl, making the inn ready for the coming of so great a guest to stay as the Freedom of Wishing for Nothing, which will satisfy the Soul in every way, this Nothing which gives everything. For whoever gives everything has everything, and not otherwise.

The Soul. Ah, further still, says this Soul, I wish to say to those who are forlorn that whoever preserved his peace and perfectly fulfilled the will of the ardor of the keen longing of the work of his spirit, as I have said, by keeping his senses so in check that they could not contemplate any work other than the will of the spirit, he would thereafter as a rightful heir come as near as possible to this state of being of which we speak. This is the eldest

Bibliography