

THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE BEGUINES

BY JAN VAN
RUYSBROECK

Translated from the Flemish by JOHN FRANCIS
With an Introduction and Notes

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"Et hoc mtelligere quis hominum dabit homini? quis angelus angelo?
quis angelus homini? A te petatur, in te quaeratur, ad te pulsetur: sic,
sic accipietur, sic invenietur, sic aperietur. Amen."

St Augustine, Confessions.

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Preface

The Book of the Twelve Beguines has been here translated from the original Flemish Texts, collated and published by the Society of Flemish Bibliophiles in 1863.

In the Flemish, the first eight Chapters are in rhymed verse; but I have preferred to follow the example of Surius, and to make no attempt to reproduce the metre or the rhymes of the original, believing that such a course results only in increasing the difficulty of obtaining an exact and accurate rendering; and in this I am confirmed by a comparison of the existing translations in French, which are often little more than paraphrases of the author's meaning. I have, however, in those Chapters, kept to the original lines, beginning each in turn with a capital letter.

The old Manuscripts were not consistently divided into Chapters, and the usual numeration is that of Surius, who also added a brief descriptive heading to each Chapter. While his division is occasionally at fault, it seems less confusing to the reader to adopt it, subdividing the longer Chapters, where necessary, into two parts; and this I have done. The descriptive headings are my own, although they follow, in the main, the intention of the headings added by Surius.

The language chosen has been always the simplest possible, in order to retain, as far as practicable, the primitive flavour of the original; but it should be remembered that Ruysbroeck himself often uses long

words, though always in their simplest signification.

I have thought it useful to summarise briefly the contents of the work, and this Summary will be found immediately after the Introduction.

It remains only to acknowledge, here and at once, the invaluable assistance which I have obtained from a careful study of the French translations made by the Abbe Cuylits and by M. Chamonal, however often I may have the temerity to disagree with their rendering; and, above all, the priceless aid of the great Latin translation of Surius, seldom at fault, and always illuminating. The Collection of the Society of Flemish Bibliophiles, to which I have already alluded, is the foundation of all, and, without it, I could have written nothing.

I trust, most earnestly, that this little book, which I believe to be the first translation of any part of Ruysbroeck from the original Flemish into English, may lead someone, more capable than I, to undertake the greater task of a more extended translation; and if it has this result, it may well prove, in years to come, that few books can show a greater worth.

JF.

Introduction

THE student of mystical literature has, to-day, no greater or more pressing need than an accurate and careful translation of the works of Jan van Ruysbroeck, himself one of the most arresting figures of mediaeval Mysticism.

And, at the threshold, we must needs ask ourselves what it is that we mean by this word "Mysticism"; for on the answer which we make to that question will depend the whole meaning of this book and indeed of all other books for us.

Mysticism, then, as we speak of it to-day, is no phantasy of mystery and legend, no foolish tale of useless occult adeptship, no farrago of ancient and discredited heresies. It imports a deep and earnest striving of the soul, to live, first, the life enjoined by all the authorised teachers, and then and not till then to pass, if she be called, beyond, into the Life of Love in God, and into intimate communion with Himself.

It is not a science or a philosophy, exploring, by the light of the intellect, the secret places of the soul. It is, in the deepest and truest sense, the living of a Life a Life of continual realisation, in which every deed and word and thought is for ever governed and made holy by the Love that rules in all.

To those who live this Life there comes at length a reward which is past all telling, when the life of eager quest and longing is taken up into the Life of consciousness with God.

Such is the claim of those who have left their record with us a tale of stammering lips, and spoken in strange tongues. They have turned to us radiant faces, and in their eyes we have read unutterable things.

They have given us scattered landmarks on the road that they have

travelled, and we come, in time, to understand that there are many paths to the "Centre," and that hardly any one of them has followed in the footsteps of another.

Each in his turn has taken up his staff, and struck out across the desert, if haply he might come one day to see the gilded spires and temples of his early vision. Each in his turn has felt the "Song of Joy" swelling in his inmost heart, the Song "that no man knoweth, save him that has conceived it."

Ruysbroeck, in other words, tells us of all that this Song meant for him. He finds within himself a constant craving, a continual inward longing. He describes how the attitude of the true lover of God is "an intellectual gazing and a loving inclination" towards Him, mind and will aspiring to intimate communion with the God of All. "Behold," he cries, "we are one life in God," and, through love and virtue, we shall come to our Eternal Life and Rest in Him.

He calls to those who hear him in a voice that thrills with earnestness, bidding them to follow where he leads: Ministering, in the world without, to all who need, in love and mercy; And, in the world within, emptying yourself of every vain imagining; Gazing inward with an eye uplifted and open to the Eternal Truth; Inwardly abiding in simplicity, and stillness, and in utter peace.

So shall you bring with you
A burning earnestness of love,
A fiery Flame of devotion, leaping and ascending into the very
Goodness of God Himself,
A loving longing of the soul to be with God in His Eternity,
A turning from all things of self into the Freedom of the Will of God,
With all the forces of the soul gathered into the unity of the Spirit,
Thanking and glorifying God, and loving and serving Him, in
everlasting reverence."

His way is the living of the Life of Christ, in a constant inward recollection, in a continual outward loving and serving, and in an uninterrupted inward and outward realisation of the everlasting Presence of the Majesty of God.

To such a life there comes the Gift of loving promise, the Holy Spirit,

Whom we liken to a Living Fountain,
Wherein we live above our created being,
Whence spring rivulets of the living waters of His Grace,
and streams that "scatter in our spirits His innumerable Gifts.

"This man," you exclaim, "is an Enthusiast." It is true. Enthusiasm is the great watchword of the Mystic Life, and stands for almost all that is meant by "Mysticism," just as it stands for all that is best in the religious life of every day. It is one of the rulers of the modern Church who tells us that "Mysticism is the raw material of all "religion," and that "it is easier to discipline the enthusiast than to breathe enthusiasm into the disciplinarian."

Only the enthusiast will hear the voice of Jan van Ruysbroeck, and only enthusiasm will carry the traveller who is following in his steps across the wilderness of his occasional lapses into mediaeval mannerisms. To the true enthusiast for Life there is no weariness, no hesitation, no return. For ever and for ever he goes forward on the path that he has chosen, to join the ranks of those to whom he now and evermore belongs.

Of such was Ruysbroeck, and of such are those to whom alone his message will sound in understanding ears.

To the difficulty of translating his writings, witness has been borne continually by many of those who have entered into that labour, and M. Maeterlinck, in the incomparable Introduction to his translation into French of the Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage, has given some of the reasons for it.

This "humble Flemish priest," as M. Maeterlinck calls him, had, in truth, at his service, one of the most primitive of modern tongues, adapted only to the simplest expression of the thoughts of daily life. He writes, in this medium, of things that pass beyond all expression, of abstract ideas just caught on the uttermost limits of that territory in which alone the human intellect can live, and he employs, at times, the boldest and most amazing imagery, the subtlest analogies, and the utmost refinements of abstract thought, in seeking to tell of the ineffable in the terms of human speech.

He is like a child who has seen a vision of the Infinite. He understands, although he knows not how; but he cannot formulate his knowledge even in his thought; and, at the attempt to convey his meaning into words, all but the least fragments of the Vision fade and pass away. It is those least fragments alone that we can see, shining through the short phrases and the simple stumbling sentences. In rough and uncouth analogy, in tortured rhythm, and in weird flights of strange imagination, we grasp and reconstruct, little by little, piece by piece, and, as it were, rebuilding it out of the material of our own original thought, the tumbled fragments of his scattered edifice.

"The Unutterable" remains for ever "unuttered," but we have with us some memory of a moment spent on the edge of all the world, gazing out across the mists of far Eternity.

Small wonder that in such an atmosphere the translator stands amazed. He has no words to fit his own half understanding of his original; and, too often, perhaps, he forgets that he is only a translator, and tries to add a word here or a word there, in the hope of making intelligible to others what he has been unable to understand himself.

Or again, he is horrified at some rugged metaphor of mediaeval flavour, and strives to palliate what he conceives to be an offence against good manners. He finds his author speaking, in all sincerity, of the pious soul "feeding on God"; or "gasping for His sacred Flesh"; and

he is appalled. He cuts and alters and emasculates, and finally produces something wholly inoffensive, and wholly useless, and totally unlike the original. Shall we not remember the well-worn words of our own orthodox Church prayers, or the many striking phrases scattered throughout our own English Testament?

Ruysbroeck is never less reverent; seldom, I think, so daring. And, were he otherwise, his sincerity is so patent, and his essential respect for all that is holy is so deep and loving, that he would be a harsh critic who found offence therein.

And, after all, it is the duty of a translator just to translate; altering nothing, if he can avoid it; omitting nothing; and, if he does not wholly understand the hidden meaning of the plain words on his written page, leaving them undisturbed, and the understanding of them to wiser men.

In the midst of the great awakening of recent years, this Flemish saint has, for us and for our generation, emerged from the obscurity of centuries, and we have been able to read, for ourselves, even in our own tongue, some few selections from his writings. It is in no disrespect of those admirable translations that one can but feel once more the difficulties of which I have just spoken, as well as the great limitation of selected passages for the purpose of enabling the student to follow the connected thought of the author, no less than one realises the disadvantage of what M. Maeterlinck calls a "double translation."

