

are not always great sins in one who is in a state of charity. You must therefore guard against them at all costs. The soul cannot experience true inward joy until the body has been largely deprived of its sensual pleasures. So if you desire to attain purity of heart, you must resist unreasonable bodily desires, but you should not attack their natural origin, such as hunger, which you are bound to feel and to satisfy at proper times. You must strengthen yourself against it by taking the medicine of food in the same way as you would take the proper medicine against a bodily ailment, so that you may serve God in greater freedom of body and soul.

You can be sure that unless he is given abundant grace, anyone who wishes to devote himself to the spiritual life will find himself greatly hindered in his attempt to attain spiritual knowledge and experience if he deliberately allows himself to suffer the pangs of hunger; and if he goes to extremes in fasting, it will be his own fault if he suffers from stomach complaints, headache and similar bodily ailments. For bodily pain, whether due to penance, illness or overwork, does not always prevent fervour towards God in devotion, but often increases it; nevertheless, I am sure that it prevents fervour of love in contemplation, because this cannot be acquired or experienced of set purpose, and is only possible in great tranquillity of body and soul. Therefore act reasonably in all that you do, and treat your body sensibly; then let God send what He pleases, whether it be health or sickness. Accept everything with cheerfulness, and do not willingly complain against God.

CHAPTER 76: *Remedies against indiscreet eating and drinking*

ACCEPT my advice, then, and take your food as it comes; make reasonable provision for it if necessary, and take it cheerfully as you need it. But beware lest greed accompanies

need, and avoid excess as well as deficiency of food. And if, when you have fed, your conscience warns you that you have eaten too much or too little, and you become troubled or discouraged on that account, lift up your heart to our Lord Jesus, confessing yourself a wretched creature, and asking His forgiveness. When you have done this, the more shortly the better, do not trouble yourself any further about it. And do not strain yourself in an effort to destroy these impulses completely; it is not worth your while, for you will never succeed. Turn instead to some other occupation, physical or spiritual, as you feel disposed, so that you may make greater progress in other virtues such as humility and charity.

You can be certain that anyone who directs all his desires and efforts to nothing except humility and charity, and is always longing to acquire them, will by so doing grow in all the other virtues such as chastity and abstinence, although he may give them little thought at the time. He will grow stronger in them in a single year than he would do in seven without this desire, although he were to strive continually against gluttony, lust, and the like, and scourge himself daily from dawn to dusk.

CHAPTER 77: *How the ardent desire and pursuit of humility and charity enable a man the sooner to acquire all other virtues*

ACQUIRE humility and charity, then, and if you devote all your efforts to this end, you will be fully occupied. If you acquire them, they will be an inward rule and guide, so controlling your food, drink, and other bodily needs that you will need no advice from anyone. You will have no doubts or fears, nor will you be troubled by anger, depression, lust, or folly, and you will enjoy the peace of an easy conscience and a tranquil mind. I have said more than I intended on this subject, but act

on my advice if you can, and I know that God will prosper your efforts.

From what I have said you may now see in part how seriously this image hinders your progress. The Gospels describe how Abraham spoke to the rich man in the depths of Hell: *Chaos magnum inter nos et vos firmatum est, ut hi qui volunt transire ad nos non possint, neque inde hic transire* (Luke xvi, 26). There is a great gulf – that is to say, a thick darkness – between us and you, so that we cannot come to you, nor you to us. This dark image in your soul and mine may also be called a great gulf, because it prevents us from coming to Abraham, that is Jesus, and it prevents Him from coming to us.

CHAPTER 78: *On the five bodily senses*

RIGHT your lamp and see the five windows in this image through which sin enters into your soul. As the prophet says: *Mors ingreditur per fenestras nostras* (Jer. ix, 21). Death comes in at the windows. These windows are the five senses, through which your soul, contrary to its true nature, goes out and seeks its pleasure and support in earthly things. Through the eye it looks for strange and beautiful things, and through the ear new and wonderful things, and so with the other senses. By employing these faculties deliberately and without discretion, in vain pursuits, the soul is greatly hindered in the exercise of its inward and spiritual faculties. So you must close and shut these windows, and only open them when necessary. This would not be very difficult once you clearly understood the nature of your soul and its potential beauty were it not stifled under the black influence of this vile image.

