The Dark Night of the Soul

by John of the Cross

Free public domain classic — Noveliopdf

The Dark Night of the Soul

by John of the Cross

Free public domain classic — Noveliopdf

THE WORKS OF ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

NIHIL OBSTAT

Henricus S. Bowden

Censor Deputatus.

IMPRIMATUR

* Gulielmus

Episcopus Arindelensis

'Vicarius Generalis.

Westmonasterii

Die 2 Martii, 1908 .

DARK NIGHT OR THE Si KT

BY

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

TRANSLATED BY

DAVID LEWIS

WITH CORRECTIONS AND INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

BY

BENEDICT ZIMMERMANN, O.C.D.

0/ St. Luke’s, Wincanton.

T i.C, Leo V-TUJ. ' s&(\Sr. ivA .

LONDON :

THOMAS BAKER.

MCMVIH.

INTRODUCTION.

T HE general purpose of the Mystical Writings of St. John of the Cross has been explained in the Introduction to the " Ascent of Mount Carmel." That work and the " Dark Night of the Soul " supplement each other. The former deals with the active purgation of the senses, the intellect and the will, that is, with the need for, and the manner of, a complete mortification of these powers, so far as with God’s grace, it can be carried out by man’s own exertions. Thei " Dark Night " treats of the passive

purgation of the same faculties, brought about by Divine intervention which steps in where human en-

deavours fail.*

The two books were written about the same time, soon after St. John’s escape from captivity in 1578. Both have for their text the stanzas he appears to have composed in memory of that event, and both are left unfinished. The Saint

* "The Ascent of Mount Carmel/* by St. John of the Cross, trans lated by David Lewis. New edition. London : Thomas Baker, 1906. Introduction, p. 17.

176 j

VI.

INTRODUCTION.

seems to have interrupted the former work in order to turn to the latter, but the exigencies of various duties imposed on him prevented the completion of these treatises. In the " Ascent " one half of the third and the whole of the fourth book are wanting ; it is not known how much he had originally intended to write on the " Dark Night," certain it is that he only explained two out of eight stanzas, and dealt summarily with the third. Even so the most difficult, and therefore the most important, part of his plan seems to have been carried out, and what is wanting may be supplemented from his other writings, notably the interpretation of the " Spiritual Canticle." In the two works under consideration he takes the reader over the most dangerous ground and leaves him only where personal guidance is no longer required.

The " Dark Night," though only a short treatise in comparison with the remaining works of St. John of the Cross, is perhaps from a practical point of view the most important of the whole series. Instructions for beginners may be found in abundance

; even the Night of the sense, as

INTRODUCTION.

vii.

St. John informs us* has had numerous exponents ; but in the Night of the spirit he breaks fresh ground. If it is one of God’s ordinances that all spiritual life must be regulated by a director so that pitfalls may be avoided, a soul plunged into the Night of the spirit depends more than any other upon the intelligent guidance of an experienced director, partly on account of I its natural reluctance to proceed along a path beset with so many difficulties, partly because the very fact of its being in darkness prevents it from seeing clearly with its own eyes. In the " Ascent " and the " Dark Night " St. John has traced the way with admirable lucidity and simplicity, but these books, especially the latter, are chiefly addressed to the director. It is impossible to read them without gaining the conviction that his is the absolutely safe way ; there may be others, less straight, less rugged, but neither so safe or so direct.

St. John, taking his position on the firm basis of the psychology and theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, and guiding himself by the light of Holy/

* " Dark Night," I, VIII, 2.

via.

INTRODUCTION.

Scripture, pitilessly dissects the soul and its operations, separating not only what is dangerous or unsound, but everything that is not directly conducive to his ultimate aim, the union of the human will with the holy will of God. A work of this magnitude must be begun by God, and accomplished by Him. The beginning consists in the grace of vocation, the end in the beatific vision. Between these two

there lies a vast distance which it takes a lifetime to cover, where the generous and intelligent co-operation of the soul is indispensable. This is partly active, and consists in the systematic denial of everything that could give satisfaction to body or soul, as explained in the " Ascent " ; and partly passive (as shown in the " Dark Night ") where the soul assists God’s operation by submitting to His chastising hand, like a patient under the knife of I the surgeon.

The number of souls called to the contemplative life in its widest sense is even now-a-days greater than is commonly supposed. They are not confined to Religious Orders, but are to be found in every station of life, and in every country, for

INTRODUCTION.

IX.

" the spirit breatheth where it will." Many proceed no farther than the initial stages ; few ' persevere as far as the spiritual night ; while those who attain to perfection are but exceptions. . " Many praise and bless Jesus as long as they receive some consolation from Him, but if He hide Himself and leave them for a little while, they fall either into complaining or into excessive dejection,"* This general falling off may be partly attributed to a want of understanding and < guidance which St. John in the book before us undertakes to remedy.

It may be useful for some readers of St. John’s works to find here a short sketch of the experiences a soul generally makes on its journey through • the realms of Mysticism. Let us suppose that it has been unexpectedly struck by a rav of Divin e grace. It may never really have been estranged from God since the day of baptism, or it may have strayed, no essential difference would result therefrom, because motion is determined not so much , by the direction whence it proceeds but whither " it tends. Such a soul, then, finds a delight,

* Imitation, II, ii.

X.

INTRODUCTION.

^hitherto unknown, in spiritual matters ; a new ^hord has been touched and set vibrating, the whole world seems transfigured, God’s work becomes visible and palpable in every b lade of grass. His interests absorb all earthly pursuits ; the human heart has found and holds fast a treasure of incomparable value ; heaven has descended upon earth. " This is he that heareth the word and immediately receiveth it with joy."

Such an experience is indeed a great grace, but it does not last. True spirituality consists not in sentiments but in the exercise of virtue. The first impulse is not strong enough to carry the soul very far in its flight heaven wards. (^The question arises how best to utilise this initial motive power ? St. John gives the answer in the " Ascen t." Almost ruthlessly he tears off the brilliant surface so as to save the substance. The first ray has

i indeed transfigured the heart but has not transformed it. There remain many dangerous germs, the weaknesses and shortcomings of human nature. The very warmth of paradise, the dew descending abundantly upon a tender heart might develop these so that " the last state of that man

INTRODUCTION.

XI.

is made worse than the first." They must, therefore be destroyed by a long process of self-denial. *

St. John teaches the beginner how to mortify hi^g) senses and faculties, sacrificing even much that in itself is good, in order to strengthen the soul by the simple

exercise of Faith. Hope and Charity, / and the four cardinal virtues. This is the active purgation.

But this represents only the smaller portion of the work to be done. However, it prepares the way for Him who " searcheth the reins and.— s hearts." The passive pur gation follows closely^' 7

t!

upon, and sometimes accompanies the former. The passive purgation of the . sense is not merely a reaction from the exultation of the , first awakening to spiritual life, it cuts far deeper. Were it only a reaction it would end in lukewarm- ■ ness, but /he who is being tried by God, so far from growing indifferent, becomes the more dili- ' gent in seeking God, the more God appears to hide Himself, for he feels His absence keenly.

" It is a great thing, says the author of the Imitation, forestalling St. John of the Cross, a very great thing to be able to do without all solace,

xii.

INTRODUCTION.

both human and divine, and to be willing to bear this exile of the heart for the honour of God, and in nothing seek self, and not to have regard to one’s own merit. What great thing is it to be cheerful and devout when grace comes to thee ? This is an hour desirable to all."*

This purgation of the sense comes in different ways, such as reverses of fortune, loss of friendship, loss of one’s reputation, ill success in one’s undertakings, illness, and the whole train of temporal misfortunes. It is always accompanied by the loss of sensible devotion. To keep still under the chastising hand of God elevates the soul to the plane where the holy man Job stood. If we have received good things at the hand

of God, why should we not receive evil ? The active purgation through which the soul has passed under the guidance of St. John of the Cross is the best preparation for this passive purgation of sense, for there it has learnt to utterly despise all comfort.

Far more terrible, as our author tells us, is the passive purgation of the Spirit which reaches

* Imitation, II, ix.

INTRODUCTION.

xiii.

" unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow." Of course there are different degrees, all souls are not tried to the same extent, and St. John takes rather an extreme case. In the most acute form, then, positive satanic interference adds to the distress , of a soul already weighed down by a feeling of the loss of God. Sometimes it takes the shape of a spirit of blasphemy, or of uncleanness or despair. . The lives of the Saints furnish some remarkable instances of such trials. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi was subject to them for five years. St. Francis de Sales was, for a long time, haunted by , the thought that he should be finally lost. The effect it had upon him was to render him extremely conscientious so that he should offend God not even in small matters, and that his loss should not come through his own fault.

" Although He should kill me I will trust Him ; but yet I will reprove my ways in His sight."

It stands to reason that a soul under such trials is absolutely dependent upon the guidance of a > learned and experienced director. Otherwise the result might be fatal. In fact there is reason to

XIV.

INTRODUCTION.

think that some of the appalling falls from spiritual height to utter perversion should be attributed to the absence of proper direction during this most dangerous period.

) The purpose of these trials is, however, not
to throw the soul into despair but to wean it
from all comfort so as to leave it with no other
support than God Himself, as St. John says in
one of his poems :

My soul is detached From every thing created,
And raised above itself Into a life delicious,
Of God alone supported.
And therefore I will say,
That what I most esteem
Is that my soul is now
Without support, and with support.*

Or, as it is expressed in some verses attributed
to him :

On Mount Carmel God alone and I.
God alone in my spirit to enlighten it,
God alone in my acts to sanctify them,
God alone in my heart to possess it.

This is one of the objects of the passive purgation. Sooner or later every soul must

pass through

* Works (ed. 1891), II, 628.

INTRODUCTION.

XV.

it. All that is of earth earthly will have to be left on one side before that which is of heaven heavenly shall appear. The process is under all

circumstances a painful one, but it is unavoidable. St. John assists the soul in stripping itself, and , allowing itself to be stripped here below. H£ calls this a purgatory, but a very dif fere nt one from what a waits the soul after death, inasmuch as there the soul is cleansed by fire, and here by < love. Moreover, the perfect purgation of the~j soul in the present life leaves it free to act with infinitely—greatei^-power, and therefore to gain innumerable merits, whereas after death the account is closed before even the soul enters purgatory. No power on earth could resist a thoroughly detached soul, it might almost be v said to participate in God's omnipotence. Here lies the secret of the marvellous deeds of so many] . Saints.

There is one other reason why the soul should pass through the trials of the Dark Night. Its ultimate destiny is union with God. Now the soul is finite, and God is infinite. The disproportion between the two is so enormous (being,

XVI.

INTRODUCTION.

in fact, infinite in itself) that the mere comparison must have a crushing effect upon the finite being. Every soul will have to pass through this experience, the minority already in this life in the Dark Night of contemplation, the vast majority on leaving this life, when they will suddenly find themselves encompassed by the infinite

Majesty and Power of the Godhead. When the finite comes into contact with the infinite it realises its utter nothingness ; it is humbled to the ground. The contrast causes it the most intense pain. This thorough humiliation makes it possible for the infinitesimal to be united to the infinite, for, as Christ says, " He who humbleth himself shall be exalted."

(~Sn important point clearly established by St. John is the length of the trial. This depends, no doubt, on many circumstances, on the thoroughness of the purgation, on the amount of co-operation on the part of the soul, probably also on the kind of imperfections to be removed ; the more subtle these are the more difficult are they to [eradicate. But on the whole it is not probable that a soul would remain plunged in deep dark-

INTRODUCTION.

XVII.

ness for many weeks together, without being comforted and strengthened by at least some passing rays of light, some consolation to give it courage. Perhaps a very strong soul would require but few interruptions of this kind, but, excepting some highly favoured souls, an alternation of glimpses of light and deep shadows seem to be the more usual experience. On this com} dition the Dark Night may continue for several years, and may even be repeated in different degrees of intensity. It is necessary to bear this in mind, for the study of Mystical works sometimes leaves the impression that the various experiences follow each other in regular and rapid succession, and that there can be no turning back unless it be a falling away.

As the soul enters the Dark Night gradually so it emerges from it by degrees. Both in the " Ascent " and in the work before us St. John proceeds so far as the dawn of a new and glorious day. Of the full noonday he treats in the " Spiritual Canticle " and

the " Living Flame of Love." There the will is firmly united with the Will of God, the only kind of permanent union between

xviii. INTRODUCTION.

man and God possible in this life. It is the height of perfection and so far above ordinary human experience that Mystical writers, St. John included, have found it necessary to use expressions of oriental exuberance, the ordinary language being quite inadequate to describe the happy condition of a soul arrived at this state. It stands in marked contrast with the almost grim sobriety of the expositions in the " Ascent " and the " Dark Night." Those who wish to form an opinion of the character of St. John should study both categories of his writings, otherwise he would appear to some as a stem, morose taskmaster, with never a smile on his lips, and to others as a dreamer of phantastic dreams, whereas he was a Saint with a wide heart and intense love, a most passionate love of his God, and, for God’s sake, of his neighbour ; and, with all that, a man of practical work and common sense.

It is hardly necessary to say much on the charge of Quietism brought sometimes against St. John of the Cross. The matter was fully investigated at the time of his beatification aiid canonisation. Had there been the slightest foundation for it

INTRODUCTION. xix.

the process would have been allowed to drop ; but as the charge has been repeated by writers who claim to have a right of being listened to, a word in reply may not be superfluous. According to St. John, the soul while plunged into the Dark Night can do nothing, but must leave God free to » act. It is passive, but not inert ; by submitting to the Divine operation it co-operates in the measure of its power. But in all other states, notably in the active purgation of the " Ascent " the soul concentrates the utmost energy of all its powers on the one great work. We have seen there how St. John expects it to leave no recess of the heart or mind unexplored and undisturbed. Considering that it costs us infinitely more to free ourselves from

those things for which we have, sometimes unconsciously, an attraction, than from what is alien to our nature, it will be] seen that so far from tending to Quietism St. / John's teaching exacts an amount of co-operation I « on the part of man that will probably surprise] most readers. If, as it seems reasonable to thinkf the active purgation goes hand in hand with the passive purgation, and should continue not only.

XX.