So far as I am acquainted therewith, all the English versions of Ruysbroeck that have yet appeared are limited to selections from the original, and are, moreover, translations, not of the Flemish, but of some rendering of it in French or Latin. Miss Stoddart has translated the Introduction and some few extracts from M. Maeterlinck's French rendering of the Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage, while Dean Inge's abridged version of that work, given in *Light, Life, and Love* is from the French version and from the Latin translation by Surius.

With these two exceptions, all the English selections have been translated from the French of Ernest Hello, who, as M. Maeterlinck points out, does not claim to have done more than loosely paraphrase the Latin text of Surius, himself the translator, nearly two centuries after Ruysbroeck's death, of the then existing manuscripts.

In so many re-translations and re-renderings, the opportunities of missing the exact shade of thought or the subtle turn of phrase, which were long ago in the mind of him who wrote, or of toning down some too bold analogy or some too vivid imagery, are almost endless; and it has seemed to me that even the most elementary attempt at an exact rendering of the original text, while it must, of necessity, lack much of the literary merit of a freer translation, may well be of more general utility in reproducing the true meaning of the author.

I have translated, then, as a whole, and, so far as possible, without omission of any kind. One may be forgiven some passing impatience when, in the midst of an amazing flood of eloquence, the writer pauses to digress on the fate, let us say, which in mediaeval times was reserved for the unbeliever and the Jew. But I cannot think that this impatience is an excuse for depriving others of the privilege of forming their own judgement; and, indeed, in the Book of the Twelve Beguines these digressions are so rare, and so short when they do occur, that their omission would have resulted in no gain either of clearness or of brevity. Moreover, in all his works, what Ruysbroeck has written he has written as a whole; and there never was, perhaps, a writer who passed more subtly from point to point of exposition, or whose digressions it was more dangerous to omit. He troubles us little, after all, with the usual mediaeval condemnation of the wicked man: and, if these digressions, almost essential as they were in those days for the orthodox son of Holy Church, be faults indeed, we may surely forgive them for the sake of the great love and the tender charity that are so conspicuous in all his teachings.

Jan van Ruysbroeck was born in 1293 A.D. in the village of Ruysbroeck, or Ruusbroec, near Brussels, to which he owes his name. The circumstances of his outer life need delay us but one moment, and have often been set out before. His mother, a good and pious woman, was yet too fond of her son to wish him to leave her for the stern life of a mediaeval priest; and at the age of eleven, he ran away from home to his Uncle John Hinckaert, who was a Canon of the first degree at the Church of Saint Michael and Saint Gudule in Brussels.

With him he studied hard in all kinds for four years, and then abandoned these labours as beside the point of his one enthusiasm, and devoted himself exclusively to theology.

Those who saw his wonderful progress in this respect thought him inspired from Heaven, and in his Uncle Hinckaert and the latter's colleague, Franc van Coudenberg, a minor canon, he found ready and invaluable assistance.

More and more as the years went on he devoted himself to the life of contemplation, till, at the age of twenty-four, when he was ordained priest, his uncle made him Chaplain of the Church of Saint Gudule.

In 1343, at Coudenberg's suggestion, the three friends left Brussels for Groennendael in the Forest of Soignes, hoping for greater peace and seclusion, and took up their abode in the old hermitage of Jean de Buscho, vacated for that purpose by the recluse Lambert, who was then in occupation. In 1344 they built a chapel which was duly consecrated by the Bishop of Trebizonde, and many clergy and laymen came to join them.

In 1349, on a remonstrance from the Abbot of Saint Victor, they took the habit of regular Canons of Saint Augustine; and while Coudenberg became Provost, Ruysbroeck himself became the Prior of the new settlement.

From this time forward his fame spread far and wide. Sometimes, we are told, his words flowed forth like wine from a broken vessel, and it is on record that he often spoke of God and of Eternal happiness until the dawn was breaking, and that the brethren who joined him after compline would find him still beside them at the bell for matins.

He always spoke without preparation, and always eloquently; and if he did not feel himself inspired to speak, he would humbly beg to be excused. Ever ready to help his brethren even in the midst of the weakness caused by his ascetic life and his increasing years, he would undertake the hardest and the meanest labour, always being the first in all monastic exercises, and continuing his contemplation in the midst of every labour.

All that he did he consecrated to the service of God; and he would say continually that it was as easy to lift the soul to God as to lift the hand to the head; while of his writings he said that he had never written one least word without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His saintliness was noised abroad throughout all Flanders, Holland, and France; and among the crowds who came from far and near for his counsel and advice were the Dominican Tauler and Gerard Groote, the founder of the "Brotherhood of the Common Life."

In 1381 he fell ill, and died at the age of eighty-eight, without pain, and fully conscious to the end; while those who stood around him saw his face aglow and burning with an inward light.

So he lived and so he died, fulfilling in his own life that perfect and humble following of Christ that he so eagerly urges in the priceless heritage of labour and of love that he has left behind him.

Of that heritage it would be hard to speak too highly. It is almost unknown to English readers; and what they lose thereby it is impossible to estimate.

I have chosen to translate the Book of the Twelve Beguines because, so far as we can tell, it was one of the last treatises he ever wrote, and because it seems to contain, in a remarkable degree, the summary and the crown of his life's teaching. Surius includes it in a collection of treatises which he entitles "De vera Contemplatione, opus praeclarum, variis divinis institutionibus, eo quo Spiritus Sanctus suggestit ordine de scriptis, exuberans," and these treatises, under the comprehensive title of "Dat Boec van den twaelf beghinen" have, together with all the other known works of Ruysbroeck, been collected and edited from the original manuscripts by the Society of Flemish Bibliophiles.

The Society, for this particular collection, drew mainly from three manuscripts, known, respectively, as Codex D, Codex F, and Codex G; and it is perhaps needless to say more on this head, save that, for various reasons, I have, when in doubt, given the preference to Codex G, which was copied in 1480 by Sister Martin van Woolputte, procuratress at "Bergen in the enclosed cloister of Saint Margaret in the Valley of Josaphat." Ruysbroeck himself never gave any title to his works, and the name of "The Twelve Beguines" is, in consequence, the addition of some copyist or critic at a later date.

The collection itself consists, as I have said, of several treatises, and much difference of opinion has arisen as to the particular division which is to be adopted.

The editors of the Society of Flemish Bibliophiles treat it as whole and complete, and consider that the sense is uninterrupted from the beginning to the end.

M. Maeterlinck, on the other hand, thinks that the Book of the Twelve Beguines ends with Chapter Thirty or Thirty-one in Surius' numeration, after which the author goes on to treat mystically of the science of astronomy.

I have, however, adopted neither of these views. The Codex G, to which I have already referred, has a note at the end of the Sixteenth Chapter to this effect, "Here the Twelve Beguines go out"; and Chapter Seventeen is headed with the words, "Here begins an Instruction." These two additions by a later hand, for such they undoubtedly are, do not occur in the other manuscripts; but I think there can be little doubt that they are justified. The last few Chapters of the Book of the Twelve Beguines have risen from height to height of abstract thought and overwhelming richness of expression, until in Chapter Sixteen the six Points of highest communion between God and man are described and dwelt on with every circumstance of powerful analysis and imagery. The Chapter concludes with these words:

"May the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, One True God in Three Persons, Who is our Reward and Crown, so grant to all of us. Amen," while the next Chapter begins with an elementary distinction between good and wicked men; and, were it indeed part of that which had gone before, would provide one of the most lamentable examples of an uncalled-for anticlimax in the whole of literary history.

The learned Abbe Cuylits, who has had access to the original manuscript of which I have spoken, closes his own admirable French translation, as I have closed mine, at the end of the Sixteenth Chapter; and Professor Vreese, in the *Biographie Belgique*, while he says nothing of the interpolations, yet draws attention to the entire change of thought and subject-matter which occurs at the beginning of Chapter Seventeen.

The word "Beguine" stands for a woman leading the religious life in community; and I think we cannot certainly say more than that. Surius calls them "cordatse virgines," which can hardly be strictly accurate, since we know at least that Ruysbroeck's own mother died in a Beguinage at Brussels, to which she had come in order to be near her son. Dean Inge, moreover, has shown that many reasons, among which the loss of life in the Crusades was not the least, combined, in

mediaeval times, to swell the number of indigent females who, having no male protector, were forced to beg their bread. "The better class of these female mendicants," he says, "soon formed themselves into uncloistered charitable Orders, who were not forbidden to marry, and who devoted themselves chiefly to the care of the sick." He speaks of their religion as "intensely inward," and "based on the longing of the soul for immediate access to God."

I pass from these matters of less moment to the immediate subject that lies before us.

It has been said of the mediaeval mystics, and most frequently by those who do not read their writings, that they teach a lesson that is limited to the inward life, and to the inward life alone; that their message has no meaning for the wider outlook and the deeper sympathies of modern thought; and that, whereas they sought to rouse and exercise the "emotions" only, we need, to-day, a using of the "intellect" and "will" as well. I think it is Henry Suso who says somewhere that "he who seeks to find the inward in the outward, is in better case than he who only finds the inward in the inward"; and indeed there is abundant testimony that the mystics, mediaeval or otherwise, all, or nearly all, teach, in the end, the same great lesson; that it is love and understanding of the outward things that lead those who are called thereto into the unity of the Inward Life.