CHAPTER 79: *How lack of knowledge causes the soul to seek outward pleasures through the five senses*

BECAUSE you do not understand your own soul, you neglect your inner life and seek outward consolations like a creature without reason. In Holy Scripture God says to a chosen soul: *Si ignoras te, O pulchra inter mulieres, egredere et abi post vestigia gregum sodalium tuorum, et pascere haeedos tuos* (Cant. i, 8). O fairest of women, if you do not know yourself, go out and follow in the footsteps of your companions' flocks, and feed your kids. As if to say: O soul, beautiful by nature, made in the likeness of God but frail as a woman in your body because of original sin, since you do not know yourself and do not understand that your inward delight should be in the Food of Angels, you wander out in your bodily senses seeking satisfaction and pleasure like a beast of your flock. As a result of this fare, your thoughts and affections are unclean like goats.

CHAPTER 80: *How the soul should seek its needs inwardly from Jesus, and not from outward things*

IT is a shame to act in this way, so return home to yourself and remain there. Do not wander abroad begging for the food of swine. If you still wish to be a beggar, beg inwardly of your Lord Jesus, for He is rich indeed, and is more ready to give than you to ask. Do not wander about like a beast from the flock any longer, or like a worldly person who has not pleasure in anything except his bodily senses. If you do this, your Lord Jesus will supply all your wants. He will take you into His wine cellar and allow you to taste of His wines, for He has many casks from which to choose. Thus in Holy Scripture a chosen soul

THE LADDER OF PERFECTION

speaks with joy of our Lord: *Introduxit me rex in cellam vinariam* (Cant. ii, 4). The king led me into his wine-cellar. In other words: When I forsook the drunkenness of bodily desire and worldly pleasure, which are like wormwood, and sought the king of all bliss, the Lord Jesus led me in. He first led me into myself, so that I might see and know myself; then He brought me into His cellar, transporting me out of myself into Him, and He gave me to taste of His wine, which is His own spiritual sweetness and heavenly joy. These are not my own words, wretched sinner that I am, but the words of the Spouse of Christ in Holy Scripture. I quote them in order that you may withdraw your soul from outward things, and follow her example as closely as you can.

CHAPTER 81: *How the windows of the imagination need to be closed, as well as those of the senses*

YOU may say that you are already doing this. You see and hear nothing of worldly affairs, and you do not employ your bodily senses more than necessary. This is why you are enclosed. If you are indeed doing this, you have closed a large window in this image, but you are not yet safe, because you have not closed the hidden openings of your imagination. Although you cannot see me with your eyes, you can still see me in your imagination, and the same applies to all material things. So if you deliberately allow yourself to consider the vanities of this world, or to think of comfort and ease, then although your soul may remain within you as far as the bodily senses are concerned, it is in fact lured far away by these vain fancies.

You may perhaps ask whether it is any great sin for a soul to consider such things, either with the senses or in the imagination. My answer is that I do not think that you should ask such a question, for anyone who truly desires to love God does not

BOOK ONE

enquire whether one sin is greater than another. He regards anything that hinders him from loving God as a great sin, and nothing as sinful except what is evil and obstructs his love of God. And what is sin but separation from God or neglect of Him? I do not say that an obstacle of this kind will be so dangerous to him as a mortal or venial sin, nor do I deny that he can distinguish between mortal and venial sin, and especially avoid the former.

CHAPTER 82: *When the use of the senses or imagination is mortal sin, and when venial*

NEVERTHELESS, I shall answer your question more fully, because your wish for guidance impels me to say more than I had originally intended. Our Lord says in the Gospel: *Homino quidam fecit coenam magnam et vocavit multos. Et misit servum suum hora coenae dicere invitatis ut venissent. Primus dixit: Villam emi; rogo te, habe me excusatum. Secundus dixit: Joga boum emi quinque, et eo probare illa. Et tertius dixit: Uxorem dixi, et ideo non possum venire* (Luke xiv, 16-20). A man made a great supper and invited many guests, and sent his servant at supper-time to those who were invited. The first excused himself from coming because he had bought a farm; the second also excused himself because he had bought five yoke of oxen and was going to try them; the third, because he had married a wife. Setting aside the first and the last, I will comment on the man who bought the oxen. These five yoke of oxen represent the five senses which we have in common with animals like the ox. Now the man who was invited to the supper was not rebuked because he bought the oxen, but because he went to try them and therefore could not come. Similarly, I say that to possess these senses and use them as necessary is not sinful, but if you go to try them by taking vain pleasure in creatures, this is sinful.