INTRODUCTION.

while the latter lasts, but to the end of life, there can be no question of a passive repose of the soul on the plea that God is working in the interior. Moreover, the state of perfection admits of no relaxation from work, besides the good works which will follow necessarily from the union of the human with the Divine Will, the highest contemplation is in itself an unfolding of all the powers of the soul, just as the Beatific vision is not a passive enjoyment but an operation of a soul lifted far above itself by the light of glory

t the intellect and a new capacity for love in the

Fr. BENEDICT ZIMMERMAN, O.C.D.

St. Luke's Priory, Wincanton, May ist, 1907.

CONTENTS

THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUI,.

BOOK I.

OF THE NIGHT OF SENSE.

CHAPTER I. page

Of the imperfections of beginners 5

CHAPTER II.

Of some spiritual imperfections to which beginners are liable in

CHAPTER III.

Of the imperfections of avarice, in the spiritual sense 13

CHAPTER IV.

Of the imperfection of luxury, spiritually understood 16

CHAPTER V.

Of the imperfections of anger 21

CHAPTER VI.

Of the imperfections of spiritual gluttony. 22

CHAPTER VII.

Of the imperfections of envy and spiritual sloth 27

CHAPTER VIII.

Explanation of the dark night 30

CHAPTER IX.

Of the signs by which it may be known that the spiritual man is walking in the way of this night or purgation of sense . . 34

XXII.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER X. page

How they are to conduct themselves who have entered the dark night 4 r

CHAPTER XI.

Explanation of the second line of the first stanza 45

CHAPTER XII.

Of the benefits of the night of sense 49

CHAPTER XIII.

Of other benefits of the night of sense 57

CHAPTER XIV.

The last line of the first stanza explained 64

BOOK II.

OF THE NIGHT OF THE SPIRIT.

CHAPTER I.

The second night ; that of the spirit. When it begins 68

CHAPTER II.

Of certain imperfections of proficients 71

CHAPTER III.

CHAPTER IV.

The explanation of the first stanza. 77

CHAPTER V

The dim contemplation is not a night only, but pain and torment

CHAPTER VI.

Of other sufferings of the soul in this night .. .. .. ,83

CHAPTER VII

The same subject continued. Other afflictions and trials of the will . . 88

CONTENTS.

XX111.

CHAPTER VIII. page

Other trials of the soul in this state 95

CHAPTER IX.

How this night enlightens the mind, though it brings darkness

CHAPTER X.

Explanation of this purgation by a comparison 108

CHAPTER XI.

A vehement passion of divine love the fruit of these sharp afflictions of the soul 113

CHAPTER XII.

How this awful night is like purgatory. How the divine wisdom illuminates men on earth with that light in which the angels are purified and enlightened in heaven 118

CHAPTER XIII.

Other sweet effects of the dark night of contemplation 122

CHAPTER XIV.

The last lines of the first stanza explained 129

* CHAPTER XV.

Explanation of the second stanza 132

CHAPTER XVI.

How the soul journeys securely in darkness 133

CHAPTER XVII.

The dim contemplation is secret 142

CHAPTER XVIII.

How this secret wisdom is also a ladder 149

CHAPTER XIX.

The mystic ladder has ten degrees. . . . . • 152

CHAPTER XX.

CHAPTER XXI.

The meaning of * disguised.’ The colours in which the soul disguises itself in this night 162

XXIV.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER XXII. page

The third line of the second stanza 169

CHAPTER XXIIi.

The wonderful hiding-place of the soul, which the devil cannot

CHAPTER XXIV.

The last line of the second stanza 178

CHAPTER XXV.

THE

DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL!

WITH AN EXPLANATION OF THE STANZAS COMPRISING THE WAY OF THE PERFECT UNION OF LOVE WITH GOD, SUCH AS IS POSSIBLE IN THIS LIFE; AND THE ADMIRABLE ENDOWMENTS OF THE SOUL WHICH HAS) ATTAINED TO IT.

ARGUMENT.

The stanzas to be explained are set forth at the beginning! of this book, then an explanation of each severally, the stanza being placed before it. After that an explanation of each line, which is also set before the explanation. The first two stanzas explain the two spiritual purgations of the sensual and spiritual part of man, and the other six the various and admirable effects of the spiritual enlightenmenjtj and union of love with God.

STANZAS.

I.

In a dark night.

With anxious love inflamed,

O, happy lot I

Forth unobserved I went,

My house being now at rest.

II.

In darkness and in safety.

By the secret ladder, disguised,

O, happy lot I

In darkness and concealment,

My house being ncfw at rest,

Google

THE DARK NIGHT

nr.

In that happy night.

In secret, seen of none,

Seeing nought myself,

Without other light or guide

Save that which in my heart was burning.

IV.

That light guided me More surely than the noonday sun To the place where He was waiting for me. Whom I knew well,

And where none appeared.

v.

O, guiding night ;

O, night more lovely than the dawn ; O, night that hast united I The lover with His beloved,

1 And changed her into her love.

vi.

On my flowery bosom,

Kept whole for Him alone,

There He reposed and slept ;

And I _ cherished Him, and the waving Of the cedars fanned Him.

VII.

As His hair floated in the breeze That from the turret blew,

He struck me on the neck With His gentle hand.

And all sensation left me.

VIII.

I continued in oblivion lost.

My head was resting on my love ;

Lost to all things and myself.

And, amid the lilies forgotten.

Threw all my cares away.

OF THE SOUL.

EXPLANATION OF THE STANZAS.

Before we enter on an explanation of these, it is right we should understand that they are the words of the soul already in the state of perfection, which is the union of love with God, when it has gone through the straits, tribulations and severities, by means of the spiritual training, of the strait way of everlasting life, by which ordinarily the soul attains to this high and divine union with God. Of it our Saviour says in the Gospel,* * How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it/ This road being so strait, and they who find it being so few, the soul regards it as a great and joyful blessing that it has journeyed on it to the perfection of love, as it sings in the first stanza,, very rightly calling the strait road, a dark night, as may be seen further on in the words of the stanza. The soul, therefore, rejoicing in that it has travelled on this strait road whereby so great a blessing has come to it, sings as follows.

* S. Matt. vii. 14.

THE DARK NIGHT

BOOK I.

OF THE NIGHT OF SENSE.

In a dark night ,

With anxious love inflamed,

O, happy lot I

Forth unobserved I went,

My house being now at rest .

In the first stanza the soul sings of the way and manner of its going forth, as to its affections, from self and all created things, dying thereto by real mortification, that it may live the life of love, sweet and delicious in God. It went forth, from itself and from all things, in a dark night, by which is meant here purgative contemplation — as I shall hereinafter explain* — which leads the soul to deny itself and all besides. This departure, it says, it was able to accomplish in the strength and fervour which the love of the Bridegroom supplied, in the obscure contemplation for that end. The soul magnifies its own ^happiness in having journeyed Godwards in that nig*ht so successfully as to escape all hindrance on the part of its three enemies — the world, the devil, and the flesh — which are always found infesting this road ; for the night of purgative contemplation had lulled to sleep and mortified, in the house of sensuality, all passions and ^iesires, in their rebellious movements.

* Ch. viii.

OF THE SOUL.

CHAPTER I.

Begins with the first stanza and treats of the imperfections of beginners.

In a dark night.

OOULS begin to enter the dark night when God is] ^ drawing them out of the state of beginners, which is that of those who meditate on the spiritual road, and is leading them into that of proficients, the state of contemplatives, that, having passed through it, they may arrive at the state of the perfect, which is that of the] divine union with God. That we may the better understand and explain the nature of this night through which the soul has to pass, and why God leads men into it, it may be well to touch first upon certain peculiarities of beginners, that they may perceive the weakness of the state they are in, take courage, and desire to be led of God into this night, where the soul is established in virtue and made strong for the inestimable delights of His love. Though I shall dwell at some length upon this point, I shall do so no longer than suffices for the immediate discussion of this dark night.

2. We are to keep in mind that a soul, when seriously converted to the service of God, is, in general, spiritually

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

nursed and caressed, as an infant by its loving mother, who warms it in her bosom, nourishes it with her own sweet milk, feeds it with tender and delicate food, carries it in her arms, and fondles it. But as the child grows up the mother withholds her caresses, hides her breasts, and anoints them with the juice of bitter aloes; she carries the infant in her arms no longer, but makes it walk on the ground, so that, losing the habits of an infant, it may apply itself to greater and more substantial pursuits.

3. The grace of God,* like a loving mother, as soon as the soul is regenerated in the

new fire and fervour of His service, treats it in the same way ; for it enables it, without labour on its own part, to find its spiritual milk, sweet and delicious, in all the things of God, and in devotional exercises great sweetness ; God giving it the breasts of His own tender love, as to a tender babe. Such souls, therefore, delight to spend many hours, and perhaps whole nights, in prayer ; their pleasures are penances, their joy is fasting, and their consolations lie in the use of the sacraments and in speaking of divine things.

4. Now spiritual men generally, speaking spiritually, are extremely weak and imperfect here, though they apply themselves to devotion, and practise it with great resolution, earnestness, and care. For being drawn to

* Sap. xvi. 25. — In omnia transfigurata omnium nutrici gratiae tuae deserviebat.

CHAP. II.] OF THE SOUL.

these things and to their spiritual exercises by the comfort and satisfaction they find therein, and not yet confirmed in virtue by the struggle it demands, they fall ^ into many errors and imperfections in their spiritual life ; for every man's work corresponds to the habit of perfection which he has acquired. These souls, therefore, not having had time to acquire those habits of vigour, must, of necessity, perform their acts, like children, weakly.

5. To make this more clear, and to show how weak] are beginners in virtue in those good works which they perform with so much ease and pleasure, I proceed to explain by reference to the seven capital sins, pointing out some of the imperfections into which beginners fall in the matter of each of them. This will show us plainly how like children they are in all they do, and also how great are the blessings of this dark night of • which I am about to speak*; seeing that it cleansesj and purifies the soul from all these imperfections.

CHAPTER II.

Of some spiritual imperfections to which beginners are^ ^ liable in the matter of pride.

When beginners become aware of their own fervour and diligence in their spiritual works and devotional

8 THE DARK NIGHT [BOOK I.

exercises, this prosperity of theirs gives rise to secret pride — though holy things tend of their own nature to humility — because of their imperfections ; and the issue is that they conceive a certain satisfaction in the contemplation of their works and of themselves. From the same source, too, proceeds that empty eagerness which they display, in speaking before others of the spiritual life, and sometimes as teachers rather than learners. They condemn others in their heart when they see that they are not devout in their way. Sometimes also they say it in words, showing themselves herein to be like the Pharisee, who in the act of prayer boasted of his own works and despised the Publican.*

2. Their fervour, and desire to do these and other works, is frequently fed by satan in order that they may

grow in pride and presumption : he knows perfectly well that ail their virtue and works are not only nothing worth, but rather tending to sin. Some of them go so far as to think none good but themselves, and so, at all times, both in word and deed fall into condemnation and detraction of others. They see the mote in the eye of their brother, but not the beam which is in their own.f They strain out the gnat in another man’s cup,\ and swallow the camel in their own.+

3. Sometimes, also, when their spiritual masters, such as confessors and superiors, do not approve of

* S. Luke xviii. n, 12. f S. Matt. vii. 3. } lb. xxiii. 24.

CHAP. H.] . OF THE SOUL.

their spirit and conduct — for they wish to be praised and considered for what they do — they decide that they are not understood, and that their superiors are not ' spiritual men because they do not approve and sanction their proceedings. So they go about in quest of some one else, who will accommodate himself to their fancy ; for in general they love to discuss their spiritual state with those who, they think, will commend and respect it. They avoid, as they would death, those who destroy their delusion with the view of leading them into a safe way, and sometimes they even hate them. Presuming greatly on themselves, they make many resolutions, and accomplish little. They are occasionally desirous that others should perceive their spirituality and devotion, and for that end they give outward tokens by movements, sighs and divers ceremonies ; sometimes, too, they fall into certain trances in public rather than in * private — whereunto satan contributes — and are pleased when others are witnesses of them.

4. Many of them seek to be the favourites of their confessors, and the result is endless envy and disquietude. They are ashamed to confess their sins plainly, lest their confessors should think less of them, so they go about palliating them, that they may not seem so bad : which is excusing rather than accusing themselves. Sometimes they go to a stranger to confess their sin, that their usual confessor may think they

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

are not sinners, but good people. And so they always take pleasure in telling him of their goodness, and that in terms suggestive of more than is in them : at the least, they wish all their goodness to be appreciated, when it would be greater humility on their part, as I shall presently show,* to undervalue it, and wish that neither their confessor nor anyone else should think it of the least importance.

5. Some beginners, too, make light of their faults, and at other times indulge in immoderate grief when they commit them. They thought themselves already saints, and so they become angry and impatient with themselves, which is another great imperfection. They also importune God to deliver them from their faults and imperfections, but it is for the comfort of living in peace, unmolested by them, and not for God ; they do not consider that, were He to deliver them, they would become, perhaps, prouder than ever. They are great enemies of other men's praise, but great lovers of their own, and sometimes they seek it. In this respect they resemble the foolish virgins, who, when their lamps gave no light, went about in search of oil, saying : ‘ Give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'t

6. From these some go on to very serious imperfections, and come to great harm thereby. Some, however, fall into them less than others, and some

CHAP. II.] OF THE SOUL.

have to contend with little more than the first movements of them. But scarcely anyone can be found who, in his first fervours, did not fall into some of them.

7. But those who at this time are going on to^j perfection proceed in a very different way, and in a very different temper of mind : they grow and are built up in humility, not only looking on their own works as . nothing, but also dissatisfied with themselves ; they look upon all others as much better, they regard them with a holy envy in their anxiety to serve God as theyj do. For the greater their fervour, the more numerous their good works ; and the keener the pleasure therein, the more they

perceive — for they humble themselves — how much that is which God deserves at their hands, and how little is all they can do for Him : thus the more they do, they less are they satisfied.

8. So great is that which they in their love would fain do, that all they are doing seems nothing. This loving anxiety so importunes and fills them that they never consider whether others are doing good or not, and if they do, it is, as I have said, in the conviction that all others are much better than they are. They think little of themselves, and wish others to do so also, to make no account of them and despise their works. Moreover, if anyone should praise and respect them they will give them no credit, for they think it strange that anybody should speak well of them.