The value of Ruysbroeck lies in his perpetual recognition of this fact, no less than in his continual implicit that "intellect" and "will" must play their due part in the life of love and virtue. Again and again he distinguishes between our life "within ourselves," wherein we labour in the outer world, and that Life which is without ourselves, wherein "we are One with God."

They correspond to the Outpouring and the Indrawing of the Holy Spirit, Who sends us forth to live good and virtuous lives, and draws us in also to inward observances; for while within ourselves we abide

in perpetual likeness to God, and must live in goodness and virtue, yet we are also One with God without ourselves in Eternal Rest.

Love is the way the seeing and the loving of God in all His works and creatures, until "the Light and the Fire" of the Holy Spirit shall have wrought His Will on us, the Light showing us our Oneness, and the Fire burning out all "unlikeness."

Such is the message of Ruysbroeck, a message, not of pious self-delusion or of morbid introversion, but of love and an abounding sympathy, exercised "in a medium of sweet sanity."

It is necessary, in conclusion, to prefix to my own translation that same warning that all who have gone before me have found occasion to convey to their intending readers. He who takes up the study of Ruysbroeck seeking to find therein the agreeable passing of an hour of leisure, some faint tickling of his appetite for mystery, or some easy initiation into a higher life, will meet with grievous disappointment.

Here, as in everything else, it is true to say that "he who will not work, neither shall he eat." The teachings of our author, as, perhaps, of all other mystical writers, do not often appear on the surface, nor always on a first reading. There is light in abundance, but it must be sought for, and that with diligence and sympathetic understanding. And only he who is content to labour, to read and to re-read, turning back, referring, and collating, will find a full reward.

It is worth a little labour; for here is wise counsel, succour for those at need, and food for weary travellers, pressed down and running over; a richness and a profusion of help and loving instruction that are rarely found within the limits of so short an essay. But they are not for the idler and the literary dilettante, nor for them that are seeking some new and curious thing.

To most, the way of the True Life is infinitely commonplace, as commonplace indeed as is Infinity to us who dwell Therein; and they are very few and foolish, as the world judges, whose enthusiasm blinds them to the dust and weariness of the long road they tread.

Every here and there, as in that Way, so in the writings of the Mystics, there are, set in the midst of the desert, green oases, full of the sound of many waters, tinkling into pools of still delight. But the desert is still the Way: through it one must pass to reach them, and without it they have no message and no meaning for the traveller.

So then, let him who has read so far, read no more, unless indeed he has the heart courageous, and the strong right hand that, once on the plough, will press to the furrow's end.

So much is in warning to all who come on such literature for the first time and unawares.

For the true Travellers there need be no misgiving. To them nothing is commonplace, and dust and weariness are welcome. Pilgrims of an inward "Odyssey," with faces set towards Jerusalem, they who have heard the Call press on toward their Goal. No one of them but knows, even if he be the very humblest and weakest, something of the glory and the peace of the will that is turned to God for evermore. No one, however often faint and stumbling, but lives the happier in his earthly life for the "Song of Joy" that is rising deep within his soul.

Around them everywhere they see the gleaming of the rainbow that is arched as high as heaven, and in every sound of earth they hear the low throbbing of the heart of Love.

These are the friends of Ruysbroeck, speaking the same language, thinking the same thoughts. And they need no words of mine.

JOHN FRANCIS.

April, 1913.

Summary of Chapters

TO those who are unaccustomed to the style and manner of Ruysbroeck, some description of this particular work may be of use; and I add, accordingly, a short analysis and summary of it.

The first eight Chapters, in the original, are in rhymed verse, and they will be found far more simple, if less interesting, both in expression and in subject-matter, than the later Chapters. At times they do not rise above the level of orthodox mediaeval thought, although they are, to some extent, a necessary preparation for that which follows after.

THE FIRST CHAPTER gives the conversation of the Twelve Beguines, who are supposed to be discoursing of the Love of Jesus, and, so far as the first Six are concerned, at all events, there will be found some fundamental error in the ideas put forward by each of them, which it will be the part of the careful reader to detect, and which it is the undoubted intention of the author to dispel in due course.

THE SECOND CHAPTER shows how simple Faith must live and suffer in the midst of an evil world; but also how, in another sense, it is necessary for us to abandon the world, in order that Love may enter the heart. The conclusion sets out the characteristics of those who follow the way of Love.

THE THIRD CHAPTER contains the prayer of the devout soul who would partake of the Holy Sacrament.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER sets forth God's answer to this soul, and the offer of His own Flesh and Blood for food and drink thereto.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER contains the soul's appreciation of God's Love and Goodness to her, and her ecstasy in receiving the Holy Sacrament. It concludes with a distinction between man, who is created according to "mode," and the Infinite God, Who is "modeless." For the finite soul

cannot apprehend the Infinite God, while she is still bound by the limits of mortality.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER describes some of the hindrances to Contemplation, and shows how those who are careful and troubled about many things in the life of the senses, cannot come to the knowledge of that God Who is beyond the law of this world.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER is a beautiful instruction to the soul as to the manner in which she may come to the Contemplative life; and, in this chapter, the rhythm of the original verses is broken and lengthened out of all proportion, as if the enthusiasm of the writer could no longer contain itself within the restrictions imposed by form.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER teaches the nature of true Contemplation, and how it lies, not without the reason, but beyond it, in the limitless region, above all forms and likenesses.

At this point in the original, the form of verse is finally abandoned, and the remainder is written in prose.

THE NINTH CHAPTER treats in Part 1 of the Way of Contemplation, showing how the Incomprehensible Light shines in the Living Mirror of a pure spirit. Without is Likeness; within is Unity. The Voice of God's Wisdom speaks to the contemplating spirit, showing her how we, who are made one with God by our "God-likeness," ought to find a new Unity with Him through His Grace and our goodness.

In Part 2, Our Lord Jesus Christ, telling the soul of all His love for her and His labour therein, calls on her to answer.

THE TENTH CHAPTER, which I have also divided into two parts, gives, in Part 1, the soul's reply to this demand, and, in Part 2, sets out the First Mode of Contemplation. Ruysbroeck describes the joy of the loving heart, which is opened to God and closed to all created things;

he tells of the "Song of Joy" and of "Joyfulness," which belong to the lowest degree of the Contemplative Life, and he shows how the Fire of the Divine Love descends on him who, in purity of heart, high aim, and tender love, comes into the Presence of the Holy Majesty of God.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER sets out the Second Mode of Contemplation, in which the soul, uplifted above all semblances, beyond and without the reason, is illuminated by the uncreated Light, which is not God, but is the intermediary between Him and the "seeing thought." Therein the soul knows God.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER describes the Third Mode of Contemplation, consisting of

(a) "Speculatio," in which the soul, as in a mirror, sees God in all, not in His own nature, but in such intellectual images as are adapted to her capacity. God is seen as every abstract quality, and in the distinction of His Three Persons.

(b) "Contemplatio," wherein, at her earnest desiring, the soul contemplates God in modeless and limitless Contemplation. This limitless Contemplation is midway between Contemplation in intellectual images and Contemplation in the Light of God.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER sets out the Fourth Mode of Contemplation, which is the Perfection of the Contemplative Life. It is the Spirit of God working in us, the transcendental and illuminated exercise of Love. We must be like God, through graces; and One with Him, in Love. Our love fails before His Measureless Love, and, failing, becomes modeless.

God's Love towards us is a purifying of the Spirit, whereby He distributes His Graces and His Gifts to each of us.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER tells of the Four Modes of Loving.

The First Mode is that of the "Friends of God," who practise goodness

and virtue in outward ways.

The Second Mode is a "loving intention" towards God inwardly, rather than the performing of good works in the outer world; a continual emptying of self, attaining to modeless Love; and an "intellectual gazing and a loving inclination," which are intermediary between Modeless Love and Love that is bare and empty of all.

The Third Mode belongs to the "Sons of God," who, uplifted above all in a bare understanding and love, labour no more, for the Holy Spirit labours in them. They are born anew, and, though they do not become God, they are "Godformed," even as red-hot iron does not become fire, but takes the nature of it.

Part 2 describes the Fourth Mode, in which the soul is made one with God in Love, and finds herself one Breadth and Length and Height and Depth with Him. We are told of the Outpouring and Indrawing of God, and how, in Outpouring, He works in a living differentiation of His Persons, but, in Indrawing, rests in an Eternal Repose without differentiation. We are One with God in both ways; and, for our better realisation of it, Jesus Christ has given us His Spirit, that we may grow in grace.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER describes the operation of the Holy Spirit within us, Who (a) sends us out to live in the practice of Love, and (b) draws us in to be One in Love with Him.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER, Part 1, tells of the six points of communion between God and man.

The First Point shows how we are one life in God, and how, by grace and virtue, we are uplifted into Eternal Life with Him.

The Second Point, how, in ourselves, we are apart from God, yet are we like Him, and, in the life of virtue, we live in Him, and He in us.