And if you choose that pleasure as the final joy and satisfaction of your soul, and wish for no happiness beyond such worldly vanity, this is mortal sin. For you choose this pleasure as your god, and you will therefore be excluded from the supper. Saint Paul forbade us employ our senses in this way when he said: *Non estis post concupiscentias vestras*. You shall not indulge your lusts or deliberately pursue pleasures. And anyone who is already guilty of mortal sins will not escape mortal sin in this respect, although he does not realize it. But I trust that this does not apply to you. Nevertheless, if through frailty you take pleasure in such vanities through the senses, but despite this keep yourself in charity in other respects, not choosing such pleasure as the ultimate satisfaction of your soul but always desiring God above all things, then this sin is venial, and its guilt is greater or less according to circumstances. You will not be excluded from this supper because of such venial sins, but you will not be able to enjoy the delights of this supper during this life unless you make every effort to resist these venial sins. For although venial sins do not destroy charity, they undoubtedly lessen its fervour and our feeling of it in the soul.

CHAPTER 83: *How a man or woman vowed to the life of religion should conduct themselves toward visitors*

YOU may say that you cannot avoid hearing about worldly matters because all kinds of people often come to talk with you, and sometimes tell unedifying tales. I answer that conversation with your fellow-men cannot do you any great harm, and is sometimes helpful if you employ it wisely, for in this way you may test the reality of your love towards your fellow-men, whether it is great or small. Like all other Christians, it is your duty to have a true love for your fellows, and when possible to show this love in practice as well as you are able. And although

you are an enclosed anchoress and unable to leave your cell to seek opportunities of helping your fellow-men by acts of mercy, you are still bound to love them all in your heart, and to show clear signs of this love to all who come to you. So when someone wishes to speak to you, whoever it may be, and you have no idea who and what he is, or why he comes, always be ready and willing to find out what he wants. Do not be aloof, or keep him waiting a long time. Think how ready and glad you would be if an angel came from heaven to speak to you. Be equally ready and willing to speak to your fellow-Christian when he visits you, for until you have asked him, you do not know who he is, why he comes, or what he may want of you or you of him. And although you may be at prayer and reluctant to abandon it, thinking that it is not proper to leave God in order to speak to man, I do not think you would be right in this instance, for if you are wise, you will not leave God by so doing. You will find Him, possess Him, and see Him as fully in your fellow-man as in prayer, but it will be in a different way. If you have a true love for your fellow-men, it will be no hindrance to your prayer if you talk with them discreetly, and I think that your discretion should be exercised in this way. When someone comes to you, ask him humbly what he wants. If he comes to tell you his troubles and receive comfort, give him a ready hearing and allow him to say what he wishes to ease his heart. When he has ended, comfort him as kindly and lovingly as you can, but do it briefly. If he then proceeds to tell idle tales or gossip about other people's doings, make little comment and do not encourage him: he will soon get tired of it and depart. Should one of the clergy come to instruct you, respect his office and listen to him humbly. If his words are helpful, ask any questions you wish, but do not presume to instruct him: it is not proper for you to instruct a priest except in necessity. If his words afford little help, answer little and he will soon take his leave. And should anyone come to bring you a gift, seek

your advice, or receive instruction, speak kindly and humbly to them all. Do not rebuke anyone for their faults; it is not your responsibility unless you happen to know the person well and are sure that he will take it from you. In short, if you think that your advice will be of spiritual service to your neighbour, say what you will if he will listen. Otherwise keep silence, and people will soon cease to trouble you. This is my advice; do better if you can.

CHAPTER 84: *How the limbs of this image in the soul, defiled by the seven deadly sins, can be destroyed*

FROM what I have said, you may now realize how dark this image is; not that I have described it fully, for I cannot. Nevertheless, from what little I have said, you can see more if you look carefully. But you may say: 'How do you know that I bear within me such an image as you describe?' In reply I quote the words of the prophet: *Inveni idolum mihi* (Hosea xii, 8). That is, I have found within me a false image, which men call an idol, horribly disfigured and deformed by the wickedness of all the sins of which I have spoken. These sins have drawn me away from purity of heart and perception of spiritual virtues, and plunged me into bodily cravings and worldly vanities too numerous to mention. For this I am truly repentant, and I beg for mercy. And because of this inward sorrow which I feel more keenly than I can say, I am in a better position to tell you about your own image. For we all spring from Adam and Eve, who were clothed in the skins of beasts, as Holy Scripture says: *Fecit Dominus Adae et uxori eius tunicas pellificas* (Gen. iii, 21). God made clothes of skins for Adam and his wife, as a sign that for his sin he was reduced to the level of the beasts. And we are all born in this animal clothing, which conceals and disfigures our true likeness.