Google

THE DARK NIGHT

[book I.

9. They, in great tranquility and humility, are very desirous to learn the things that are profitable to them from anyone ; in this respect the very opposite of those of whom I have just spoken, who are willing to teach everybody ; and who, when anyone seems about to teach them anything, take the words out of his mouth, as if they knew it already.

10. But they of whom I am now speaking are very far from wishing to instruct anyone ; they are most ready to travel by another road if they be but commanded, for they never imagine that they can be right in anything. When others are praised they rejoice, and their only regret is that they do not serve God themselves as well as they. They have no wish to speak about their own state, for they think so lightly of it, that they are ashamed to speak of it to their own confessors ; it seems to them unworthy of any mention whatever. But they have a great desire to speak of their shortcomings and sins, or of that which they consider not to be virtue : thus they

incline to treat of the affairs of their soul with those who have no great opinion of their state and spirit.* This is a characteristic of that spirituality which is pure, simple, true, and most pleasing unto God. For as the wise Spirit of God dwells in these humble souls, He moves and inclines them to keep His treasures secretly within, and to cast

* See Life of St. Teresa, Relation vii. § ii.

CHAP, m.] OF THE SOUL.

out the evil. For God gives this grace, together with the other virtues, to the humble, and withholds it from the proud.

11. These will give their hearts' blood for him who serves God, and will help him to serve Him to the utmost of their powers. When they fall into any imperfection they bear up under it with humility, in r meekness of spirit, in loving fear of God, and hoping in Him. But the souls who in the beginning travel thus towards perfection are, as I said,* few, yea, very few, and we ought to be content when they do not rush into the opposite evils. This is the reason, as I shall hereafter explain, t why God leads into the dark night those souls whom He will purify from all these imperfections in order to their further progress.

CHAPTER III.

Of the imperfections into which some beginners are wont ? to fall, in the matter of the second capital sin, which is avarice, in the spiritual sense.

Many a beginner also falls at times into great spiritu£l^

^avariceJ Scarcely anyone is contented with that measure

of the spirit which God gives ; they are very disconsolate

and querulous because they do not find the comfort they j

desire in spiritual things. Many are never satisfied wkii

listening to spiritual counsels and precepts, with reading

THE DARK NIGHT

14 THE DARK NIGHT [BOOK I.

books which treat of their state ; and they spend more , time in this than in doing their duty, having no regard to that mortification, and perfection of interior poverty of spirit to which they ought to apply themselves. Besides, they load themselves with images, rosaries, and crucifixes, curious and costly ; now taking up one, then another, now changing them, and then resuming them again. ^At one time they will have them of a certain fashion, at another time of another, prizing one more than another because more curious or costly. Some may be seen with an Agnus Dei, and with relics and medals, like children with coral.

2. I condemn here that attachment and clinging ot the heart to the form, number, and variety of these things, because in direct opposition to poverty of spirit, which looks only to the substance of devotion; which makes use indeed of these things, but only sufficiently for the end, and disdains that variety and curiosity, for

v real devotion must spring out of the heart, and consider only the truth and substance which the objects in question represent. All beyond this is attachment and greed of imperfection ; he who will go on unto perfection, must root out that feeling utterly.

3. I knew a person who for more than ten years used continually, without interruption, a cross rudely formed of a piece of blessed palm, and fastened together with a 4 common pin bent backwards, until I took it away. This

CHAP, in.] OF THE SOUL.

was a person not deficient in sense and understanding.

I knew another who had a rosary made of the backbones ofJi§h, and whose devotion, I am certain, was not on that account of less value in the eyes of God ; for it is clear that the cost or workmanship of these contributed nothing to it.

4. Those beginners, therefore, who go on well, do not rely on visible instruments, neither do they burden themselves with them, nor do they seek to know more than is necessary for acting rightly ; their sole object is to be well with God and to please Him ; their avarice # consists in that. With a noble generosity they give upj all they possess ; and their delight is to be poor for the love of God and their neighbour, disposing of everything according to the laws of this virtue ; because, as I have said, their sole aim is real perfection, to please God inj. all things and themselves in nothing.

5. The soul, however, cannot be perfectly purified from these imperfections, any more than from the others, until God shall have led it into the passive purgation of * the dark night, of which I shall speak immediately.* But it is expedient that the soul, so far as it can, should labour, on its own part, to purify and perfect itself, that it may merit from God to be taken under His divine care, and be healed from those imperfections which of

^ itself it cannot remedy. For, after all the efforts of the

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

soul, it cannot by any exertions of its own actively purify itself so as to be in the slightest degree fit for the divine union of perfection in the love of God, if God Himself does not take it into His own hands and purify it in the fire, dark to the soul, in the way I am going to explain.!

CHAPTER IV.

x ^Of other imperfections into which some beginners are wont to fall, in the matter of the third sin, which is luxury, spiritually understood.

Many beginners fall into other imperfections, over and above those belonging to each capital sin of which I am speaking. I pass them by now, to avoid prolixity, and treat of some of the chiefest, which are, as it were, the source and origin of the rest.

2. As to the sin of luxury, putting aside the commission of the sin — my object being to speak of those ; imperfections which have to be purged away in the dark 1 night — beginners fall into many imperfections, which may be called spiritual luxury ; not that it is so in fact, but because it is felt and experienced sometimes in the flesh, because of its frailty, when the soul is the recipient of spiritual communications. For very often, in the f Bk. ii. ch. io.

midst of their spiritual exercises, and when they cannot help themselves, the impure movements of sensuality are felt ; and sometimes even when the mind is absorbed in prayer, or when they are receiving the sacraments of penance and the eucharist. These movements not being in their power, proceed from one of three sources.

3. They proceed occasionally — though but rarely, and in persons of delicate constitutions — from sensible * sweetness in spiritual things. For when sense and spirit are both delighted together, the whole nature of man is moved in that delectation according to its measure and character. For then the spirit, that is, the higher part of our nature is moved to delight itself in God ; and sensuality, which is the lower part, is moved towards sensible gratification, because it knows, and admits of, none other. And so it happens that the soul is in spirit praying, and on the other hand in the senses troubled, to its great disgust, with the rebellious movements of the

flesh passively. But inasmuch as these two parts form but one subject, man, they ordinarily share in their respective passions, each in its own way ; for, as the philosopher tells us, all that is received is received according to the condition of the recipient.

4, Thus in these beginnings, and even when the soul has made some progress, the sensual part, being still imperfect, when spiritual delight flows into the soul, mingles occasionally of its own therewith. But when

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

the sensual part is already renewed in the purgation of the dark night, it is no longer subject to these infirmities, because it receives so abundantly of the Spirit of God, that it seems rather to be received into that Spirit itself, as into that which is greater and grander. Thus it possesses everything according to the measure of the Spirit, in an admirable manner, of Whom it is a partaker, united with God.

5. The second source of these rebellious movements is satan, who, in order to disquiet the soul during prayer, or when preparing for it, causes these filthy movements of our lower nature, and these, when in any degree admitted, are injury enough. Some persons not only relax in their prayers through fear of these movements, which is the object of satan when he undertakes to assail them, but even abandon them altogether, for they imagine that they are more liable to these assaults during prayer than at other times. This is certainly true ; for the devil then assails them more than at other times, that they may cease from prayer.

6. This is not all ; for he represents before them then, most vividly, the most foul and

filthy images, and occasionally in close relation with certain spiritual things and persons, by whom their souls are profited, that he may terrify and crush them. Some are so grievously assailed that they dare not dwell upon anything, for it becomes at once a stumbling-block to them, especially

CHAP. IV.] OF THE SOUL.

those who are of a melancholy temperament ; these are so vehemently and effectually assailed as to be objects of the deepest pity. When melancholy is the occasion of these visitations of satan, men in general cannot be delivered from them till their bodily health is improved, unless they shall have entered on the dark night which purifies them wholly.

7. The third source of these depraved movements which war against the soul is usually the fear of them, for this fear which is brought about by a sudden remembrance of them, in a look, a word, or thought, makes souls suffer from them, but without fault on their part.

8. Sometimes, spiritual persons, when either speaking of spiritual things, or doing good works, display a certain energy and strength arising out of their consideration for persons present, and that with a certain measure of vain joy. This also proceeds from spiritual luxury in the sense in which I use the word, and is accompanied at times by a certain complacency of the will.

9. Some, too, form spiritual friendships with others, the source of which is luxury, and not spirituality. We may know it to be so by observing whether the remembrance of that affection increases our recollection and love of God, or brings remorse of conscience. When this affection is purely spiritual, the love of God grows with it, and the more we think of it the more we think of God, and the greater our longing for Him ; for the

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

one grows with the other. The spirit of God has this property, that it increases good by good, because there is a likeness and conformity between them. But when this affection springs out of the vice of sensuality, its effects are quite opposite ; for the more it grows, the more is the love of God diminished, and the remembrance of Him also ; for if this earthly love grows, that of God cools down ; the remembrance of that love brings forgetfulness of God and a certain remorse of conscience.

10. On the other hand, if the love of God grows in ^the soul, the human love cools, and is forgotten ; for as they are contrary the one to the other, not only do they not help each other, but the one which predominates suppresses the other, and strengthens itself, as philosophers say. And so our Saviour tells us in the gospel, saying, < that which is bom of the flesh is flesh, and that which is bom of the spirit is spirit that love which I grows out of sensuality ends in the same, and that which is spiritual ends in the spirit of God, and makes it grow. This is the difference between these two loves, whereby we may know them. When the soul enters the dark night, these affections are ruled by reason ; that night strengthens and purifies the affection which is according to God, and removes, destroys, or mortifies the other. In the beginning both are by it put out of sight, as I [shall explain hereafter.f

* S. John iii. 6. *f Ch. xiii. n.

CHAP. V.]

OF THE SOUL.

CHAPTER V.

Of the imperfections of beginners in the matter of anger.

Many beginners, because of their inordinate appetite for spiritual sweetness, generally fall into many imperfections in the matter of anger ; for when spiritual f things minister to them no more sweetness and delight, they naturally become peevish, and in that bitterness of spirit prove a burden to themselves in all they do : trifles make them angry, and they are at times intolerable to all about them. (^This happens generally after great sweetness in prayer ; and so, when that sensible sweetness is past, their natural temper is soured . and rendered morose^ They are like a babe weaned from the breast, which he found so sweet. When this natural feeling of displeasure is not permitted to grow, there is no sin, but only imperfection, which will ‘ have to be purged away in the severity and aridities of the * dark night.

2. There are other spiritual persons, too, among these who fall into another kind of spiritual anger. They are 1 angry with other people for their faults, with a sort of unquiet zeal, and watch them ; they are occasionally moved to blame them, and even do so in anger, con- , stituting themselves guardians of virtue. All this is, contrary to spiritual meekness.

3. Others, again, seeing their own imperfections, become angry with themselves with an impatience that is not humble. They are so impatient with their shortcomings as if they would be saints in one day. Many of these make many and grand resolutions, but, being self-confident and not humble, the more they resolve, the more they fall, and the more angry they become ; not having the patience to wait for God's time ; this is also opposed to spiritual meekness. There is no perfect remedy for this but in the dark night. There are, however, some people who are so patient,

and who advance so slowly in their spiritual progress, that God wishes they were not so patient.

CHAPTER VI.

Of the imperfections in the matter of spiritual gluttony.

There is much to say of the fourth capital sin, which is spiritual gluttony, for there is scarcely one among beginners, however good his progress, who, in the matter of this sin, does not fall into some of the many imperfections to which beginners are liable, because ot that sweetness which in the beginning they find in spiritual exercises.

2. Many beginners, delighting in the sweetness and joy of their spiritual occupations, strive after spiritual sweetness rather than after pure and true devotion.

CHAP. VI.] OF THE SOUL.

which is that which God regards and accepts in the whole course of the spiritual way. For this reasofiri over and above their imperfection in seeking after; sweetness in devotion, that spirit of gluttony, which has taken possession of them, forces them to overstep , the limits of moderation, within which virtue is acquired { and consists. For allured by the delights they then experience, some of them kill themselves by penances, , and others weaken themselves by fasting. They tak^ upon themselves more than they can bear, without rule or advice ; they try to conceal their austerities from those whom they are bound to obey, and some even venture to practise them though commanded to abstain. These are full of imperfections — unreasonable people, who undervalue submission and obedience, which is the] penance of the reason and judgment, and therefore a more acceptable and sweet sacrifice unto God than all the acts of bodily penance. Bodily penance is full of imperfections when the penance of the will is neglected, for men undertake it merely because they * like it, and for the sweetness which they find in it.

3. Inasmuch then as all extremes are vicious, and as in this course of conduct men follow their own will, the # consequences are that they grow in vice and not in virtue ; at least they minister to their spiritual gluttony and pride, for they do not walk in the way of obedience. 1 The devil so deceives many of them by exciting their

24 THE DARK NIGHT [BOOK I.

gluttony through this sweetness which he increases, that, since they cannot obey, they either change, or vary, or add to, what is commanded them ; so hard and bitter is obedience become. The evil has so grown upon some, that they lose all desire to do their spiritual duties the instant obedience enjoins them; because all their satisfaction consists in doing that which pleases them, and perhaps it would be better for them to leave it undone.

4. Many of these importune their spiritual directors to allow them to do their own will : they extort that permission as if by force, and if it be refused, they mope like children, and become discontented, and think they are not serving God whenever they are thwarted. These persons clinging to sweetness and their own will, the moment they are contradicted, and directed according to the will of God, become fretful, fainthearted, and then fall away. They imagine that to please and satisfy themselves, is to serve and please God.

5. Others also there are, who, by reason of this spiritual gluttony, are so ignorant of their own meanness and misery, and so insensible to that loving fear and reverence due to the majesty of God, that they are not afraid to insist on being allowed by their confessors to confess and communicate frequently. And what is much worse, they very often dare to communicate without the leave and sanction of the minister and

CHAP. VI.] OF THE SOUL.

steward of Christ, purely out of their own head, and hide the truth from him. This

eagerness for communion makes them confess carelessly, for they are more anxious to communicate anyhow than to communicate in pureness and perfection. It would be more profitable for them, and a holier course, to beg their confessors not to enjoin such frequent communions ; though the better way between these two extremes is to be humble and resigned. This excessive boldness leads to great evil, and men may well be in fear of chastisement for such rashness.