The Third Point shows how, stirred by God, sent out by Him to lead lives of virtue, and indrawn by Him again, we abide, within ourselves, in perpetual likeness to Him, and, beyond ourselves, are One with Him.

The Fourth Point, how the Spirit moves us to yield ourselves, outside ourselves, to God, and, within ourselves, to grasp and apprehend Him. These two things are impossible for us, but possible to God, and we must endure the workings of God therein.

Part 2 shows, in the Fifth Point, how we have always, within ourselves, a continual hunger and thirst and longing for God, and must for ever be striving; but, beyond ourselves, are satisfied, and One with Him. These are the states of "labour" and "enjoyment" and this is the "life in Truth."

The Sixth Point treats of the still and essential and glorious Oneness of Fruition, where all is rest, and we are One with God in Love. We learn that, where we are "made one" with God in Love by grace and good actions, we receive each his own reward; but, where we are One with Him beyond all separation, there is God our Fruition and His own in a fathomless bliss.

The Chapter concludes in gathering up all that has gone before, by showing how God is One Fruitful Nature in a Trinity of Persons; and passes on, after an orthodox condemnation of unbelievers and hypocrites, to tell how, if we would be chosen, we must be clothed, in ourselves, with the Life of Christ, and, beyond ourselves, must be One with God in Love. In us is Likeness; in God is Oneness; and between these there mediate the Light and the Fire of the Spirit. The Light shows us our Oneness, and the Fire burns out all unlikeness. And so the Discourse ends, with a prayer that God may grant these things to all who hear and understand.

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Shows twelve different notions of the Love of Jesus, on the part of the Twelve Beguines.

CHAPTER II
Shows the manner of the True Lovers of God.

CHAPTER III
Shows the preparation required of him who wills to receive the Holy Sacrament.

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Tells of the Four Modes of Loving, and shows forth the first Three Modes of it.

CHAPTER XIV.
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CHAPTER XVI. Part 1.....
Further tells of the six Points wherein is the highest communion between God and man, and shows forth the first four Points.

CHAPTER XVI. Part 2.....
Shows forth the fifth and sixth Points.

CHAPTER I

Shows twelve different notions of the Love of Jesus, on the part of the Twelve Beguines.

TWELVE Beguines sat
Talking of the fair Lord Jesus
Each after her own manner:
"Let us treasure this Love," said they,
"For sweet is Its beginning,
And the end of it passing tender."

The First said:
"I would bear the burden of the Love of Jesus,
Unaided, save by God, Who strengthens me.
Oh, wise are we, who know and who love
This noble Son of a Royal House."

The next said:

"Willingly would I love Him,
Knew I but how to begin;
But He is hidden from me.
Alas, I confess that it is I who am at fault;
For my heart is restless and distracted,
And I live in the midst of petty cares."

The Third said:

"He comes to me like One in utter holiness,
Showing me all beauty:
Anon He flies from me, like a fickle lover,
Taking all my joy with Him:
And I but follow after Him as best I can.
Unwise is he who rejoices in the day,
Before he has seen the ending of it

In a calm and peaceful eventide."

The Fourth said:

"The Love of Jesus has betrayed me,
And therein have I lost both head and heart;
Nor do I know to whom I can complain.
Fiercely He consumes me night and day,
Asking more than I can give,
Making me no fair return."

The Fifth said:

"I should be wrong were I to take it ill
That my wages were not paid beforehand.
Nor do I wonder thereat;
For often times it happens
That to him, who works but little,
There comes but little profit."

Thus spake the Sixth Beguine:

"What words are these?
And what are these demands?
Can Jesus cause us trouble?
Our sisters err
In grieving Him thus.
Their words are empty and foolish,
And fitter for their Confession."

The Seventh said:

"So great is the hunger of my soul,
That, had I all that God could give me,
Still were I unsatisfied:

And, if He give me not Himself,
I have no life in me.
Alas, no man can help or counsel me
In this my unquenchable longing."

The Eighth said:

"The Lord Jesus is a pure stream,
Whence all joy fulness flows forth:
I hold high festival with Him,
For He is mine, and I am His.
I cannot live without Him,
Who is my allotted Destiny;
And He is like a sweet nut to me,
Whose shell it were folly not to pierce,
For delicious is the Kernel of it.
Ah, were all Good within my choice,
I would choose Jesus for my God;
So greatly do I joy to be with Him"

The Ninth said:

"The Love of the Lord Jesus has deserted me:
I follow after Him
In strange and unaccustomed paths,
Erring continually.
All that I had before, now have I lost;
And the burden of my sorrow is grievous,
For He has stolen away my heart."

The Tenth said:

"The Love of Jesus is so fair,
That it has filled my soul.
Ever holds He a chalice to my lips,
Brimming with His generous wine.

Ah God ! how far greater will be my joy,
When He unveils His glorious Face,
And I drink deep of that precious wine.
Indeed they do wrong to slander Him."

The Eleventh said:

"I know not even if I have desire;
For I have lost myself
In a fathomless Unknowing.
I am swallowed up in Him; and His Mouth
Is as a bottomless Abyss,"
Whence there is no return."

The Twelfth Beguine said:

"Always to do well; such is my will,
For there is no idleness in love.
To live virtuously in utter faithfulness,
And, beyond all virtues, to contemplate the Face of God:
Here lies my treasure.
To behold the fair beauty of the Godhead;
To dissolve in His beloved Presence;
Ever to be intoxicated with His Love;
This is the Way of Perfection.
Let us still gather together,
Ever speaking of the joys of Heaven;
For this is the Perfect Life.
Our Heavenly Father has so loved us,
That He has sent and given to us His Son,
Who has redeemed us by His Death,
Wherein is our everlasting comfort.
In Him let us live,
And pray to our God, Who is in Heaven,
That we may fulfil His commandments,

To the everlasting Glory of His Name:
And that, in this Valley of Tears,
We may overcome the pains of hell,
And find our way into His Garden."

CHAPTER II

Shows the manner of the True Lovers of God.

LO, this is the estate of holy Beguines,
Who follow eagerly the path of virtue:
So was it in the days of old;
So is it still to-day.
But alas, that the glory is departed therefrom
Through unbelief and folly !

If you would live in utter faithfulness,
Then must your heart cleave fast to God
In love, and in all truth,
And with unfeigned simplicity.

Live gently and humbly in the midst of those
Who are hasty, and lightly moved to wrath;
Who are full of railings and bitterness, high-minded,
Easily offended, slow to pardon, an evil generation.
Self-willed are they, impatient and obstinate,
Wrathful, envious, pitiless,
Evildoers, cruel and unbridled.

This is not the way of the Beguines;
And these wicked men live not therein,
Nor even in the outward seeming of it.
Yet shall you suffer and endure them;
And God shall send His blessing on your life.

Would you learn who are the good men?
Watch them then in their outward lives, and in their Life Within.
All holiness comes from God
To those who live after His Commandments:
And they, who in their hearts despise the world,
Shall mount the steps of Heaven,
And shall be filled with the Grace of God,
Inasmuch as they follow His Counsels.
They, who have emptied themselves of the things of earth,
Shall be fulfilled with Love,
Which is as a great Weight in the scales,
Outweighing all earthly ties,
Prevailing over flesh and blood,
And speeding us towards every virtue.

They, who follow the way of Love,
Are the richest of all men living;
They are bold and frank and brave;
They have neither toil nor any care,
For the Holy Spirit bears all their burdens.

They seek no outward seeming;
They desire nothing that men value;
They affect no extravagance of behaviour.
They wish to be like other good people,
Obeying the ordinances of Holy Church
In virtuous and godly living.
Deeply they reverence all Her Sacraments,
For Thence come the Grace and Mercy of God, to dwell for ever with
them.

CHAPTER III

Shows the preparation required of him who wills to receive the Holy Sacrament.

WHEN he is about to receive the Holy Sacrament,
Given to us from God Himself,
Whence lives in him the Body of Our Lord,
Rightly honoured above and beyond all else,
Every good man shall enter into the Presence of Christ,
Opening his inmost heart before the Eternal Truth;
And shall examine himself, looking well into his life;
And weighing his worth and actions.
Then will he cry from the depths of a grieving heart; and say:
"Be pitiful to me, everlasting Love;
Deep is my sorrow.
I have sinned and done amiss from my childhood,
And have wasted all my opportunity.
Be merciful to me, O Lord, Who are full of mercy;
I am not worthy that You should come to me.
I have altogether lived in sin;
And nevermore shall I be healed,
Unless Your gentle Mouth shall comfort me,
And speak the Word of Consolation,
That comes out of Your Holy Hill."

CHAPTER IV

Shows God's answer to the Soul that is hungry for His Sacrament.

"O MAN, I have heard your prayer,
And all that is Mine to do, I will perform.
I will answer the grieving of your heart,
And in you will I work, according to your faith.
Be of good heart, bold, and undaunted,
And I will fulfil all your desire.
I will Myself be Food for you;

I will serve up the Feast, and I will be your Host:
Turn, turn wholly to Me.
My Flesh has been well prepared
Upon the Cross, for your redemption;
My Blood is warm and living,
Permeating body and soul.
Come, let us eat and drink together:
Think on My Passion and My Death,
And on My Everlasting Love;
Live in the thought of it, and you shall be at peace.
Beloved, I understand so well
Your eager longing for My Sacrament.
Behold, the Sacrifice of the Mass is all prepared;
And of it, if you are ready, you may, indeed, partake."