CHAPTER 85: *The limbs of this image of sin*

THIS is an ugly image to look at. Its head is pride, for pride is the first and principal sin. As the wise man says: *Initium omnis peccati superbia* (Ecclesi. x, 15). Pride is the beginning of all sin. The back part is covetousness; as Saint Paul says: *Quae retro sunt obliuiscens, in anteriora me extendo* (Phil. iii, 13). I will forget all worldly things that are behind me, and reach forward to eternal things. The breast, in which is the heart, is envy, which is not a bodily sin but comes from the devil. As the wise man says: *Invidia diaboli mors introiit in orbem terrarum. Inimicitiae illam domnes qui ex parte eius sunt*. Through the devil's envy death came into the world, and all who are of his party follow him in it. The arms of this image are anger, for a man gives vent to his anger with his arms, contrary to Christ's commandment in the Gospel: *Si quis percussit te in unam maxillam, praebet illi et alteram* (Matt. v, 39). If a man strikes you on one cheek, you are not to strike back at him, but offer him the other. The belly of this image is gluttony, as Saint Paul says: *Esca ventri, et venter escis; Deus hunc et has destruet* (1 Cor. vi, 13). Food for the belly, and the belly for food: God will destroy both the belly and the food. That will be at the end of all things, when God restores His chosen and judges the reprobate. His legs are lust, of which Saint Paul says: *Non exhibeatis membra vestra iniquitatis ad peccatum* (Rom. vi, 13). You shall not yield your limbs, and especially your secret parts, to be the means of sin. The feet of this image are sloth, and so the wise man tells the soul to bestir itself to good works. *Discurrte, festina, suscita amicum tuum* (Prov. vi, 3). Bestir yourself to good works quickly; make haste, for time is passing, and rouse your friend, who is Jesus, by devout prayer and meditation. Now you know about the limbs of this image.

CHAPTER 86: *Of what the image of Jesus and the image of sin consist*

THIS is not the image of Jesus. It is more like the image of the devil, for the image of Jesus consists of virtues – humility, perfect love, and charity. But this image and its limbs consist of a false and carnal love of self. Both you and all men, whoever they may be, bear this image inwardly until it is partly destroyed by the grace of Jesus. David seems to refer to this in the psalms: *Veruntamen in imagine pertransit homo; sed et frustra conturbatur* (Ps. xxxix, 6). Meaning that although in the beginning man was made in the image of God, stable and steadfast, nevertheless because of sin he now passes through this life bearing the image of sin, which makes him unstable and troubled. Saint Paul also speaks of this image: *Sicut portavimus imaginem terreni hominis, sic portemus imaginem caelestis* (I Cor. xv, 49). If we desire to come to the love of God, having formerly borne the image of Adam the earthly man, which is the image of sin, we must henceforward bear the image of Jesus the heavenly man, which is the image of virtue.

CHAPTER 87: *How we must crucify this image of sin, and quicken the image of Jesus*

WHAT are we to do with this image? I answer in the words of the Jews to Pilate about Christ: *Tolle, tolle, crucifige eum* (S. John xix, 15). Take this body of sin and crucify it. That is, destroy this image and slay the false love of sin in yourself. As Christ's body was slain for our sins, so if you wish to be like Christ, slay your bodily desires and lusts. As Saint Paul says: *Qui autem Christi sunt, carnem suam crucifixerunt cum vitiis*

et concupiscentiis (Gal. v, 24). Those who are followers of Christ have crucified and subdued their flesh, that is, the image of sin, with all its lusts and unreasonable desires.

Slay pride, break it down and establish humility. Break down anger and envy, and replace them by love and charity towards your neighbours. Instead of covetousness cultivate poverty of spirit, and instead of sloth foster fervent devotion and a glad readiness for all good works. Replace gluttony and impurity by temperance and purity of body and soul. This is what Saint Paul recommended when he said: *Deponetes veterem hominem cum suis actibus, qui corrumpitur secundum desideria erroris; et induite novum hominem, qui secundum Deum creatus est in sanctitate et iustitia* (Eph. iv, 22). Put off the old man – which is the sinful image of the old Adam, with all its limbs corrupted by wrongful desires – and put on the new man – which is the image of God – by holiness, righteousness, and the perfection of virtue. Who will help you to destroy this image? None but the Lord Jesus Himself. In His might and in His Name you will destroy this idol of sin. Pray to Him earnestly and with longing, and He will help you.