6. These persons, when they communicate, strive with all their might for sensible sweetness, instead of worshipping in humility and praising God within themselves. So much are they given to this, that they think when they derive no sensible sweetness, they have done nothing, so meanly do they think of God; ^neither do they understand that the least of the blessings of the Most Holy Sacrament is that which touches the senses, and that the invisible grace It confers is far greater p for God frequently withholds these sensible favours from men, that they may fix the eyes of faith upon Himself. But these persons will feel and taste God, as if He were palpable and accessible to them, not only in communion but in all their other acts of devotion. All this is a very great imperfection, and directly at variance with the nature of God, Who demands the purest faith.

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

7. They conduct themselves in the same way when they are praying; for they imagine that the whole business of prayer consists in sensible devotion, and this they strive to obtain with all their might, wearying out their brains and perplexing all the faculties of their souls. When they miss that sensible devotion, they are cast down, thinking they have done nothing. This effort after sweetness destroys true devotion and spirituality, which consist in perseverance in prayer with patience and humility,

mistrusting self, solely to please God. Therefore, when they once miss sweetness in prayer, or in any other act of religion, they feel a sort of repugnance to resume it, and sometimes cease from it altogether.

8. In this they are, as we said just now, like children who are not influenced by reason, but by their inclinations. 'They waste their time in the search after spiritual consolation, and are never satisfied with reading good books, taking up one meditation after another, in the pursuit of sensible sweetness in the things of God. God refuses it to them most justly, wisely, and lovingly, for if He did not, this spiritual gluttony on their part would grow into great evils. For this reason, it is most necessary that they should enter into the dark night, that they may be cleansed from this childishness.

9. They who are bent on sensible sweetness, labour also under another very great imperfection: excessive weakness and remissness on the rugged road of the cross ;

CHAP. VII.] OF THE SOUL.

for the soul that is given to sweetness naturally sets its face against all the pain of self-denial. They labour under many other imperfections, which have their origin here, of which our Lord will heal them in due time, through temptations, aridities and trials, elements of the dark night. I will not enlarge upon them here, that I may avoid prolixity ; but this will I say, that spiritual soberness and temperance produce a far different temper, that of mortification, of fear and submission in all things ; showing us that the perfection and value of things consist not in the multitude thereof, but in our knowing how to deny ourselves in them. Spiritual men must labour after this with all their might, until it shall please God to purify them by leading them into the dark night. I hasten on with the description of these imperfections, that I may enter on the explanation of it.

CHAPTER VII.

Of the imperfections in the matter of envy and spiritual sloth.

Beginners are not free from many imperfections, in the matter of the two other vices, envy and spiritual sloth. Many of them are often vexed because of other men's goodness. They are sensibly afflicted when others outstrip them on the spiritual road, and will not endure to hear them praised. They become fretful over other men's virtues, and are sometimes unable to refrain from

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

contradiction when they are commended ; they depreciate them as much as they can, and feel acutely because they themselves are not thought so well of, for they wish to be preferred above all others. This is most opposed to that charity of which S. Paul says, it ‘rejoiceth with the truth/* If charity admits of envy at all, it is a holy envy that makes us grieve that we have not the virtues that others have ; but still rejoicing that they have them, and glad that others outstrip us in the race that they may serve God, we being so full of imperfection ourselves.

2 . As to spiritual sloth, beginners are wont to find their most spiritual occupations irksome, and avoid them as repugnant to their taste, for being so given to sweetness in spiritual things, they loathe them when they find none. If they miss once this sweetness in prayer which is their joy — it is expedient that God should deprive them of it in order to try them — they will not resume it ; at other times they omit it, or return to it with a bad grace. Thus, under the influence of sloth they neglect the way of perfection — which is the denial of their will and pleasure for God — for the gratification of their own will, which they serve rather than the will of God.

3. Many of these will have it that God should will that which they will, and are afflicted when they must

* 1 Cor. xiii. 0.

CHAP. VII.] OF THE SOUL.

will that which He wills, reluctantly submitting their own to the divine will. The result is that they frequently imagine that what is not according to their will is also not according to the will of God ; and, on the other hand, when they are pleased, they believe that , God is pleased. They measure Him by themselves, and not themselves by Him, in direct contradiction to His teaching in the gospel ; ‘ He that shall lose his life for My sake, shall find it/* That is, he who shall give up his will for God shall have it, and he who will have it, he shall have it never.

4. They also find it wearisome to obey when they are commanded to do that which they like not ; and , because they walk in the way of consolation and spiritual sweetness, they are too weak for the rough trials of perfection. They are like persons delicately nurtured who avoid with heavy hearts all that is hard and rugged, and are offended at the Cross wherein the / joys of the spirit consist. The more spiritual the work they have to do, the more irksome do they feel it to be. * And because they insist on having their own way and will in spiritual things, they enter on the < strait way that leadeth unto life/f of which Christ speaks, with repugnance and heaviness of heart.

5. Let this reference to these imperfections among the many under which they labour, who are in the first

* S. Matt. xvi. 25. f S. Matt. vii. 14.

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

state of beginners, suffice to show them how necessary it is for them that God should bring them to the state of proficients, which He effects when He leads them into the dark night of which we shall now speak. In that night He weans them from the breasts of sweetness, in pure aridities and interior darkness, cleanses them from all these imperfections and childish ways, and by ways most different, makes them grow in virtue. For after all the exertions of beginners to mortify themselves in their actions and passions, their success will not be perfect, or even great, until God Himself shall do it for them in the purgation of the dark night. / May God be pleased to give me His light, that I may speak profitably of this ; for I have great need of it while treating of a night so dark and a subject so difficult/

CHAPTER VIII.

Explanation of the first line of the first stanza. ‘ Beginning of the explanation of the dark night.'

‘In a dark night/ This night — it is c ontemplation — produces in spiritual men two sorts of darkness or purgations comformable to the two divisions of man’s nature into sensual and spiritual. Thus the first night, or sensual purgation, wherein the soul is purified or detached, will be of the senses, subjecting them to the ^spirit. The other is that night or spiritual purgation

CHAP, vni.]

OF THE SOUL.

wherein the soul is purified and detached in the spirit, l H and which subdues and disposes it for union with Godr in love. The night of sense is common, and the lot of many : these are the beginners, of whom I shall first speak. The spiritual night is the

portion of very few ; and they are those who have made some progress,] exercised therein, of whom I shall speak hereafter.* ^ — 3

2. The first night, or purgation, is bitter and terrible , to sense. The second is not to be compared with it, for it is much more awful to the spirit, as I shall soon show.t But as the night of sense is the first in order and the first to be entered, I shall speak of it briefly — for being of ordinary occurrence, it is the matter of many treatises — that I may pass on to treat more at large of the spiritual night ; for of that very little hai been said, either by word of mouth or in writing, ajias little is known of it even by experience.

3. But the behaviour of these beginners on the way of God is not noble, and very much according to their own liking and self-love, as I have said before.* Meanwhile, God seeks to raise them higher, to draw them out of this miserable manner of loving to a higher state of the , love of God, to deliver them from the low usage of the senses and meditation whereby they seek after God, as

I said before, § in ways so miserable and so unworthy of Him. He seeks to place them in the way of the spirit

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

wherein they may the more abundantly, and more free from imperfections, commune with God now that they have been for some time tried in the way of goodness, persevering in meditation and prayer, and because of the sweetness they found therein have withdrawn their affections from the things of this world, and gained a certain spiritual strength in God, whereby they in some measure curb their love of the creature, and are able for the love of God, to carry a slight burden of dryness, * without going back to that more pleasant time when their spiritual

exercises abounded in delights, and when the sun of the divine graces shone as they think, more clearly upon them. God is now changing that light into darkness, and sealing up the door of the fountain of the sweet spiritual waters, which they tasted in God as often and as long as they wished. For when they were weak and tender, this door was then not shut, as it is written, ‘Behold, I have given before thee an opened door, which no man can shut ; because thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name/*

4. God thus leaves them in darkness so great that they know not whither to betake themselves with their imaginations and reflections of sense. They cannot advance a single step in meditation, as before, the inward sense now being overwhelmed in this night, and * Apoc. iii. 8.

CHAP. VHI.] OF THE SOUL.

abandoned to dryness so great that they have no more any joy or sweetness in their spiritual exercises, as they had before ; and in their place they find nothing but insipidity and bitterness. For, as I said before,* God now, looking upon them as somewhat grown in grace, weans them from the breasts that they may become strong, and cast their swaddling-clothes aside : He carries them in His arms no longer, and shows them how to walk alone. All this is strange to them, for all things seem to go against them.

5. Recollected persons enter the dark night sooitefif than others, after they have begun their spiritual course t (because they are kept at a greater distance from the occasions of falling away* and because they correct more quickly their worldly desires, which is necessary in orderly to begin to enter the blessed night of sense. In general, there elapses no great length of time after they have begun before they enter the night of sense, and most of them do enter it, for they generally suffer aridities. The Holy Scriptures throughout, but especially the Psalms , and the prophetical

books, furnish many illustrations of the night of sense, for it is so common ; but, to avoid prolixity, I omit them for the present, though I shall make use of some of them later on.

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

CHAPTER IX.

Of the signs by which it may be known that the spiritual man is walking in the way of this night or purgation

of sense.

But as these aridities frequently proceed, not from this night and purgation of the sensitive appetite, but from sins or imperfections, from weakness or lukewarmness, from some physical derangement or bodily indisposition, I shall here propose certain tests by which we may . ascertain whether a particular aridity proceeds from the purgation of sense, or from any one of the vices I have just enumerated. There are three chief tests for this

(purpose :

2. The first is this : when we find no comfort in the things of God, and none also in created things. For \ when God brings the soul into the dark night in order to wean it from sweetness and to purge the desire of Isense, He does not allow it to find sweetness or comfort • £j>ywhere. It is then probable, in such a case, that this dryness is not the result of sins or of imperfections recently committed ; for if it were, we should feel some inclination or desire for other things than those of God. Whenever we give the reins to our desires in the way of any imperfection, our

desires are instantly attracted to it, much or little, in proportion to the affection for it. But still, inasmuch as this absence of pleasure in the things of heaven and of earth may proceed from bodily

CHAP. IX.] OF THE SOUL.

indisposition or a melancholy temperament, which * frequently cause dissatisfaction with all things, the second test and condition become necessary.

3. The second test and condition of this purgation are that the memory dwells ordinarily upon God with ar; painful anxiety and carefulness, the soul thinks it is not serving God, but going backwards, because it is no longer conscious of any sweetness in the things of God.

In that case it is clear that this weariness of spirit and aridity are not the results of weakness and lukewarmness ; for the peculiarity of lukewarmness is the want of earnestness in, and of interior solicitude for, the things of God.

4. There is, therefore, a great difference between! dryness and lukewarmness, for the latter consists in r great remissness and weakness of will and spirit, in the want of all solicitude about serving God. The true ^ purgative aridity is accompanied in general by a , painful anxiety, because the soul thinks that it is not serving God. Though this be occasionally increased by melancholy or other infirmity — so it sometimes happens — yet it is not for that reason without its purgative effects on the desires, because the soul is deprived of all sweetness, and its sole anxieties are 1 referred to God. For when mere bodily indisposition is the cause, all that it does is to produce disgust and the ruin of bodily health, without the desire of serving God

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

which belongs to the purgative aridity. In this aridity, though the sensual part of man be greatly depressed, weak and sluggish in good works, by reason of the little satisfaction they furnish, the spirit is, nevertheless, ready and strong.

5. The cause of this dryness is that God is transferring to the spirit the goods and energies of the senses, which, having no natural fitness for them, become dry, parched up, and empty ; for the sensual nature of man is helpless in those things which belong to the spirit simply. Thus the spirit having been tasted, the flesh becomes weak and remiss ; but the spirit, having received its proper nourishment, becomes strong, more vigilant and careful than before, lest there should be any negligence in serving God. At first it is not conscious of any spiritual sweetness and delight, but rather of aridities and distaste, because of the novelty of the change. The palate accustomed to sensible sweetness looks for it still. And because the spiritual palate is not prepared and purified for so delicious a taste until it shall have been for some time disposed for it in this arid and dark night, it cannot taste of the spiritual good, but rather of aridity and distaste, because it misses that which it enjoyed so easily before.

6. \£hese, whom God begins to lead through the solitudes of the wilderness, are like the children of Israel, who, though God began to feed them, as soon as

CHAP. IX.] OF THE SOUL.

they were in the wilderness, with the manna of heaven, which was so sweet that as it is written, it turned to what every man liked , *j were more sensible to the loss of the onions and flesh of Egypt — for they liked them and had revelled in them — than to the delicious sweetness of the angelical food. So they wept and bewailed the flesh-pots of Egypt, saying, i We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free-cost ;

^the cucumbers come into our mind, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic/ 1 Our appetite becomes so depraved that we long for miserable trifles, and loathe the priceless gifts of heaven.

7. But when these aridities arise in the purgative way of the sensual appetite, the spirit though at first without any sweetness, for the reasons I have given, is conscious of strength and energy to act because of the substantial nature of its interior food, which is the commencement of contemplation, dim and dry to the

senses. This contemplation is in general secret, and unknown to him who is admitted into it, and with the aridity and emptiness which it produces in the senses, , it makes the soul long for solitude and quiet, without the power of reflecting on anything distinctly, or even desiring to do so.

8. Now, if they who are in this state knew how to be quiet, to disregard every interior and exterior work, —

* Exod. xvi. 15, Wisd. xvi. 21. t Numb. xi. 5.

38 THE DARK NIGHT [BOOK I.

for the accomplishment of which they labour, — to be without solicitude about everything, and resign

* themselves into the hands of God, with a loving interior obedience to His voice, they would have, in this tranquillity, a most delicious sense of this interior food. This food is so delicate that, in general, it eludes our perceptions if we make any special effort to feel it, for, as I am saying, it does its work when the soul is most tranquil and free ; it is like the air which vanishes when we shut our hands to grasp it.