CHAPTER V

Shows in what manner the Soul makes answer to her God.

"O LORD, You measure all my desire,
And blessed be Your Name!
Gladly I partake of this Holy Sacrament,
A priceless gift,
Wherein I receive Your Holy Body,
Sweet and comfortable to me.
This is my Bread of Heaven,
And they who do not eat of it, have no Life in them.
This, too, is the Food of Angels,
Wherein is the delight of the wise.
The world, which knows not the taste of it, has other gifts to bring its
joy and sorrow.
O Lord, You do even condescend
That we should eat together;
And I strain and gasp in my desire for You ,
Yet can I not consume You .

The more I eat the fiercer is my hunger;
The more I drink the greater is my thirst;
And always have I more remaining over,
Than all men could consume.
You, O Lord, are a generous host,
And all that is consumed is paid for at Your Hands.
Eagerly I drink the Living Blood,
Flowing from Your Side and Holy Body,
Precious and Priceless.
So sweet is It in my mouth,
That I am as if intoxicated, caring not to hide it.
Lord, Your Blood is more precious
Than the juice of pomegranates.
Therewith will I fill all my vessels,
For I am bold and greatly daring,
And care nothing for the world without.
I am satiated, and yet I cease not from desiring.
That which I have, I cannot consume,
And all I have is nothing worth to me.
I follow after that which flies from me,
And, as I follow, my desire grows greater."

But that which manifests in mode cannot comprehend the Modeless:
"With-mode" and "Modeless" - these, indeed, are twain;
And nevermore shall they be one.
They abide for ever separate,
And neither can usurp the other's place.
True faith, and a true rule and mode of life,
Rightly are these held in honour:
For the ordinances of Holy Church
Rest in rule, and mode, and weight, and measure.

Let us live therefore in the Mode of reason
That we may attain, beyond the reason, to the Life of Contemplation.

CHAPTER VI

Shows a diversity of hindrances from true Contemplation.

MANY abide in error,

So that they come not to Contemplation, or to That which has no Mode.

Yet every hindrance is within themselves;

They are disquieted at heart,

Watching narrowly the deeds of others,

Concerning themselves with the cares of their friends and kinsmen
In which they have no part,

Careful for their own necessities,

Wherefore the riches of God are veiled from their eyes.

Foresight and discretion are good, But anxiety is folly.

A going out into the life of sense

Prevents the exercise of earnest realization:

They, who delight in the outer senses.

Will find no joy in the Life Within.

Such are idle and unready without,

And within they are ungoverned both in love and grief.

And while all this need not be mortal sin,

It hinders a man from coming into his own;

And they whose imaginings are full of other things,

Shall never attain to Contemplation or to That which has no Mode.

CHAPTER VII

Shows the means of coming to the Same.

IF you would enter on the Way of Contemplation,
You must take the path that leads Thereto.

The same is a conscience pure and undefiled,
A simple and well-regulated life,
A modest demeaning of yourself,
And temperance in outward things.

You must restrain the ungoverned desires of Nature,
Supplying her wants with wisdom and discretion,
Ministering, in the world without, to all who need, in love and mercy;
And, in the world within, emptying yourself of every vain imagining;
Gazing inward with an eye uplifted and open to the Eternal Truth;
Inwardly abiding in simplicity, and stillness, and in utter peace.

So shall you bring with you

A burning earnestness of Love,

A fiery Flame of devotion, leaping and
ascending into the very Goodness of God Himself;

A loving longing of the soul to be with God in His Eternity;

A turning from all things of self into the freedom of the Will of God,
With all the forces of the soul gathered into the unity of the Spirit;

Thanking and glorifying God, and loving and serving Him, in
everlasting reverence.

So lovingly following this life of virtue,

You may hope to come to the Life of Contemplation.

And, if you abide faithful to your God and to yourself,

Then, in the hour when He shall manifest Himself,

You shall behold His Face.

CHAPTER VIII

Shows the Nature of true Contemplation.

CONTEMPLATION is a knowing without mode,
For ever abiding above the reason.
Never can it descend therein,
And above it can the reason never ascend.
The shining forth of That which has no Mode is as a fair Mirror,
Wherein there shines the Everlasting
Light of God. It is without attributes,
And therein all the workings of the reason fail.

It is not God;
But it is that Light,
Whereby we see Him.
They, who walk in the Divine Light

Thereof, Discover in themselves the Unconfined.
That which has no Mode is above reason, not without it;
And it perceives all things without wonder.

Wonder is far beneath it,
And the Life of Contemplation is without wonder.
That which has no Mode sees, but knows not what is seen,
Since it is above all, and is neither This, nor That.

Now am I compelled to cease from rhyming,
That I may show forth clearly the way of Contemplation.

CHAPTER IX. PART 1

Shows how one comes to see the Light and to hear the Truth of God That speaks to the Soul.

IF you desire to unfold the Contemplative Life in yourself, you must enter within, beyond your sense-life, and, in that high point of your being, adorned with all the virtues of which I have spoken, looking to God with thanks and love and continual reverence, you must keep your thoughts bare and stripped of every sensible image, your understanding opened and lovingly uplifted to the Eternal Truth, and your spirit spread out in the sight of God as a Living Mirror, to receive His Everlasting Likeness.

Behold, therein appears a Light of the understanding, Which neither sense, nor reason, nor nature, nor the clearest logic can apprehend, but Which gives us freedom and confidence towards God.

It is nobler and higher than all that God has created in Nature; for It is the perfection of Nature, and above Nature, and is the clear-shining Intermediary between us and God.

Our thoughts, bare and stripped of images, are themselves the Living Mirror wherein there shines this Light.

And the Light requires from us that we should be like to and one with God in this Living Mirror of our bare thoughts; and so God lives in us with His Grace, and we live in Him by reason of our virtue and good deeds.

In this Living Mirror are we like to our Eternal Archetype, Which is God Himself; for we live a life conformable to the Everlasting Providence of God.

The Light flows forth in similitude, and indraws Itself in unity; which

we perceive, beyond the reason, in that high point of our understanding, which is bare and turned within.

And therein speaks the Truth of God within our spirit, and says:

"Behold Me as I behold you; and know Me as I know you. Love Me as I love you; delight in Me as I delight in you; and just as I am all yours, wholly and unreservedly, so would I that you should wholly and unreservedly be Mine.

From all Eternity have I seen you, before all Creation, in Me, and one with Me, and as I see Myself. Therein have I known you, loved you, called you, chosen you. I have created you in My Image and in My Likeness. I have adopted your nature, and therein have I imprinted My Archetypal Image, that you may be one with Me, without intermediary, in the Glory of My Father.

I have created My Soul, with all Its powers, and filled It with every good gift, in order that I might serve and obey My Father and your Father, My God and your God, in the humanity which is common to us both, with all My strength, and even to death.

And, out of My fulness of Grace and Mercy, have I filled your soul and your powers, in order that you may be like Me, and, in My strength and by My Gifts, may serve and thank and praise Our God to all Eternity, World without end."

CHAPTER IX. PART 2

Shows in what manner one comes, thereafter, to hear the Voice of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

LO, thus are we all one with God in our Eternal Archetype, Which is His Wisdom, Who has put on the nature of us all. And, although we are already one with Him Therein, by that putting on of our nature; we

must also be like God in grace and virtue, if we would find ourselves one with Him in our Eternal Archetype, Which is Himself. And thus was, and is, the Humanity of Our Lord Jesus Christ lifted up and made One with the Wisdom of God; and His Soul and all His Powers were filled, and are still filled, with the fulness of all good gifts.

And He is to us like a Living Fountain, Whence we receive all that we need.

And He Himself says:

"My Father has sent Me to live, as God and Man, for each one who desires Me.

My Well-beloved, chosen from all, behold how that I am yours without reserve. I have lived for you , taught you, trained you, and died for your sake. I have offered you to My Father with My Death, and I have paid your debt with My own Sacred Blood.

I have risen, glorious in Soul and Body, that you may arise in glory, at the Last Day, in soul and body, and may behold My Glory and the Glory of My Father for ever, world without end.

I have ascended to the right hand of My Father, above all choirs and hierarchies of men and angels; and I have prepared a place for each, according to his deserving.

And I shall come again, at the Last Day, in Glory, with My Angels and My Saints, to judge both good and evil according to their deserts and in utter justice.

Look well, beloved, what more I have done for you: I have given to you and left with you My Flesh and My Living Blood for Food and Drink; and, as is the strength of his desire, so can each one taste and know the abiding Heavenly Savour of it.

Your longing and your life of the Senses, these I have nourished and have filled with My Glorious Martyred Body.

Your love and your life of the Reason, these, too, I have nourished and have filled with My Spirit and with all My Gifts, and with the Merits, whereby I am pleasing to My Father.

Your Contemplation and the lifting up of your spirit, these, also, I have nourished and have filled with My Own Person, so that you live in Me, and I, God and Man, live in you, in the similitude of virtues, and in Oneness of fruition.