CHAPTER 88: *The advantage of guarding the heart, and the close attachment of the soul to what it loves*

TRY to be recollected in heart, and follow the advice of the wise man who said: *Omni custodia serva cor tuum, quia ex ipso procedit vita* (Prov. iv, 23). Do your utmost to guard your heart, for out of it comes life. This is true, for when it is well guarded, wise thoughts, pure affections, and ardent desire for virtue and charity, and for the joys of heaven come from it, and cause the soul to live a life of blessedness. If, on the contrary, it is not well guarded, then as our Lord says in the Gospel: *De corde exeunt cogitationes inidae, quae coinquinant hominem*

(Matt. xv, 19). Evil thoughts and impure desires come from the heart and defile a man. If these are mortal sins they injure the life of the soul, or if they are venial they weaken or sicken it. For what is a man but his thoughts and his loves? These alone make him good or bad. The more you love and know God, and the better you love your neighbour, the greater is your soul; and the less you love Him, the less your soul. And if you do not love Him at all, your soul is worthless, for while it has no capacity for goodness, it has great capacity for sin. If you want to know what you really love, examine your thoughts, for your mind dwells on what you love, and your thoughts will mostly be on what your heart loves best. If you love God deeply, you will like to think constantly of Him, and if you love Him little, then you will think of Him little. So direct your thoughts and affections rightly, and you will be virtuous.

CHAPTER 89: *How the image of sin is to be destroyed*

BEGIN, then, to destroy this image. Consider yourself and your wretched condition, as I have said. But when you come to realize how proud, vain, envious, gloomy, covetous, unspiritual, and full of corruption you are, also, how little knowledge or experience of God you have, while in worldly matters you are clever, quick, and interested — in short, if you realize that you are as full of sin as a hide is of meat — do not be too greatly discouraged. When you have done all this, lift up your heart in longing desire to your Lord Jesus, and ask His help. Earnestly implore Him to help you bear the heavy burden of this image, or else to destroy it for you. Think how shameful it is for you to fill yourself with the swine's food of worldly pleasures when you should be seeking the spiritual joys of heaven. If you do this, you will be beginning to attack the foundations of sin within you, and it may be that this will bring

you pain and sorrow, for you will come to understand that no soul can live without great pain unless it can find rest and pleasure either in its Creator or else in creatures. So when you turn from self with a fervent desire to feel the presence of your Lord Jesus, and withdraw your love from all material things and from dependence upon bodily feelings, you will find that you are still burdened by self. It will seem to you that all created things are trying to hold you back, and all these things that once pleased you will turn to pain and weariness. When you have thus forsaken self and cannot readily find comfort in Jesus Christ, your soul must needs suffer pain. Nevertheless, endure this pain for a time, steadfastly holding to the bare longing for Jesus only. Desire nothing but Him. Let nothing distract you from this. Do not seek for external consolations during this time, for it will not last long: our Lord is near, and He will soon bring comfort to your heart. He will help you to bear with your body and its corrupt nature, and will destroy this false image of self-love in you by the merciful power of His gracious presence. This will not take place at once, but little by little, until you are to some degree reformed in His likeness.

CHAPTER 90: *How to control impulses of pride and other vices*

AFTER such a complete uprising against your self-love, you will be able to control yourself more wisely, gently, and easily, and to guard your thoughts and feelings more carefully, so as to distinguish between the good and the bad. And if afterwards you should feel any stirring of pride, be on your guard at once, and give it no chance to survive. Grasp it, crush it, and despise it; expose it to every possible contempt. Do not spare it or listen to it, however plausible it may seem, for it is false however true it may seem to be. As the prophet says: *Popule*

meus, qui te beatum dicunt ipsi te seducant, et in errorem mittunt (Isa. iii, 12). Which is to say: My people, those who tell you that you are blessed and holy deceive you and lead you astray. And if you do this often and thoroughly, you will by the grace of God soon stop much of the spring of pride and greatly abate your vain delight in it, so that you will hardly feel it. And when you do feel it, it will be so weak and nearly dead that it will do you little harm. Your soul will catch a glimpse of the fair beauty of humility, and come to desire and love it for its own sake. You will be glad to be judged as you are, and if need arises you will willingly endure scorn and reproof for love of what is right. Similarly, when you feel moved to anger or despair, or ill-will to your neighbour, beware of it, however reasonable it may seem. Be on the alert to restrain it, lest the natural instincts seize control. Do your utmost not to yield to it in word or deed, and whenever it revives, strike it down again. Slay it with the sword of the fear of God, and it will not hurt you. Remember that if you set your will and reason to resist these impulses of pride, vainglory, envy, and such like directly you are aware of them, you will kill them even though they linger in the mind against your wish and are not easily dislodged. Do not fear them, for although they may rob your soul of peace, they cannot defile it. Treat all evil impulses of covetousness, spiritual lethargy, gluttony, and impurity in the same way, and let your reason and will be always quick to reject and despise them.