9. The words of the bridegroom which, addressed to the bride, in the Canticles, are applicable to this matter :

4 Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have made me flee away/* For this is God's way of bringing the soul into this state; the road by which He leads it is so

• ^SifFerent from the first, that if it will do anything in its

own strength, it will hinder rather than aid His work. It was far otherwise once.

10. The reason is this : God is now working in the soul, in the state of contemplation, that is, when it advances from meditation to the state of proficients, in such a way as to seem to have bound up all the interior faculties, leaving no help in the understanding, no sweetness in the will, no reflections in the memory. Therefore, at this time, all that the soul can do of itself ends, as I have said, in disturbing the peace and the

* Cant. vi. 4.

CHAP. IX.] OF THE SOUL.

work of God in the spirit amid the dryness of sense. This peace, being spiritual and delicate, effects a work that is quiet and delicate, pacific and utterly alien from the former delights, which were most gross and sensual. This is that peace, according to the Psalmist, which God speaks in the soul to make it spiritual. ' He wil^ speak peace upon His people/* This brings us to the third test.

11. The th ird si gn we have for ascertaining whether this dryness be the purgation of sense, is inability to ,

meditate and make refle ctions, and to excite the

imagin ation, as before, notwithstanding all the efforts we may make ; for God begins now to communicate * Himself, no longer through the channel of sense, as formerly, in consecutive reflections, by which we ' arranged and divided our knowledge, but in pure spirit, which admits not of successive reflections, and [/ in the act of pure contemplation, to which neither the interior nor the exterior senses of

our lower nature can ascend. Hence it is that the fancy and the imagination , cannot help or suggest any reflections, nor use them ever afterwards.

12. It is understood here that this embarrassment and dissatisfaction of the senses do not arise out of any bodily ailment. When they arise from this, the indisposition, which is always changeable, having

* Ps. Ixxxiv. 9.

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

ceased, the powers of the soul recover their former energies, and find their previous satisfactions at once. It is otherwise in the purgation of the appetite, for as soon as we enter upon this, the inability to make our meditations continually grows. It is true that this purgation at first, is not continuous in some persons, for they are not altogether without sensible sweetness and comfort —their weakness renders their rapid weaning inexpedient — nevertheless, it grows upon them more and more, and the operations of sense diminish ; if they are going on to perfection. They, however, who are not walking in the way of contemplation, meet with a very different treatment, for the night of aridities is not continuous with them, they are sometimes in it, and sometimes not ; they are at one time unable to meditate, and at another able as before.

13. God leads these persons into this night only to try them and to humble them, and to correct their desires, that they may not grow up spiritual gluttons, and not for the purpose of leading them into the way of the spirit, which is contemplation. God does not raise to perfect contemplation everyone that is tried in the way of the spirit, and He alone knoweth why. Hence it is that these persons are never wholly weaned from the breasts of meditations and reflections, but only, as I have said, at intervals and at

certain seasons.

CHAP. X.]

OF THE SOUL.

CHAPTER X.

How they are to conduct themselves who have entered the

dark night.

During the aridities, then, of the night of sense — whenj God effects the change of which I have spoken,* drawing the soul out of the way of sense into that of the spirit, from meditation to contemplation, where it is helpless in ' the things of God, so far as its own powers are concerned, as I have said,t — s^iritual^B Lersons have to endur e_great afflictions^ not sa much because of aridity, but because

the y are afraid tha t they will be lost on this road ; thinking that they are spiritually ruined, and that God ' has forsaken the m, b ecause they find no help orj consolatipRTn^ioly^things. Under these circumstances, they weary themselves, and strive, as they were wont, to fix the powers of the soul with some satisfaction upon some matter of meditation, imagining when they cannot do this, and are conscious of the effort, that they are doing nothing. This they do not without great dislike and inward unwillingness on the part of the soul, which enjoys its state of quietness and rest.

2. In thus turning away from this state they, make no progress in the other, because, by exerting their own spirit, they lose that spirit which they had, that of ' tranquillity and peace. They are like a man who does his work over again ; or who goes out of a city that he * Ch. ix., § 5 . t viii. f § 4*

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

may enter it once more; or who lets go what he has caught in hunting that he may hunt it again. Their labour is in vain ; for they will find nothing, and that because they are turning back to their former ways, as I have said already.*

3. Under these circumstances, if they meet with no one who understands the matter, these persons fall away, and abandon the right road ; or become weak, or at least put hindrances in the way of their further advancement, because of the great efforts they make to proceed in their former way of meditation, fatiguing their natural powers beyond measure. They think that their state is the result of negligence or of sin. All their own efforts are now in vain, because God is leading them by another and a very different road, that of contemplation, (jheir

first road was that of discursive reflection, but the second

knows no imagination or reasoning. |

4. It behoves those who find themselves in this condition to take courage, and persevere in patience. Let them not afflict themselves, but put their confidence in God, who never forsakes those who seek Him with a pure and upright heart. Neither will He withhold from them all that is necessary for them on this road until He brings them to the clear and pure light of love, which He will show them in that other dark night of the spirit, if they shall merit an entrance into it.

♦ Ascent of Mount Carmel, bk. ii., ch. xii. § 10.

CHAP. X.] OF THE SOUL.

5. The conduct to be observed in the night of sense J is this : in nowise have recourse to meditation s, for, as I h a ve j> a id, the time is now past, le t the soul be

quiet and at rest, though they may think they are doin g noth ing, that they are losing time, and that their lukewarmness is the reason of their unwillingness to employ their thoughts. T hey will do eno ugh if they keep patience,, # and_persevere_Jn_prayer ; all they have to do is to keep their soul free, unembarrassed, and^ at rest from all th oughts and all knowledge, not anxious about their meditation, contenting themselves simply with directing their attention lovingly and calmly towards God ; and all this without anxiety or effort, or immoderate desire to feel and taste His presence. For all such efforts disquiet the soul, and distract it from the calm repose and sweet tranquillity of contemplation to which they • are now admitted.

6. And though they may have many ^scruples^ that they are wasting time, and that it may be better for them to betake themselves to some other good work, seeing that in prayer and meditation they are become helpless ; yet let them be patient with themselves, and remain quiet, for that which they are uneasy about is their own satisfaction and liberty of spirit. If they were now to exert their interior faculties, they would simply hinder and ruin the good which, in that repose, God is working in the soul ; for if a man while sitting for his

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

portrait cannot be still, but moves about, the painter will never depict his face, and even the work already done will be spoiled.

7. In the same way when the soul interiorly rests, every action and passion, or anxious consideration at that time, will distract and disturb it, and make it feel the dryness and emptiness of sense. The more it strives to_find hel p in affections and knowledge, the more will it feel the deficiency which cannot now be supplied i n

that way . It is therefore expedient for the soul which is in this condition not to be troubled because its faculties have become useless, yea, rather it should desire that they may become so quickly ; for by not hindering the operation of infused contemplation, to which God is now admitting it, the soul is refreshed in peaceful abundance, and set on fire with the spirit of love, which this contemplation, dim and secret, induces and establishes within it.

8. Still, I do not mean to lay down a general rule for the cessation from meditation ; that should occur when meditation is no longer feasible, and only then, when our Lord, either in the way of purgation and affliction or of the most perfect contemplation, shall make it impossible. At other times, and on other occasions, this help must be had recourse to, namely, meditation o n the life jmd passioj n_ of Chris t^whic h is the J best_ means of purification and of patience and of security on the road.

CHAP. XI.] OF THE SOUL.

and an admirable aid to the highest contemplation. Contemplation is nothing else but a secret, peaceful, , and loving infusion of God, which, if admitted, will set the soul on fire with the spirit of love, as I shall show in the explanation of the following verse.

CHAPTER XI.

STANZA^ I.

With anxious love inflamed.

The burning fire of love, in general, is not felt at first, for it has not begun to burn, either because of our natural impurity, or because the soul, not understanding its

own state, has not given it, as I have said,* a peaceful rest within. Sometimes, however, whether it be so or not, a certain longing after God begins to be 1 felt ; and the more it grows, the more the soul feels itself touched and inflamed with the love of God, without knowing or understanding how or whence that love comes, except that at times this burning so inflames it that it longs earnestly after God. David in this night said of himself, * My heart is inflamed, and my reins are changed, and I am brought to nothing, and knew not.'f That is, ‘my heart hath been inflamed' in the love of[contemplation ; ‘ my reins,' that is, my tastes and affections also, have been changed from the sensual to

* Ascent of Mount Carmel, bk. ii., ch. 13, § 4. t Ps. lxxii. 21, 22.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book I.

the spiritual way by this holy dryness, and in my denial of them, and ‘ I am brought to nothing, and I knew not/ The soul, as I have just said, not knowing the way it goeth, sees itself brought to nothing as to all things of heaven and earth, wherein it delighted before, and on fire with love, not knowing how.

2. And because occasionally this fire of love grows in the spirit greatly, the longings of the soul for God are so deep that the very bones seem to dry up in that thirst, the bodily health to wither, the natural warmth and energies to perish in the intensity of that thirst of love. The soul feels it to be a livings thirsts So was it with David when he said, 1 My soul hath thirsted after God, the strong, living/* It is as if he had said, the thirst of my soul is a living thirst. We may say of this thirst, that being a living thirst, it kills. Though this thirst is not continuously, but only occasionally, violent, nevertheless it is always felt in some degree.

3. I commenced by observing that this love, in general, is not felt at first, but only the dryness and emptiness of which I am speaking ; and then, instead of love, which

is afterwards enkindled, what the soul feels in the dryness and the emptiness of its faculties is a general painful anxiety about God, and a certain painful misgiving that it is not serving Him. But a soul anxious and afflicted for His sake, is a sacrifice not a little

* Ps. xli. 3.

CHAP. XI.] OF THE SOUL.

pleasing unto God. Secret contemplation keeps the soul in this state of anxiety, until, in the course ot time, having purged the sensual nature of man, in some degree, of its natural forces and affections by means of the aridities it occasions, it shall have kindled within it this divine love. But in the meantime, like a sick man in t he hands of his physician T all it has to do, in the dark night and dry purgation of the desire, is to suffer, healing its many imperfections and practising many virtues, that it may become meet for the divine love, of which I shall speak while explaining the following line :

O happy lot 1

4. When God establishes the soul in the dark night \ of sense, that He may purify, prepare, and subdue its lower nature, and unite it to the spirit, by depriving it of light, and causing it to cease from meditation — as He afterwards establishes it also in the spiritual night, that He may purify the spirit, and prepare it for union with Himself— the soul makes a gain so great, though it does not think so, that it looks upon it as great happiness to , have escaped from the bondage of the senses of its lower nature in that happy night, and therefore it sings — ‘Jp happy lot ! *

5. It is necessary now for us to point out the benefits which accrue to the soul in this night, and for the sake of which it pronounces itself happy in having passed

THE DARK NIGHT

[book I.

through it. All these benefits are comprised in these words :

Forth unobserved I went.

6. f This going forth of the soul is to be understood of that subjection to sense under which it laboured when it~^ was seeking after God in weak, narrow, and fitful ways, for such are the ways of man's lower nature. It then fell at every step into a thousand imperfections and ignorances, as I showed while speaking of the seven capital sins, from all of which the spiritual man is delivered in the dark night which quenches all desire in all things whatsoever, and deprives him of all his lights in meditation, and brings with it other innumerable blessings in the acquirement of virtue, as I shall now show.

7. It will be a great joy and comfort to him who travels on this road, to observe how that which seemed so rugged and harsh, so contrary to spiritual sweetness, works in him so great a good. This good flows from going forth, as I am saying, as to all affections and operations of the soul, from all created things, in this night, and journeying towards those which are eternal, which is a great happiness and a great good. In the first place, because the desires are extinguished in all things ; and in the second place, because they are few who persevere and enter in through the narrow gate, by

CHAP. XII.] OF THE SOUL.

the strait way that leadeth to life : ‘ How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it ! ’* are words of our Lord.

8. The narrow gate is this night of sense. The soufl detaches itself from sense that it may enter on it, » directing itself by faith, which is a stranger to all sense, that it may afterwards travel along the strait road of the other night of the spirit, by which it advances towards God in most pure faith, which is the means of union with^ Him.

This road, because so strait, dark, and terrible — for there is no comparison, as I shall show,f between its trials and darkness and those of the night of sense — is travelled by very few, but its blessings are so much the more. I shall begin now to say somewhat, with the utmost brevity, of the blessings of the night of sense, that I may pass on to the other.

CHAPTER XII.

Of the benefits which the night of sense brings to the soul.

This night and purgation of the appetite is full of happiness to the soul, involving grand benefits, though, as I have said,* it seems to it as if all were lost. As Abraham made a great feast on the day of Isaac's weaning, § so there is joy in heaven when God takes a soul out of its swaddling clothes ; when He takes His

* S. Matt. vii. 14. t Bk. ii. ch. xii. \ Ch. x. § 3. § Gen. xxi. 8.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book I.

arms from under it, and makes it walk alone ; when He denies it the sweet milk of the breast and the delicate food of children, and gives it bread with the crust to eat ; when it begins to taste the bread of the strong, which, in the aridities and darkness of sense, is given to the spirit 1 emptied and dried of ^11 sensible sweetness ; namely, the * bread of infused contemplati on, of which I have spoken.* This is the first and chief benefit which the soul gains here, and from which almost all the others flow.

^ 2 ? Of these, the first is the knowledge of self and its » own vileness. For over and

above that those graces which God bestows on the soul, are ordinarily included in this knowledge of self, these aridities and the ' emptiness of the faculties as to their former abounding, and the difficulty which good works present, bring the soul to a knowledge of its own vileness and misery, which in the season of prosperity it saw not. This truth is vividly shadowed forthjm the book of Exodus. There we read that God, about to humble the children of Israel and bring them to a knowledge of themselves, commanded them to lay aside their ornaments and festival attire, which they ordinarily wore in the wilderness, saying, t ‘ Now, lay aside thy ornaments ; ’ that is, lay aside thy festival attire, and put on thy working dress, that thou mayest know what treatment thou hast deserved.

* Ch. vii. § 8. | Exod. xxxiii. 5.

CHAP, xn.] OF THE SOUL.