My Father and I have filled this world with Our Spirit, with Our good Gifts, and with Our Sacraments, in the measure in which each one has need and desire it.

O Man, behold, and see Who I am; how I have lived for you; what I have suffered for you; and that which I have promised you. Be thankful, and account to Me for all, to the utmost of your power. "

CHAPTER X. PART 1

Shows the answer of the loving Soul to her Lord.

"O LORD, be merciful to me, who am nothing, and can do nothing, without Your Help and Grace.

Indeed do I see, in the light of my nature, that You are Creator and Lord of Heaven and earth, and of all created things. I see and I believe, in the Christian Faith, all that belongs thereto; and my desire is in the fulfilling of Your Law and Your Commandments, every way, with all my power, and by Your Help and Grace.

And this is the duty of all Your members, and of every Christian man

who would be saved.

O Lord, You desire my spirit in the inward parts, that I may see You as You see me, and love You as You love me."

CHAPTER X. PART 2

Shows forth the First Mode of true Contemplation.

NOW, therefore, hear and understand;

To the good and inward man, who enters within himself, free and empty of all earthly things, opening and uplifting his heart reverently towards the Eternal Goodness of God, there is thrown wide the Heaven which was shut, and from the Face of Divine Love there blazes down a sudden Light, as it were a lightning-flash; and in that Light there speaks the Spirit of Our Lord, in this opened and loving heart, and says: "I am yours, and you are Mine: I dwell in you, and you dwell in Me."

In this meeting of the Light with the stirring of God, is so great a joy and delight of the soul and body in his uplifted heart, that the man knows not what has befallen him, nor how he may endure it. And this is called "The Song of Joy," which has no words, and which no man knoweth, save him who has conceived it in his heart.

And this it is which lives in the loving heart that is opened to God, and closed to all created things.

And thence comes "Joyfulness," and the same is a heartfelt love, and a burning flame of devotion, for ever reverently turned to God in thankfulness and praise.

And he who conceives this sweetness, who abides therein, and yet seeks therein his own delight, without thanking and praising God for

it, is utterly at fault.

This is the first and lowest mode, whereby God inwardly declares Himself in the Contemplative Life; and so I will show forth a homely parallel of it for those who have not experienced it.

Take then a mirror, curved like a bowl, and, having laid therein some dry and inflammable matter, hold it up to the rays of the sun. Then will the dry matter be enkindled and burn by reason of the heat of the sun and the curving of the mirror.

So, and in like manner, in your inward man, if you have your heart alive, and open, and reverently uplifted to God, the Light of His Grace will shine therein, will purify your conscience, and will burn up all your faults in the Fire of His Love.

Lo, this is the lowest mode of the Contemplative Life, which is followed in purity of heart, and in tender love, with thankfulness and praise, with devotion and longing, in the Presence of the Holy Majesty of God.

CHAPTER XI

Shows forth the Second Mode of true Contemplation.

HEREAFTER follows the Second Mode of the Contemplative Life.

They who are uplifted in simple purity of spirit by the love and reverence they bear towards God, stand with their faces open and unveiled before the Presence of His Majesty. And from the Face of the Father there shines forth a clear Light on the Souls whose thought is bare and stripped of images, uplifted above the senses and above similitudes, beyond and without reason, in high purity of spirit.

This Light is not God, but it is an intermediary between the seeing thought and God.

It is called a Ray of God or the Spirit of the Father, and herein God shows Himself simply, neither by differentiation, nor by the mode of His Persons, but in the unveiling of His Nature and Substance; and in this Light there speaks the Spirit of the Father in the uplifted thought, which is bare and stripped of images, saying: "Behold Me as I behold you."

Then the pure and single eyes are strengthened, by the inpouring of that clear Light of the Father, and they behold His Face, in a simple seeing, beyond reason and without consideration.

This Light and this Vision give to the contemplating spirit a conscious certainty that she sees God, so far as man may see Him in this mortal life.

Here, for your better understanding, I will set forth an analogy taken from the life of the senses.

If you stand in clear sunlight, turning your eyes from all considerations of form and colour, and from all things whereon the sun shines, and thereafter simply following with your gaze the rays of light coming from the sun, you will be led into that essence which is the sun itself.

And so, in like manner, if you follow the bright rays that stream from the Face of God on your clear gaze, they will lead you into the source of your created being, wherein you shall find no other thing but God alone.

CHAPTER XII

Shows forth the Third Mode of true Contemplation.

HEREAFTER follows the Third Mode which belongs to the Life of Contemplation.

This Mode is called "Speculatio," that is to say, A seeing in a mirror. For indeed, the understanding of him who is contemplating is as a living mirror, whereon the Father and the Son breathe their Spirit of Truth, so that the reason may be enlightened, and may realize, in modes, forms, images, and similitudes, all truth that can be realised.

But to that Mode whereby we see the Face of God beyond and without reason, in bare understanding and in thoughts stripped of all images, neither consideration nor reasoning can attain. For just as the Eagle, King of Birds, can, with his powerful sight, gaze steadfastly on the brightness of the sun, so do the weaker eyes of the bat fail and falter in the same.

The pure and single eye of the soul, uplifted, beyond and without reason, in a bare and simple vision, sees always the Face of the Father, as do the Angels who are our Ministers; for it has before it no other image than that of God Himself.

In that moment it beholds God and all things, so far as they are one with God, in a simple seeing, and therewith it is content; and the name of it is "Contemplatio," that is, the seeing of God in all simplicity.

And so, in like manner, the intellectual power of the soul is a living Mirror, wherein God dwells in Grace, and whereto He has given His Spirit of Truth. And, by His Light, the eye of the reason is enlightened, to recognise God and all His creatures in their forms and images and similitudes, so far as He is pleased to manifest them. And the Spirit of God commands the reason, which It has enlightened, to order and

govern the life of the senses after His Law and the ordinances of His Holy Church, in love and true discretion.

In the second place, he who has understanding and who has received from God the spirit of truth, shall walk before the Face of Our Lord, ruling and adorning his inward life with every virtue, according to the beloved will of God. And so may he hear that gentle voice of the Father, speaking in his spirit, and saying: "Look to Me; know Me as I know you. Behold Me from very close, What I am and Who I am."

At this invitation the soul and all the inward powers rejoice; and she desires, at the urging and inviting of God, to see with the eyes of her understanding opened and enlightened.

And then He shows Himself to the soul in the living Mirror of her intelligence, not as He is in His Nature, but in images and similitudes, and in the degree in which the enlightened reason can grasp and understand Him. And the wise reason, enlightened by God, sees clearly and without error, in images of the understanding, all that which she has heard of God, of faith, and of all truth, according to her desiring. But that Image which is God Himself, although It is held before her, she cannot comprehend, for the eyes of her understanding must fail before that Incomparable Light.

Yet because she is made wise by the spirit of Truth, so does she see God in the images of her understanding as power, truth, justice, goodness, and mercy, compassion, abundance, and loving-kindness 28, living faithfulness, consolation, and sweetness. She sees also the distinction of the Persons, that Each is God and Each alike Almighty in natural power, Unity in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, in Their nature fruitfulness and in Their essence pure repose, Each Person God, and the Godhead in Their Common Substance.

For the reason, which is enlightened by the Spirit of Truth, sees God in her mirror in as many modes, forms, and images as she can imagine,

and in all the ways that she desires.

And now this power of the understanding is invited and urged by God to see What and Who He is. And therefore cries the contemplating soul: "Lord, show us Your Face above images and similitudes, uncovered and unveiled; so shall we be blessed indeed, and it shall be sufficient for us."

And as the Spirit of Our Lord answers the enlightened reason, and says, " Behold Me, Who and What I am, the eye of the understanding is strengthened to see all that it desires, whereto it has been urged of God. That simple eye, with clear gaze in the Divine Light, sees plainly all that is God, and follows after Him, in her desire to know and to conceive Therein What and Who God is. But before the Face of Our Lord the reason, with all her considerations and distinctions, fails. And this power of the understanding is uplifted into that which is beyond all Modes, and its Seeing is modeless, being without manner, and it is neither thus nor thus, neither here nor there; for That, Which has no Mode, has enveloped all, and the vision is made high and wide.

It knows not, itself, where that is, which it sees, and it cannot come thereat; for its Seeing is modeless, and passes on beyond, forever and without return.

That which it apprehends, it cannot realise in full, nor wholly attain, for its apprehension is modeless and without manner, and therefore is it apprehended of God in a higher way than it can apprehend Him.

Lo, such a following of the way which is modeless, is intermediary between Contemplation in images and similitudes of the understanding, and unveiled Contemplation beyond all images, in the Light of God.

CHAPTER XIII

Shows forth the Fourth Mode of true Contemplation.

HEREAFTER follows the Fourth Mode, which is the perfection of the true Contemplative Life in all the Modes that belong thereto. This Mode is called the uplifted and illuminated Exercise of love, according to the beloved Will of God. It is born of God together with the observances of it.

Our Lord says in His Gospel, Except a man be born again of the Holy Spirit, he cannot see, nor enter into the Kingdom of God.