CHAPTER 91: *What best helps a man to know and obtain what he needs, and destroys sin in him*

YOU will be able to do this better and more easily if you firmly set your heart on one thing, that is, on our Lord Jesus Christ alone, who is the blessed one, both God and Man. Let Him be the sole object and inspiration of your soul's desire,

and the light of your heart. Have a deep and reverent fear of displeasing Him, and a great desire to please God, to love Him, know Him, see Him, and possess Him in some measure here by grace, and to enjoy Him fully in the bliss of heaven. If you cherish this desire for Jesus Christ, it will enable you to judge what is sinful and what is not, what is good and what is better. Hold fast to it, and it will teach you all you need to know, and obtain for you all that you want. Therefore, whenever you fight against the root of sin in general or any sin in particular, hold fast to this desire, and fix your mind upon Jesus Christ for whom you long rather than upon the sin which you are fighting. If you will do this, Jesus Christ will fight for you, and destroy sin in you. You will attain your purpose much sooner if you do this than if you were to set aside this humble desire for God alone, and devote your attention to crushing sinful desires in the expectation that you can destroy them by self-discipline alone. You will never succeed in this way. Do as I have said, and better if you can, and I am confident that by the grace of Jesus you will put the devil to shame, and crush all these evil desires so that they will do you little harm. This is the way to break down and destroy the image of sin which distorts the true image of Christ in you. Humility and charity will fashion you to the likeness of Jesus in His Humanity, and will at length transform you to the true likeness of Jesus in His Godhead. You will have only a glimmering of it here in contemplation, but in the bliss of heaven it will be yours in the fullness of reality.

Saint Paul speaks of this conformity to the likeness of Christ: *Filioli, quos iterum parturio donec Christus formetur in vobis* (Gal. iv, 19). My dear children, whom I bear as a woman bears her child until Christ is formed in you. You have conceived Christ by faith, and He lives in you in so far as you possess the good-will and desire to serve and please Him. But He is not yet fully formed in you by perfect charity, nor you in Him. Therefore

Saint Paul bore you, me, and other Christians with pain, as a woman bears her child, until Christ is fully formed in us, and we in Him.

CHAPTER 92: *How a man is to be conformed to the likeness of Christ, and Jesus formed in him*

WHETHER imagines that he can attain to the full stare and practice of contemplation in some other way – that is, without continual recollection of the precious Humanity and Passion of Jesus Christ, and the pursuit of all virtues – does not come in by the door, and will therefore be cast out like a thief. I do not deny that by the grace of God a man may sometimes have some foretaste and limited experience of contemplation, for some have been granted this early in their spiritual life, but they cannot retain it permanently. For Christ is both the door and the porter, and no one may enter unless he shares His life and bears His sign. As He Himself has said: *Nemo venit ad Patrem nisi per me* (John xiv, 6). No man comes to the Father except through Me. Meaning that no one can come to the contemplation of the Godhead until he is first conformed by perfect humility and charity to the likeness of Jesus in His Humanity.

CHAPTER 93: *Why this book was written, and how the person for whom it was written should use it*

NOW I have told you a little about the contemplative life as I see it, and of the ways in which grace leads us to it. And although I cannot fully experience and practise what I have been saying, I hope that my words – such as they are – will rouse me out of my negligence to do better than I have done hitherto. My other purpose is to inspire you and others who have

entered the contemplative life to devote yourselves to it more actively and humbly by such simple words as God's grace has enabled me to say. Therefore, if anything that I have said in this book brings you some encouragement, or moves you to a deeper love of God, then thank God, for it is due to His grace and not to my words. But if it brings you no help, or does not suit your needs, do not study it for too long. Put it aside till another time, and give yourself to prayer or some other occupation. Use it as it suits you; do not read it all at once. And do not take all that I have written too literally. But wherever after due thought you feel that I have dealt inadequately with some matter, whether through poor command of English or through faulty reasoning, please correct it, but only where necessary.

Lastly, what I have written does not apply to anyone living the active life, but only to you and others who live the contemplative life.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.