3. It is as if He said to the people : ‘ Inasmuch as the ornaments you wear, being those of joy and festivity, are the cause why you think not meanly of yourselves — you really are mean — lay them aside ; so that henceforth clad in vile garments, you may acknowledge that you deserve nothing better, and also who and what you are.

4. Hereby the soul learns the reality of its own misery, which before it knew not. For in the day of festivity when it found great sweetness, comfort, and help in God, it was highly satisfied and pleased, thinking that it rendered some service to God. For though it may not then explicitly say so, yet, on account of the satisfaction it finds, it is not wholly free from feeling it. But when it has put on the garments of heaviness, of aridity and abandonment, when its previous lights have become darkness, it possesses and retains more truly that excellent and necessary virtue of self-knowledge, counting itself for nothing, and having no satisfaction in itself, because it sees that of itself it does and can do nothing.

5. This diminished satisfaction with self, and the affliction it feels because it thinks that it is not serving God, God esteems more highly than all its former delights and

all its good works, however great they may have been; for they were occasions of many imperfections and ignorances. But in this garb of aridity, not only these, of which I am speaking, but

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

other benefits also of which I shall presently speak, and many more than I can speak of, flow as from their i proper source and fount, that of self-knowledge.

6. In the first place, the soul learns to commune with / God with more respect and reverence ; always necessary

I in converse with the Most High. Now, in its prosperous Ldays of sweetness and consolation, the soul was less observant of reverence, for the favours it then received, rendered the desire somewhat bold with God, and less reverent than it should have been. Thus it was with Moses, when he heard the voice of God ; for carried away , by the delight he felt, he was venturing, without further consideration, to draw near, if God had not commanded him to stop, and put off his shoes, saying, 4 Come not nigh hither; put off the shoes from thy feet/* This teaches us how reverently and discreetly in spiritual detachment we are to converse with God. When Moses had become obedient to the voice, he remained so reverent and considerate, that not only did he not venture to draw near, but, in the words of Scripture, 4 durst not look at God/t For having put off the shoes of desire and sweetness, he recognised profoundly his own * wretchedness in the sight of God, for so it became him when about to listen to the words of God.

7 . The cpndition to which God brought Job in order that he might converse with God, was not that of delight

* Exod. iii. 5. f 6.

CHAP, xn.] OF THE SOUL.

and bliss, of which he there speaks, and to which he had been accustomed. God left him in misery, naked on a dung-hill, abandoned and even persecuted by his friends, filled with bitterness and grief, covered with worms : * then it was that the Most High, Who lifteth up ‘the poor out of the dung-hill, 't was pleased to communicate Himself to Job in greater abundance and sweetness, revealing to him ‘ the deep mysteries of His wisdom / + as He had never done before in the days of Job's prosperity.

8. And now that I have to speak of it, I must here point out another great benefit of the dark night and aridity of the sensual appetite ; the fulfilment of the words of the prophet, ‘Thy light shall rise up in darkness/§ God enlightens the soul, making it see not only its own misery and meanness, as I have said, but also His grandeur and majesty. When the desires are/ quelled, and sensible joy and consolation withdrawn, the understanding remains free and clear for the reception of the truth, for sensible joy and the desire even of spiritual things darken and perplex the mind, but the trials and aridities of sense also enlighten and quicken the understanding in the words of Isaias,|| ‘VexaJ tion alone shall give understanding in the hearing/ Vexation shall make us understand how God in His

* Job. ii. 8 ; xxx. 17, iS. f Ps. cxii. 7. t Job xxxviii.

§ Is. lviii. 10. || Is. xxviii. 19.

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

divine wisdom proceeds to instruct a soul, emptied and cleansed — for such it must

be before it can be the recipient of the divine inflowing — in a supernatural way, in the dark and arid night of contemplation, which He did not do, because it was given up to its former sweetness and joy.

9. The same prophet Isaias sets this truth before us with great clearness, saying, 4 Whom shall he teach knowledge ? and whom shall he make to understand the thing heard r Them that are weaned from the milk, that are plucked away from the breasts/* The temper of mind, then, meet for the divine inflowing is not so much the milk of spiritual sweetness, nor the breasts of sweet reflections in the powers of sense, which the soul once had, as a failure of the first and withdrawal from the other. Therefore, if we would listen to the voice of the great King with due reverence, the soul must stand

1 upright, and not lean on the affections of sense for support. As the prophet Habacuc said of himself, ‘ I will stand upon my watch, and fix my step upon the munition, and I will behold to see what may be said to me/f To stand upon the watch, is to cast off all desires ; to fix the step, is to cease from reflections of sense, that

' 1 1 may behold and understand what God will speak to me. Thus out of this night springs first the knowledge of

one's self, and on that, as on a foundation, is built up the

* Is. 9. t Habac. ii. 1.

CHAP. XII.] OF THE SOUL.

knowledge of God. ‘Let me know myself/ saith St. \ Augustin, ‘ and I shall then know Thee, O my God/ for, as the philosophers say, one extreme is known byj another.

10. In order to show more fully how effectual is the night of sense, in its aridity and

desolation, to enlighten the soul more and more, I produce here the words of the Psalmist, which so clearly explain how greatly efficacious

is this night in bringing forth the knowledge of God :

i In a desert land, and inaccessible, and without water ; so in the holy have I appeared to Thee, that I might see Thy strength and Thy glory. ’^^The Psalmist does not say here— and it is worthy of observation — that his previous sweetness and delight were any dispositions or means whereby he might come to the knowledge of the glory of God, but rather that aridity and emptying of v the powers of sense spoken of here as the barren and dry land.

1 1 . Moreover, he does not say that his reflections and meditations on divine things, with which he was once familiar, had led him to the knowledge and contemplation of God's power, hnt r rather, his inability t p meditate on Go d, jto form reflections by the help of his im agination^ that is th e inacces s ible_Jand. The means, therefore, of attaining to the knowledge of God, and of ourselves, is the dark night with all its aridities

* Ps. lxii. 3.

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

and emptiness ; though not in the fulness and abundance of the other night of the spirit; for the knowledge that comes by this is, as it were, the beginning of the other. _ 12. Amid the aridities and emptiness of this night ot the desires, the soul acquires also spiritual humility, which is the virtue opposed to the first capital sin, which,

said,* is spiritual pride. The humility acquired by self-knowledge purifies the soul from all the imperfections into which it fell in the day of its prosperity. For now,

seeing itself so parched and miserable, it does not enter into its thoughts, even for a moment, to consider itself better then others, or that it has outstripped them on the spiritual road, as it did before ; on the contrary, it acknowledges that others are better.

13. Out of this grows the love of our neighbour, for it now esteems them, and no longer judges them as it used to do, when it looked upon itself as exceedingly fervent, and upon others as not. Now it sees nothing but its own misery, which it keeps so constantly before its eyes that it can look upon nothing else. This state is admirably shown by David himself, when in this dark night, saying, ‘ I was dumb, and was humbled, and kept silence from good things, and my sorrow was renewed.'f All the good of his soul seemed to him so mean that he could not speak of it ; he was silent as to the good of * Ch. ii. t Ps- xxxviii. 3.

CHAP. XIII.] OF THE SOUL.

others, because of the pain of the knowledge of his own wretchedness.

14. In this state, too, men are submissive and obedient in the spiritual way, for when they see their own wretchedness they not only listen to instruction^ ^ but desire to have it from any one who will guide their steps and tell them what they ought to do. That presumption which sometimes possessed them in their prosperity is now gone ; and, finally, all those imperfections a,re swept clean away to which I referred when I was treating of spiritual pride.

CHAPTER XIII.

Of other benefits which the night of sense brings to

the soul.

The imperfections of spiritual avarice, under the f influence of which the soul

coveted this and that spiritual good, and was never satisfied with this or that practice of devotion, because of its eagerness for the sweetness it found therein, become now, in this arid and dark night, sufficiently corrected. For when the soul / finds no sweetness and delight, as it was wont to do, in spiritual things, but rather bitterness and vexation, it has recourse to them with such moderation as to lose now, perhaps, through defect, what it lost before, through excess. Though, in general, to those who are brought

THE DARK NIGHT

[book I.

to this night, God gives humility and readiness, but without sweetness, in order that they may obey Him solely through love. Thus they detach themselves from many things, because they find no sweetness in them.

2. The soul is purified, also, from those impurities ot I spiritual luxury of which I have spoken before,* in this

aridity and bitterness of sense which it now finds in spiritual things ; for those impurities are commonly said to proceed generally from the sweetness which flowed occasionally from the spirit into the sense.

3. The imperfections of the fourth sin, spiritual > gluttony, from which the soul is delivered in the dark

night, have been discussed in a former chapter, fthough not all, because they cannot be numbered. Nor shall I speak of them here, for I wish to conclude the subject of this night, that I may pass on to the other, with regard to which I have serious things to write. Let it suffice for a knowledge of the innumerable advantages which v the soul, in addition to those already mentioned, gains, in this night, wherewith to resist spiritual gluttony, to say that it is set free from the imperfections there enumerated, and from many other and greater evils than those described, into which many fall, as

we learn by experience, because they have not corrected their desires in the matter of spiritual gluttony.

4. For when God has brought the soul into this

* Ch. iv. t Ch. vi.

CHAP. XIII.] OF THE SOUL.

arid and dark night, He so curbs desire and bridles concupiscence that it can scarcely feed at all upon the sensible sweetness of heavenly or of earthly things, and this so continuously that it corrects, mortifies, and controls its concupiscence and desires, so that the forces of its passions seem to be destroyed. Marvellous ' benefits flow from that spiritual soberness, in addition to those I have mentioned ; for because it mortifies concupiscence and desire, the soul dwells in spiritual tranquillity and peace ; for, where concupiscence and desire have no sway, there is no trouble, but, rather, the peace and consolation of God.

5. Another benefit comes from this; a constant remembrance of God, with the fear and dread that it is, ' as I have said,* going back on the spiritual way. This is a great benefit, and not one of the least, of aridity and purgation of the appetite, for the soul is purified and cleansed thereby, from those imperfections which clung to it because of the affections and desires, the effect of which is to darken and deaden the soul,

6. Another very great benefit to the soul in this night is, that it practices many virtues at once, as « patience and long suffering, which are well tried in these , aridities, the soul persevering in its spiritual exercises without sweetness or comfort. The love of God is practised, because it is no longer attracted by sweetness

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

and consolation, but by God only. The virtue ot fortitude also is practised, because amid these difficulties, and the absence of sweetness in good works from which the soul now suffers, it gathers strength from weakness, and so becomes strong : finally, all the virtues, cardinal, * theological, and moral, are practised amidst these aridities.

7. In this night the soul obtains these four benefits Inhere mentioned, namely, delight of peace, constant ' v remembrance of God, purity and cleanness of soul, the * /practice of all the virtues of which I have just spoken. ^So David speaks from his own experience when he was in this night. 4 My soul/ he saith, 4 refuses to be comforted ; I was mindful of God and was delighted, and was exercised, # and my spirit fainted/ He adds forthwith : 4 1 meditated in the night with my own heart, and I was exercised, and I swept my spirit '* clean of all affections.

8. The soul is purified also in this aridity of the desires from the imperfections of the other three capital sins of which I have spoken, f envy, anger, and sloth, and acquires the opposite virtues. Softened and humbled by these aridities, by the hardships, temptations, and afflictions which in this night try it, it becomes gentle with God, with itself, and with its neighbour. It is no longer impatiently angry with itself because of its

* Ps. lxxvi. 3, 4, 7. f Ch. vii.

CHAP. XIU.] OF THE SOUL.

own faults, nor with its neighbour because of his ; neither is it discontented or given to unseemly complaints against God because He does not sanctify it at once. As to envy, the soul is in charity with everyone, and if any envy remain, it is no longer vicious as before, when the soul was afflicted when it saw others preferred to it, and raised higher ; for now it yields to everyone considering its own misery, and the

envy it feels, if it feels any, is a virtuous envy, a desire to emulate them, which is great virtue.

9. The sloth and weariness now felt in spiritual / things are no longer vicious as they were once. They were once the fruit of spiritual delights which the soul experienced at times, and sought after when it had them

not. But this present weariness proceeds not from the

failure of sweetness, for God has taken it all away in this purgation of the desire.

10. Other innumerable benefits beside these, flow"] from this arid contemplation ; for, in the midst of these aridities and hardship, God communicates to the soul, ' when it least expects it, spiritual sweetness, most pure love, and spiritual knowledge of the most exalted kind, ' of greater worth and profit than any of which it had previous experience, though at first the soul may not think so, for the spiritual influence now communicated y is most delicate, and imperceptible by sense.

11. Finally, as the soul is purified from all sensual

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

• affections and desires, it attains to liberty of spirit, wherein the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost are had.

Tit is also delivered in a most wonderful way from the 4 hands of its three enemies — the devil, the world, and the flesh ; for when all the delight and sweetness of sense 4 are quenched, the devil, the world, and the flesh have |^no weapons and no strength wherewith to assail it.

12. These aridities, then, make the soul love God in all pureness, for now it is influenced not by the pleasure and sweetness which it found in its works — as

perhaps it was when that sweetness was present — but by the

f sole desire to please God. It is not presumptuous and self-satisfied, or perhaps it may have been in the day of

• its prosperity, but timid and diffident, without any selfsatisfaction. Herein consists that holy fear by which virtues are preserved and grow. This aridity quenches concupiscence, and our natural spirits, as I said before ;* for now, when God infuses, from time to time, His own sweetness into the soul, it would be strange if it found by any efforts of its own as has been already said,f any comfort or sweetness in any spiritual act or practice.

13. The fear of God and the desire to please Him i increase in this arid night ; for as the breasts of

sensuality which nourished and sustained the desires " which the soul followed after, become dry, nothing remains in that aridity and detachment but an anxious * Ch. iv. § 9. f Ch. ix. § 11.

CHAP. XIII.] OF THE SOUL.

desire to serve God, which is most pleasing unto Him, as it is written : ‘ a sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit/*

14. When the soul beholds the many and great benefits which have fallen to its lot in this arid purgation through w T hich it passed, it cries out with truth, ‘oh, happy lot, forth unobserved I went/ I escaped from the bondage and thraldom of my sensual desires and affections, unobserved, so that none of my three enemies were able to hinder me. These enemies of the soul already spoken of t so bind and imprison it in sensual desires and affections, that it cannot go forth out of itself to the liberty of the perfect love of God ; without them they cannot attack it.