The Holy Spirit is a Living Fountain in which those spirits that love are baptised, and wherein they live and dwell; and He pours into our living spirit the water of His Grace, and therein are we purified from all our sins; and He dwells in us with His Grace, and we dwell in Him by virtue and holy living.

And from the Spirit of Our Lord, Whom we liken to a Living Fountain, Wherein we live above our created being, spring rivulets of the living water of His Grace, and streams that scatter in our spirits His innumerable Gifts; and so He lives and dwells within us. And He purifies our spirit with His Finger, that is, with His Spirit, and, speaking to us, says: "Love Me as I love you, and have loved you from all Eternity."

This voice and that inward beseeching are so terrible to experience, that all is overthrown in a tempest of love, and the powers of the soul make answer and say one to another: "Let us love this fathomless Love, which has loved us from all Eternity."

The heart expands in desire, and all the powers of the senses follow after, in the realisation of love towards God.

This living soul, with true intention, with inward recollection, with forgetfulness and contempt of all that can impede or hinder it from the love of Our Lord, passes on beyond itself; and the enlightened intelligence and the will that is free go forward with thanks, and praise, and reverence, before the face of the Eternal Love.

All that is born of God is God and Spirit. It is God with God, one Love, and one Life in His Eternal Manifestation. It is also spirit and like to God by grace and a loving cleaving to Him. It is holy, and strong, and free, and triumphant over all, in the observances of love.

And between the being one with God in Love, and the being like to God in grace, is the sphere of loving observance in every Mode; for God touches and purifies our Spirit, and requires our love, as He loves us.

Now His Love is measureless, for It is Himself, but our love has a measure, and so we cannot fulfil all that His Love demands of us; but we fail in weakness, and then, before the Face of His Love, our love becomes modeless and without manner.

Love is neither cold nor hot, neither dark nor light, neither food nor drink, and there is nothing in the world that one can compare with Love.

But the Love of God towards us is a stirring and purifying of the Spirit; whereby He distributes His graces and His gifts to each of us, according to his need for the life of virtue.

CHAPTER XIV. PART 1

Tells of the Four Modes of Loving, and shows forth the -first Three Modes of it.

THERE are four Modes of Love, wherein all holiness abides. The First Mode is of command, and it belongs to the Friends of God.

The Second is of convenience, and it belongs to those uplifted spirits who live after the counsels of God. The Third Mode is neither of command nor of convenience, and it belongs to the Sons of God, who suffer His action in bare love.

The Fourth Mode is to be one with God in Love.

Hear now and understand: The First Mode of Love is to fear and to love God above all things; to obey Him and the Holy Church in Christian Faith, in goodness and in virtue.

Such are the Friends of God, who are pleasing to Him in the lowest Mode whereby it is possible to live in Him.

Hereafter follows the Second Mode of Love, wherein we live in God, in Spirit and in truth. Herein the good man rather directs his loving intention towards God than does good works for His sake in the world without: and so is he ever moved and urged by the Spirit of the Lord to greater love. And the more he loveth, the more is he so moved.

Wherefore he comes to feel that which is blessed beyond all modes, and that is to love after no manner.

Here also, and in this wise, does he become a pure spirit, cleaving to God with a love that is modeless; and he empties himself continually, until he attains to the repose of being.

Thereafter feels he new stirrings, and again he empties himself, for all his strength fails him in a love that is modeless: And this it is to love God and to be loved of Him. For no man understands what Love is in Itself, but such are Its workings: Which gives more than one can take, and asks more than one can pay.

This urgency of Love is sometimes felt in the heart, as a burning fire of longing in the soul, a disturbance and a restlessness in the body, and in the spirit a hungry and consuming greed, which devours the workings of the spirit in a simple emptiness of being. Lo, there begins an intellectual gazing and a loving inclination in a sweet atmosphere of bliss, where the Modeless Love is perfected.

For this intellectual gazing and this loving inclination are two heavenly pipes, sounding without need of tune or notes: they go always forward in that everlasting life, without digression or return, keeping in harmony and concord with all the Holy Church; for the Holy Spirit gives the wind that sings in them. And they are intermediary between the Love that is Modeless, and the Love that is bare and empty of all.

Hereafter follows the Third Mode in an uplifted and enlightened love in the Divine Light.

In this mode are spirits empty and stripped of all, uplifted above all action in a bare understanding and love. They labour no more, for the Spirit of the Lord labours in them, and they are, as it seems, themselves grace and love; and they are called the Sons of God, because they are dead to themselves in Him, and have given up their own will to His beloved Will.

Their life is hid with Christ in God, and they become, wholly and anew, born of the Holy Ghost, chosen Sons of the Love of God, and beyond grace and all the actions of it, they again and again annihilate and dissolve themselves in Love; for they are God-formed, and become

transformed and super-formed by the Spirit of Our Lord; just as the glowing iron is super-formed and made one with the fire.

As much as is iron, so much is fire; and as much as is fire, so much is iron; yet the iron does not become fire, nor the fire iron; but each retains its substance and its nature. So, likewise, the spirit of man does not become God, but is God-formed, and knows itself breadth and length and height and depth; and, as far as God is God, so far is the loving spirit made one with Him in love .

CHAPTER XIV. PART 2

Shows forth the Fourth Mode of Loving.

AND thus the Fourth Mode is a state of emptiness, made one with God in bare love and in Divine Light, free and empty of all the observances of love, above actions, and enduring a pure and simple love, which consumes and annihilates in itself the spirit of a man, so that he forgets himself, and knows neither himself nor God, nor any creature, nor aught else but Love alone, which he tastes and feels and possesses in simple emptiness.

He feels himself one Breadth with Love, Which is measureless, comprehending all things, and Itself for ever remaining incomprehensible.

He sees himself made one with the eternal Length, which is immovable, without beginning or ending, going before and following after all created things.

He realises himself as uplifted in one Height with God, Who rules and governs in Heaven and on earth, and over all creation.

He sees himself also as Depth, and uplifted in his super-being, which is the Being of God.

There he finds himself, with God and all His saints, one fathomless bliss, which, being natural to God, to us is super-natural.

The same is above all and beneath all, being the void foundation that upholds without a base both God and all created things. Henceforth it is known only by its own being; and it is to God a quiet and essential knowing, and to us a non-knowledge that is beyond our apprehension. When we know and understand, then are we blessed and made one with God in love; but where our knowledge fails, there are we in the bliss of rest with God, above our created being, far outside and beyond our spirit, abroad in our super-natural blessedness, and in the fathomless abyss that is the Being of God, and that shall never more be disturbed by Him or any creature

And so we realise a distinction and a differentiation according to our reason, between God and the Godhead, between action and repose.

The fruitful nature of the Persons, of Whom is the Trinity in Unity and the Unity in Trinity, ever works in a living differentiation. But that Simple Being of God, according to the nature of it, is an Eternal Repose of God and all created things; wherein we all, according to our super-nature, enjoy without differentiation a fathomless bliss, which is natural to God alone and to us super-natural; wherein we are above our created being, far outside and beyond our spirit, abroad in our super-natural blessedness, in the abyss which is henceforth known only by its own being.

And although we are all, in our super-nature, above our created being, with God in eternal rest and inaction; we are also one with God in the Fruitful Trinity of Persons, living and working beyond all created being.

We understand that we are One in Eternal Life with our Heavenly Father, Who is our Origin, and has created us.

We find ourselves also One in living Truth with His Son, Who is our Archetype, in Whom we live a higher life than our own, each distinct in creation, foreordained and foreknown in His Eternal Wisdom.

We realise ourselves also in the Holy Spirit, That has loved us from all Eternity and has desired all virtues for us, and that we are One with Him in Love.

He sends us forth full of grace and gifts, to fulfil His Will in all goodness and virtue, to live after His beloved Will, and to follow after Christ to the utmost of our understanding and our power.

Just as the Father has sent us His Son Jesus Christ, to serve us, to live for us, and to die for our sake, so does Jesus Christ His Son send and give to us His Spirit, that we may live one with another in love, and in all goodness and virtue. So are we His disciples if we keep His law and His commandments, abiding in mutual love and loyalty to one another: so can we grow and perfect ourselves in grace, in virtue, and in likeness to the Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ; and so grows in us from more to more the Grace of God, and the hunger and thirst for virtue and for truth, as I have already shown in speaking of the beginning of the Life of Holiness

CHAPTER XV

Shows forth the operation of the Spirit of God within us.

HENCEFORWARD, as the Spirit of the Lord sends us forth to live good and virtuous lives, so He draws us also to inward observances, entreating and commanding us to thank and praise and love and honour God for ever and ever, as I have taught aforetime.

And the more we know and love Him, the more we delight therein; and in this wise we pass beyond the life of the senses.

The Spirit of Our Lord draws us within and shows us the Face of Love. He frees and empties us of ourselves, our joys and sorrows, and of all

created things, and gives us the fulness of His grace, teaching us a more perfect practice of love, that is a mutual beholding

between us and God, a mutual tasting and knowing, a pleasing and delighting, and a dissolving and overflowing in love. For God gives Himself to us, but we cannot apprehend Him. From Him flow forth in us His scattered gifts, in our soul and body and heart, in our senses and in all our powers. We taste and feel the comfort and the sweetness of His Love. He eats and drinks with us, and we with Him, beyond the understanding of our senses.