15. Hence, when by continual mortification the four , passions of the soul are

calmed, that is, joy, grief, hope, ^ and fear, when the natural desires are lulled to sleep in • our sensual nature by persistent aridities, when the senses and the interior powers of the soul cease to be * active, and meditation no longer pursued, as has been already said,* which is the household of the lower part

of the soul, then the liberty of the spirit is unassailable by these enemies and the house remains calm and tranquil as the words that follow show.

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK I.

CHAPTER XIV.

The last line of the first stanza explained.

t My house being now at rest/ When the house ot sensuality was at rest, that is, when the passions were mortified, concupiscence quenched, the desires subdued and lulled to sleep in the blessed night of the purgation of sense, the soul began to set out on the way of the spirit, the way of proficients, which is also called the illuminative way, or the way of infused contemplation, wherein God Himself teaches and refreshes the soul without meditation or any active efforts that itself may deliberately make. Such, as I have said, is this night (and purgation of the senses.

2. But this night, in their case who are to enter into that other more awful night of the spirit, that they may go forward to the divine union of the love of God — it is not everyone, but only a few who do so in general — is attended with heavy trials and temptations of sense of long continuance, in some longer than in others ; for to some is sent the angel of satan, the spirit of impurity, to buffet them with horrible and violent temptations of the flesh, to trouble their minds with filthy thoughts, and their

imaginations with representations of sin most vividly depicted ; which, at times, becomes an affliction more grievous than death.

3 At other times this night is attended by the spirit

CHAP. XIV.] OF THE SOUL.

of blasphemy ; the thoughts and conceptions are overrun with intolerable blasphemies, which now and then are suggested to the imagination with such violence as almost to break forth in words ; this, too, is a heavy affliction.

4. Again, another hateful spirit, called by the prophet,] € the spirit of giddiness/* comes to torment them. This spirit so clouds their judgment that they are filled with a thousand scruples and perplexities so embarrassing that they can never satisfy themselves about them, nor submit their judgment therein to the counsel and direction of others. This is one of the most grievous stings and horrors of this night, approaching very nearly/ to that which takes place in the night of the spirit. ^

5. God ordinarily sends these violent storms and temptations, in the night of the purgation of the sense to those whom he is about to lead afterwards into the other night — though all do not enter in — that being thus chastened and buffeted they may prove themselves, dispose and inure sense and faculties for the union of the divine wisdom to which they are to be then admitted. For if the soul be not tempted, tried, and proved in temptations and afflictions, sense will never attain to wisdom. That is why it is said in Ecclesiasticus,f 4 What doth he know/ asks the wise man, ‘ that hath not been tried ? ... he that hath no experience

* Is. xix. 14. f Eccles. xxxiv. 9, 10, 11.

Google

66 THE DARK NIGHT [BOOK I.

knoweth little. ... he that hath not been tried, what manner of things doth he know r ' Jeremias also bears witness to the same truth, saying : ‘ thou hast chastised me, and I was instructed/* The most proper form of this chastening, for him who will apply himself unto wisdom, are those interior trials of which I am now speaking. They are that which most effectually purges sense of all sweetness and consolations, to which, by reason of our natural weakness, we are addicted, and by them the soul is really humbled that it may be prepared for its coming exaltation.

6. But how long the soul will continue in this fast and penance of sense, cannot with certainty be told, because it is not the same in all, neither are all subjected to the same temptations. These trials are measured by the divine will, and are proportioned to the imperfections, many or few, to be purged away : and also to the degree of union in love to which God intends to raise the soul ; that is the measure of its humiliations, both in their intensity and duration.

7. Those who are strong and more able to bear suffering, are purified in more intense trials, and in less time. But those who are weak are purified very slowly, with weak temptations, and the night of their purgation is long : their senses are refreshed from time to time lest they should fall away ; these, however, come late to the

* Jerem. xxxi. 18.

CHAF. XIV.] OF THE SOUL.

pureness of their perfection in this life, and some of them never. These persons are not clearly in the purgative night, nor clearly out of it ; for though they make no progress, yet in order that they may be humble and know themselves, God tries them for a season in aridities and temptations, and visits them with His con- * solations at intervals lest they should become fainthearted, and seek for comfort in the ways of the world.

8. From other souls, still weaker, God, as it were, hides Himself, that He may try

them in His love, for ^ without this hiding of His face from them they would 5 _never learn how to approach Him. But those souls that are to enter so blessed and high a state as this of the union of love, however quickly God may lead them, tarry long, in general, amidst aridities, as we see by experience. Having now brought the first book to a close, I proceed to treat of the second night.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

BOOK II.

OF THE NIGHT OF THE SPIRIT.

CHAPTER I.

The Second Night ; that of the spirit. When it begins.

{The soul, which God is leading onwards, enters not into the union of love at once when it has passed through the aridities and trials of the first purgation and night of sense ; yea, rather it must spend some time, perhaps years, after quitting the state of beginners, in exercising |itself in the state of proficients. In this state — as one released from a rigorous imprisonment — it occupies itself in divine things with much greater freedom and satisfaction, and its joy is more abundant and interior than it was in the beginning before it entered the night of sense ; its imagination and faculties are not held, as hitherto, in the bonds of meditation and spiritual reflections ; it now rises at once to most tranquil and i loving contemplation, and finds spiritual sweetness ^without the fatigue of meditation.

p2. However, as the purgation of the soul is still somewhat incomplete — the chief

part, the purgation of

CHAP. I.] OF THE SOUL.

the spirit, being wanting, without which, by reason of the union of our higher and lower nature, man being an individual, the purgation of sense, however violent it may have been, is not finished and perfect — the soul will never be free from aridities, darkness, and trials, sometimes much more severe than in the past, which are, as it were, signs and heralds of the coming night of the spirit, though not so lasting as that expected night ; for when the days of the season of this tempestuous night have passed, the soul recovers at once its wonted serenity. It is in this way that God purifies some souls who are not to rise to so high a degree of love as others^ He admits them at intervals into the night of contemplation or spiritual purgation, causing the sun to shine upon them, and then to hide its face, according to the words of the Psalmist: 4 He sendeth His crystal/ that is contemplation, 4 like morsels/* These morsels of dim contemplation are, however, never so intense as is that awful night of contemplation of which I am speaking, and in which God purposely places the soul, that He may raise it to the divine union.

3. That sweetness and interior delight, which proficients find so easily and so plentifully, come now in greater abundance than before, overflowing into the senses more than they were wont to do previous to the purgation of sense. The senses now being more purej

* Ps. cxlvii. 17.

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK II.

can taste of the sweetness of the spirit in their way with greater ease. But as the sensual part of the soul is weak, without any capacity for the strong things of the spirit, they who are in the state of proficients by reason of the spiritual communications made to the sensual part, are subject therein to great infirmities and sufferings, and physical derangements, and consequently weariness of mind, as it is written : 4 the corruptible body . . . presseth down the mind.** Hence the communications made to these cannot be very strong, intense, or spiritual, such as they are required to be for the divine union with God, because of the weakness and corruption of the sensual part which has a share in them.

4. Here is the source of ecstasies, raptures, and dislocation of theToneS^wbich^always happen whenever these communications^are not purely spiritual ; that is, granted to the mimTalone, aS In the case of the perfect, already purified in the second night of the spirit. In these, raptures and physical sufferings have no place, for they enjoy liberty of spirit with unclouded and unsuspended senses. To make it clear how necessary it is for proficients to enter into the night of the spirit, I will now proceed to point out certain imperfections and dangers which beset them.

* Wisd. ix. 15.

CHAP. II.]

OF THE SOUL.

CHAPTER II.

Of certain imperfections of proficients.

Proficients labour under two kinds of imperfections^ 'i one habitual, the other actual.

The habitual imperfections are their affections and imperfect habits which still remain, like roots, in the mind, where the purgation^ of sense could not penetrate. The difference between the purgation of these and of the others, is like the difference between plucking out a root, and tearing off a branch, or removing a fresh, and an old stain. For, as I have said,* the purgation ofl sense is, for the spirit, merely the gate and entrance of contemplation, and serves rather to bend sense to the spirit than to unite the latter with God. / The stains of the old man still remain in the spirit, though not visible to it, and if they be not removed by the strong soap and lye of the purgation of this night, the spirit cannot attain to the pureness of the divine union.

2. They suffer also from dulness of mind, and natural rudeness which every man contracts by sin ; from distraction and dissipation of mind, which must be refined, enlightened, and made recollected in the sufferings and hardships of this night. All those who have not advanced beyond the state of proficients are

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

subject to these habitual imperfections, which cannot co-exist with the perfect state of union with God in love.

3. But all are not subject to actual imperfections in the same way ; some, whose spiritual good is so much on the surface, and so much under the influence of sense, fall into certain unseemlinesses and dangers, of which I spoke in the beginning of this book. For as their mind and sense and feedings are full of fancies whereby they very often see imaginary and spiritual visions — all this, together with other pleasurable impressions, befall many of them in this state, wherein the devil and their own proper fancy most frequently delude the soul — and as satan is wont with so much sweetness to insinuate, and impress these imaginations, they are easily

deluded and influenced by him, because they do not take the precaution to resign themselves into the hands of God, and defend themselves vigorously against these visions and impressions. For now the devil causes them both to believe in many vain visions and false prophecies, and to presume that God and His saints are speaking to them : they also frequently believe in their own fancies.

4. Now, too, satan is wont to fill them with pride and presumption; and they, led on by vanity and arrogance make a show of themselves in the performance of exterior acts which have an air of sanctity, such as ecstasies and other appearances. They thus

CHAP. n.J OF THE SOUL.

become bold with God, losing holy fear, which is the key and guard of all virtue. Some of them become so entangled in manifold falsehoods and delusions, and so persist in them, that their return to the pure road of virtue and real spirituality is exceedingly doubtful. They fall into this miserable condition because they gave way to these spiritual imaginations and feelings with over much confidence when they began to advance on the road of spirituality.

5. I have much to say of these imperfections of theirs, and how much more incurable these are than the others, because they consider them as more spiritual than those ; but I shall pass on. One thing, however^ I must say, to establish the necessity of the spiritual night which is the purgation of the soul that is to go on to perfection, that there is not one among the proficient, however great may be his exertions, who can be free from many of these natural affections and imperfect ^ habits, the purification of which must, as I have said, j necessarily precede the divine union.

6. Besides, and I have said it before,* because Xhe[spiritual communications reach also to the lower part of the soul, they cannot be as intense, pure, and strong, as the divine union demands, and, therefore, if that is to be attained, the soul must enter the second night of the * spirit where — perfectly detaching sense and spirit from »

THE DARK NIGHT

74 THE DARK NIGHT [BOOK II.

pill sweetness and from all imaginations — it will travel on the road of faith dark and pure, the proper and adequate means of union, as it is written : ‘ I will espouse thee to Me in faith,'* that is, I will unite Myself [Jto thee in faith.

CHAPTER III.

Notes on that which is to follow.

Proficients, then, experienced during the past time these sweet communications, in order that the sensual ^ part of the soul, allured and attracted by the spiritual sweetness overflowing from the spirit, may be united and made one with the spiritual part ; both parts eating the same spiritual food, each in its own way, off the same dish of their one being, that, thus in a certain way become one and concordant, they might be prepared for the sufferings of the sharp and rough purgation of the spirit which is before them. In that purgation the two parts of the soul, the spiritual and the sensual, are to be wholly purified, for neither of them can be perfectly purified without the other, and the purgation of sense is then effectual when that of the spirit commences in earnest.

T 2. Hence it is that the night of sense may and should I be called a certain re-formation and bridling of desire,

CHAP. III.] OF THE SOUL.

rather than purgation, because all the imperfections and disorders of the sensual part having their strength and roots in the mind, can never be wholly purged away until the evil habits, rebelliousness and perverseness of the mind are corrected. Therefore,

in this night ensuing, both parts of the soul are purified together : this is the end for which it was necessary to have passed through the re-formation of the first night, and to have attained to that tranquillity which is its fruit, in order that sense and spirit, made one, may both be purified and suffeit together with the greater courage, most necessary for soL violent and sharp a purgation.* For if the weakness of the lower part be not redressed, and if it have acquired no courage in God, in the sweet communions with Him subsequently enjoyed, nature would have been unprepared and without strength for the trials of this night.

3. The intercourse of proficients with God is, however, still most mean, because the gold of the spirit is not purified and refined. They think, therefore, and speak of Him as children, and their feelings are those of children, as described by the Apostle : ‘ When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child ; '* because they have not reached perfection, which is union with God in love. But in the state of union, having grown to manhood, they do great things in spirit — all their actions and all their faculties being

* 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

now rather divine than human, as I shall hereafter explain* — for God is stripping them of the old man, and clothing them with the new, as it is written : * Put on the new man, who is created according to God ; 't and again, ‘ Be reformed in the newness of your mind/+

4. He now denudes the faculties, the affections, and feelings, spiritual and sensual, interior and exterior, leaving the understanding in darkness, the will dry, the memory empty, the affections of the soul in the deepest affliction, bitterness, and distress ; withholding from it the former sweetness it had in spiritual things, in order

that this privation may be one of the principles, of which the mind has need, that the spiritual form of the spirit, which is the union of love, may enter into it and be one with it.

5. All this our Lord effects in the soul by means of contemplation, pure and dark, as it is described by it in the first stanza. That stanza, though explained in the beginning of the night of sense, the soul understands it principally of this second night of the spirit, because that is the chief part of the purification of the soul. I shall, therefore, apply it in this sense, and explain it here again.

* Ch. iv. § 2. f Ephes* iv. 24. J Rom. xii. 2.

CHAP. IV.]

OF THE SOUL.

CHAPTER IV.

Explanation of the first stanza.

In a dark night.

With anxious love inflamed .

O, happy lot /

Forth unobserved I went,

My house being now at rest .