The more we eat, the fiercer is our longing; and the more we drink, the greater is our thirst; but it is Love that pays for all.

The gifts of God consume and nourish us, for they are themselves both food and drink. They fill up and overflow all our vessels; and yet there remains with us a mysterious hunger and thirst, in which we long and gasp for that good thing that is Love itself, beyond all gifts and measureless.

This is the Mode in which the Spirit of God gives Himself to us, could we but apprehend Him.

He draws us also within Himself, and entreats us to be one in love with Him.

For all the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ must needs come to pass, and He desired and prayed His Heavenly Father, that we should be One with Them, just as He, in His Humanity, is One with God in love, not by nature, but by grace. And He desired also that we should be where He is, that we might see the glory and the honour given Him of His Heavenly Father.

In these words you will especially observe six points, wherein is found the most intimate communion between us and God.

CHAPTER XVI. PART 1

Further tells of the six Points wherein is the highest communion between God and man, and shows forth the first four Points.

THE first is in what manner we are One with God in Love and in the Holy Spirit.

The second point is in what manner we are separate from God in grace and virtue.

The third is in what manner we make ourselves One with God beyond ourselves.

The fourth point is in what manner we abide in ourselves and cannot pass beyond.

The fifth point is in what manner we are in ourselves hungry and thirsty, and yet cannot apprehend God.

The sixth is in what manner, beyond ourselves, we are satisfied and fulfilled and blessed in Eternal Love.

Observe particularly these six points, for I pass on to their unravelling and explanation.

Behold, we are one life in God, in our eternal Archetype, beyond our created nature. We are also one Humanity, which God has created, and one Human nature, wherein He has impressed the image of His Trinity; and which He has assumed from very Love, so that He with us is God and Man. And this have all men alike received, both the just and the unjust; for this is the nobility and grandeur of our nature. Yet therewith are we neither holy nor blessed.

But when grace and virtue uplift us into the still and empty repose of our spirit, wherein God ruleth, there we find ourselves One with Him and with all saints, and there are we all fulfilled and perfected in the Love which is God, the beginning and the ending 38 of our Eternal Life.

And next, we are apart from God, and cannot become one, but abide always in separation whenever we remain in ourselves, each in his own personal life. There has God made us like to Himself in bare nature, after the mode of our highest powers; and although this likeness which God has given to us all in our common nature makes us neither holy nor blessed, yet grace and the gifts of God which descend from on high on us, give us a life of virtue, and so God lives in us, and we in Him.

And thus are we, above our nature, like to God, and so we abide like Him in grace and glory.

Hereafter follows the third Point, as to the manner in which we are, beyond ourselves, One with God; and, in ourselves abide in perpetual likeness to Him.

And this is taught us by the stirring of God, enlightening our reason, sending us forth with the entreaty that we should lead a life of virtue, and drawing us in with the entreaty that we should be One with Him.

And if we render an equal obedience to this double entreaty, we live according to the beloved Will of God.

This stirring is an eternal and living intermediary between us and God, of such a kind that we abide in perpetual likeness within ourselves, and, beyond all likeness, One with God.

Hereafter follows the fourth Point:

By virtue of the stirring of the Holy Ghost, we are altogether moved within, and we conceive an insatiable desire and a fierce craving, which neither reason nor any created thing can restrain or satisfy. For the Spirit of God urges our spirit, that we, wholly outside ourselves, should yield ourselves to Him; and, wholly within ourselves, should grasp and apprehend Him; and these two things are impossible for us. For we are not able to come out of ourselves in God, and to lose our created nature, and so we must for ever dwell, as created beings, apart from God; for no creature can become God, nor can God become creature.

And we can neither apprehend God within ourselves, Who is measureless Breadth, nor can we follow after Him nor tell of Him, Who is endless Length, fathomless Depth, and Height above all that He has created.

Yet that which is impossible for us is quite possible for Him; since, when our spirit and all its powers fail at their labour, the Spirit of Our Lord works beyond them and their works; and we are wrought on Thereby, enduring His workings beyond our workings; and in so enduring Him, we apprehend Him, and become apprehended by Him.

In our own labour we fail always, and therein we cannot apprehend Him; but, where He works and we endure, there, by that enduring, we apprehend Him beyond all our labour. And this is the apprehension of God after an in-apprehensible manner, by enduring without apprehending Him

CHAPTER XVI. PART 2

Shows forth the fifth and sixth Points.

HEREAFTER follows the fifth Point that wholly perfects us in the observances of Eternal Love, as I have said before; wherein we, beyond all our labour, are wrought on by the Spirit of Our Lord.

There are we emptied of ourselves and of every creature, and made One with God in Love. But between us and God this unity for ever ceaselessly renews itself, since the Spirit of God, overflowing and indrawing, touches and stirs our spirit, urging us to live according to the beloved Will of God, and to love Him after His deserving.

This stirring, that mediates between us and God, we can never pass beyond; and what that stirring is in its essence, and what Love is in itself, we can never know. Where we exhaust ourselves in labour, there we begin anew, since the gifts of God do not allow us to be idle. The outflowing of the Holy Spirit makes us rich, and fills the vessels of our craving with divine gifts, with Everlasting Food, and with Spiritual Drink: and yet there remains with us a hunger and a thirst and an eternal longing to follow after and to attain to Him Who is measureless.

And this is impossible for us. And therefore must we strive, abiding for ever at our labour in hunger and thirst.

And although we feed on God, night and day craving and desiring Him with open mouth, yet can we not apprehend Him, nor consume and make Him wholly ours; but we must for ever be striving, since here, where we have no abiding city, hunger and thirst and eternal longing cannot be silenced.

And just as God sends us forth, with all His gifts, to live according to His beloved Will, so His Spirit draws us within, to love Him after His

deserving.

And His deserving urges our spirit to love Him without measure; for He is Himself measureless, and He loves us with Himself and as He is Himself; and His Love is terrible, drawing inwards, and consuming all that it toucheth. And we experience these things beyond the reason, and there our love is modeless and without manner; for we cannot know the way of answering His Love, a Love so eager that It devours and consumes in Itself all that approaches It.

Our love must fail before this Love; we cannot defend ourselves; since here our love becomes quite bare and empty and inactive.

And the Love of God is a Consuming Fire, which draws us out of ourselves and swallows us up in Unity with God, where we are satisfied and overflowing, and with Him, beyond ourselves, eternally fulfilled.

Yet in ourselves we abide for ever hungry, where we live in separation, loving the law of obedience.

And thus are we, beyond ourselves, for ever satisfied, with God in Unity; and, in ourselves, we are famished, where we love and live in righteousness.

And this it is to be satisfied and hungry, to work and to enjoy, and to live in truth.

Beyond this is the sixth Point that is Fruition in itself. This Fruition of God, and supernatural fruition of all of us who are One with Him in Love, is a still and glorious and essential Oneness beyond the differentiation of the Persons; where there is neither an outpouring nor an indrawing of God; but the Persons are still, and One in Fruitful Love, which is their calm and glorious Unity. There all is fathomless rest and fruition and joy, and there all loving spirits, according to their

super-nature, are one with God in a blessed Fruition without differentiation.

This Fruition of God is a Oneness of Persons, bare Repose, overflowing Joy, fathomless Bliss, the Crown and Recompense of Love made perfect in Eternity.

Where we are made one with God in love, by His grace and our good actions, there each receives his special grace and glory, according as he deserves and has earned in grace with the help of God; and there are we all differentiated, and each of us receives grace, merit, rank, and praise, according to the just and wise ordinance of God, our Super-nature.

But where we are One with God, without intermediary, beyond all separation, there is God our Fruition and His own, in an Eternal and Fathomless Bliss.

You must know that, although, in our way of seeing, we give God many Names, His Nature is One in Three different Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One Fruitful Nature in a Trinity of Persons.

Lo, thus are we to understand, this are we to experience, and hereafter are we to live, and hereto God created and called every one of us that is born of the seed of Adam. But heathens and Jews and all unbelievers who despise that Call of God, are therefore accursed; and those bad Christians who live in a state of mortal sin, and hypocrites passing for good men and so living and dying, are alike reprobate and condemned of God. Yet Christian men who have been baptised in the Blood of Christ are called and summoned to the Eternal Joy of God.

But if we would be received and chosen for that, we must be clothed with the Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, made one with Him, in ourselves, by virtue of His Grace and our good actions, so that He lives in us and we in Him, in the measure of His Grace and the holiness of

our lives. And, beyond ourselves, we must also be One with God in Love and Fruition.

So are we One with Him; and so are we One Love and One Fruition with Him, fulfilled in Everlasting Bliss. And between this likeness which is in us and this Oneness which is in God, there mediates the spark of the soul, which is the Light and Fire of the Holy Spirit. The Light shows us that we are One with God in Love and in Fruition, and like to Him by His Grace and our virtue; and the Fire burns and consumes all unlikeness in us and holds us continually in communion and in love, giving us all comfort and a foretaste of the Glory of God, and assuring us of our Eternal Bliss.

They who understand this, who have experience of it, and who live thereafter, these are the Chosen People.

May the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, One True God in Three Persons, Who is our Reward and Crown, so grant to all of us. Amen.