Taking these words, then, with reference to purgation? contemplation, or detachment, or poverty of spirit — these are, as it were, one and the same thing — they may thus explained in this way, as if the soul were saying : In poverty, without help in all my powers, the understanding in darkness, the will under constraint, the

memory in trouble and distress, in the dark, in pure faith, which is the dark night of the natural faculties, the will alone touched by grief and affliction, and the anxieties of the love of God, I went forth out of myself, out of my low conceptions and lukewarm love, out of my scanty and poor sense of God, without being hindered by the flesh or the devil.

2. This was to me a great blessing, a happy lot, for by annihilating and subduing my faculties, passions, and affections — the instruments of my low conceptions of God — I went forth out of the scanty works and ways of my own to those of God ; that is, my understanding went forth out of itself, and from human became divine ; for united to God in that purgation, it understands no

THE DARK NIGHT

("BOOK II.

more within its former limits and narrow bounds, but in the divine wisdom to which it is united.

3. My will went forth out of itself becoming divine, for now, united with the divine love, it loves no more with its former scanty powers and circumscribed capacity, but with the energy and pureness of the divine spirit. Thus the will acts now in the things of God, not in a human way, and the memory also is transformed in eternal apprehensions of glory. Finally, all the energies and affections of the soul are in this night and purgation of the old man, renewed into a divine temper and delight.

CHAPTER V.

Explains how this dim contemplation is not a night only, but pain and torment also for the soul.

In a dark night .

^The dark night is a certain inflowing of God into the soul which cleanses it of its ignorances and imperfections, habitual, natural, and spiritual. Contemplatives call it infused contemplation, or mystical t heology , whereby God secretly teaches the soul and instructs it in the perfection of love, without efforts on its own part beyond a loving attention to God, listening to His voice and admitting the light He sends, but ^without understanding how this is infused contemplation.

CHAP. V.] OF THE SOUL.

And inasmuch as it is the loving wisdom of God, it produces special effects in the soul, for it prepares it, by purifying and enlightening it, for union with God in love : it is the same loving wisdom, which by enlightening purifies the blessed spirits, that here purifies and enlightens the soul.

2. But it may be asked : Why does the soul call tlie"\ divine light, which enlightens the soul and purges it of its ignorances, the dark night ? I reply, that the divine wisdom is, for two reasons, not night and darkness only, but pain and torment also to the soul. The first is, the divine wisdom is so high that it transcends the capacity of the soul, and therefore is, in that respect, darkness. The second reason is based on the meanness and impurity of the soul, and in that respect the divine wisdom is painful to it, afflictive and dark also.

3. To prove the truth of the first reason, we take for granted a principle of the philosopher, namely, the more clear and evident divine things are, the more dark and hidden they are to the soul naturally. Thus the more? clear the light the more does it blind the eyes of thel owl,* and the stronger the sun's rays the more it blinds the visual organs ; overcoming them, by reason of their/ weakness, and depriving them of the power of seeing. So the divine light of contemplation, when it beats on

* [Aristot. Metaphysic, lib. 1. prope jinem. 4 ^lawep yap ra twv vvk - T€p[8(j>v

oppara irpbs to <j>€yyos to peO' rjpepav , outco Kal Trjs rjp€T€pas yvyr) s 6 vovs 7rpbs ra Trj <f>vcr€i <j>av€pu>TaTa 7^avTa>J/. ,]

Google

THE DARK NIGHT

SO

[book n.

the soul, not yet perfectly enlightened, causes spiritual darkness, because it not only surpasses its strength, but because it blinds it and deprives it of its natural perceptions.

4. It is for this reason that St. Dionysius and other mystic theologians call infused contemplation a ray of darkness, that is, for the unenlightened and unpurified soul, because this great supernatural light masters the natural power of the reason and takes away its natural way of understanding. Therefore, David also said : 4 Clouds and darkness are round about Him ; ’* not that this is so in reality, but in reference to our weak understanding, which, in light so great, becomes dimmed and blind, unable to ascend so high. He repeats it, saying : 4 At the brightness that was before Him the clouds passed/t that is, between Him and our understanding. This is the reason why the illuminating ray of hidden wisdom, when God sends it from Himself into the soul not yet transformed, produces thick darkness in the understanding.

5. This dim contemplation is in its beginnings, painful also to the soul. For as the infused divine contemplation contains many excellences in the highest degree, and the soul, which is the recipient, because not yet pure, is involved in many miseries the result is — as two contraries cannot co-exist in the same subject — that

* Ps. xcvi. 2. t lb. xvii. 13.

fra W.U'

CHAP. V.] OF THE SOUL.

the soul must suffer and be in pain, being the subject in which the two contraries meet, and resist each other because of the purgation of the soul from its imperfections, which is being wrought by contemplation. I shall show it to be so by the following induction.

6. In the first place, because the light and wisdom of contemplation is most pure and bright, and because the soul, on which it beats, is in darkness and impure, that soul which is the recipient must greatly suffer. As eyes weakened and clouded by humours suffer pain when the clear light beats upon them, so the soul, by reason of its impurity, suffers exceedingly when the divine light really shines upon it. And when the rays of this pure light strike upon the soul, in order to expel its impurities, the soul perceives itself to be so unclean and miserable that it seems as if God had set Himself against it, and itself were set against God. So grievous and painful is this feeling — for it thinks now that God has abandoned it — that it was one of the heaviest afflictions of Job during his trial. ‘ Why hast Thou set me contrary to Thee, and I become burdensome to myself ? ’* The soul seeing distinctly in this bright and pure light, though dimly, its own impurity, acknowledges its own unworthiness before God and all creatures.

7. That which pains it still more is the fear it has that it never will be worthy, and that all its goodness is gone.

* Job vii. 20.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

This is the fruit of that deep impression, made on the mind, in the knowledge and sense of its own wickedness and misery. For now the divine and dim light reveals to

it all its wretchedness, and it sees clearly that of itself it can never be other than it is. In this sense we can understand the words of the Psalmist : ‘ For iniquities Thou hast chastised man, and Thou hast made his soul pine away as a spider/*

8. In the second place, the pain of the soul comes from its natural and spiritual weakness ; for when this divine contemplation strikes it with a certain vehemence, in order to strengthen it and subdue it, it is then so pained in its weakness as almost to faint away, particularly at times when the divine contemplation strikes it with greater vehemence ; for sense and spirit, as if under a heavy and gloomy burden, suffer and groan in agony so great that death itself would be a desired relief.

9. This was the experience of Job, and he said, ‘ I will not that He contend with me with much strength, nor that He oppress me with the weight of His greatness. 't The soul under the burden of this oppression feels itself so removed out of God's favour that it thinks — and so it is — that all things which consoled it formerly have utterly failed it, and that no one is left to pity it. Job also speaks to the same purport, ‘ Have mercy upon me, have

* Ps. xxxviii. 12. t Job xxiii. 6 .

CHAP. VI.] OF THE SOUL.

mercy upon me, at the least you my friends, because the hand of our Lord hath touched me.’* Wonderful and piteous sight ! So great are the weakness and impurity of the soul that the hand of God, so soft and so gentle, is felt to be so heavy and oppressive, though neither pressing nor resting on it, but merely touching it, and that, too, most mercifully ; for He touches the soul not to chastise it, but to load it with His graces.

CHAPTER VI.

Of other sufferings of the soul in this night.

The third kind of suffering and pain for the soul comes from the meeting of two extremes, the human and the divine : the latter is the purgative contemplation ; the human, is the soul itself. The divine touches the soul to renew it and to ripen it, in order to make it divine, to detach it from the habitual affections and qualities of the old man, to which it clings and conforms itself. The divine extreme so breaks and bruises the soul, swallowing it up in profound darkness, that the soul, at the sight of its own wretchedness, seems to perish and waste away, by a cruel spiritual death, as if it were swallowed up and devoured by a wild beast, suffering the pangs of Jonas in the belly of the whale. For it must lie buried in the grave

* Job xix. 21.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

of a gloomy death that it may attain to the spiritual resurrection for which it hopes. David describes this kind of pain and suffering — though it really baffles description — when he says, ‘ The sorrows of death have compassed me . . . the sorrows of hell have compassed me. ... In my tribulation I have called upon our Lord, and have cried to my God/*

fli. But the greatest affliction of the sorrowful soul in / this state is the thought that God has abandoned it, of I which it has no doubt ; that He has cast it away into \ darkness as an abominable thing. The thought that He has abandoned it is a grievous and pitiable affliction. David experienced the same trials when he said, ‘ As the wounded sleeping in the sepulchres, of whom Thou art mindful no more ; and they are cast off from Thy hand. They have put me in the lower lake, in the dark places, and in the shadow of death. Thy fury is confirmed upon me ; and all Thy waves Thou hast brought in upon me/f

3. For, in truth, when the soul is in the pangs of the purgative contemplation, the shadow of death and the pains and torments of hell are most acutely felt, that is, the sense of being without God, being chastised and abandoned in His wrath and ^eavy displeasure. All this and even more the soul feels now, for a fearful apprehension has come upon it that thus it will be with * Ps. xvii. 5, 6, 7. t Ib * lxxxvii. 6 , 7, 8.

CHAP. VI.] OF THE SOUL.

it for ever. It has also the same sense of abandonment with respect to all creatures, and that it is an object of contempt to all, especially to its friends ; and so the Psalmist continues, saying, ‘ Thou hast put away my acquaintance far from me ; they have set me an abomination to themselves/*

4. The prophet Jonas also, as one who had experience of this, both bodily and spiritually, witnesses to the same truth, saying, ‘ Thou hast cast me forth into the depth, in the heart of the sea, and a flood hath compassed me : all Thy surges and Thy waves have passed over me. And I said, I am cast away from the sight of Thine eyes : but yet I shall see Thy holy temple again/ — this is the purgation of the soul that it may see God — ‘ the waters have compassed me even to the soul, the depth hath enclosed me, the sea hath covered my head. I am descended to the extreme parts of the mountains : the bars of the earth have shut me up for ever/f The bars of the earth here are the imperfections of the soul which hinder it from having any joy in this sweet contemplation.

5. The fourth kind of pain is caused by another excellence peculiar to this dim contemplation, a sense of God’s majesty and greatness, which makes it conscious $£ the other extreme, its own poverty and misery ; this is one of the chief sufferings of this purgation. The

86 THE DARK NIGHT [BOOK II.

soul is conscious of a profound emptiness, and destitution of the three kinds of goods, natural, temporal, and spiritual, which are ordained for its comfort ; it sees itself in the midst of the opposite evils, miserable imperfections and aridities, emptiness of the understanding, and abandonment of the spirit in darkness*

0. Inasmuch as God is now purifying the soul in its sensual and spiritual substance, its interior and exterior powers, it is necessary for it that it should be in all its relations empty, poor and abandoned, in aridity, emptiness, and darkness. For the sensual part is purified in aridities, the faculties in the emptiness of their powers, and the spirit in the thick darkness.

7. All this God brings about by means of this dim contemplation, in which the soul is made to suffer from the failure and withdrawal of its natural powers, which is a most distressing pain. It is like that of a person being suffocated, or hindered from breathing. But this contemplation is also purifying the soul, undoing or emptying it, or consuming in it, as fire consumes the rust and mouldiness of the metal all the affections and habits of imperfection which it had contracted in the whole course of its life. But inasmuch as these habits are deeply rooted in the soul, the interior sufferings and trials it has to undergo are heavy, and are, in addition to the destitution and emptiness, natural and spiritual, of which I have spoken.

CHAP. VI.] OF THE SOUL.

• 8. The words of the prophet Ezechiel are now ful-

filled : ‘ Heap together the bones which I will burn with fire : the flesh shall be consumed, and the whole composition shall be sodden, and the bones shall dry away/* This describes the pain which the soul suffers in the sensual and spiritual parts when in this state of emptiness and poverty. Then the prophet proceeds, saying : ‘ Set it also upon hot burning coals empty, that the brass thereof may wax hot and be melted ; and let the filth of it be melted in the midst thereof, and let the rust

thereof be consumed/f

9. This is the heavy trial of the soul in the purifying fires of contemplation. The prophet says that, in order to purge away and consume the filth of the affections which are within the soul, it is necessary for it, in a certain way to be annihilated and undone, because its passions and affections have become natural to it. The soul, therefore, because it is purified in this furnace, like gold in a crucible, according to the words of Wisdom, ‘ as gold in the furnace He hath proved them/J feels itself utterly consumed in its innermost substance in this absolute poverty wherein it is as it were lost. This is taught us by the Psalmist, saying of himself ; ‘ Save me, O God, because waters are entered unto my soul. I stick fast in the mire of the depth ; and there is no sure standing. I am come into the depth of the sea : and a * Ezech. xxiv. 10. f lb. xxiv. 11. J Wisd. iii. 6 .

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

tempest hath overwhelmed me. I have laboured crying, my jaws are made hoarse, my eyes have failed, whilst I hope in my God/*

io. Here God is humbling the soul that He may exalt it much hereafter, and if it were not His will that these feelings, when they rise, should be quickly lulled again, the soul would almost immediately depart from the body, but they occur only at intervals in their greatest violence. They are occasionally felt so acutely that the soul seems to see hell and perdition open before it. Of these, are they who go down alive into hell, and have their purgatory in this life ; for this is the purgation to be endured there for venial sins. And thus the soul which passes through this state in the present life, and is perfectly purified, either enters not into purgatory, or is detained there but a moment, for one hour here is of greater profit than many there.

CHAPTER VII.

The same subject continued. Other afflictions and trials of

the will.

The afflictions and distress of the will now are also very great ; they occasionally pierce the soul with a sudden recollection of the evils that environ it, and of the uncertainty of relief. To this is superadded the memory * Ps. lxviii. 2 — 4.

CHAP, vn.] OF THE SOUL.

of past happiness ; for they who enter this night have, generally, had much sweetness in God, and served Him greatly ; but now, to see themselves strangers to so much happiness, and unable to recover it, causes them the greatest affliction.

2. Job also, having learnt this by experience, declares it in these words : ‘ I sometime that wealthy one,

suddenly am broken ; He hath held my neck, broken me, and set me to Himself, as it were a mark. He hath compassed me with His spears, He hath wounded my loins, He hath not spared, and hath poured out on the earth my bowels. He hath cut me with wound upon wound : He hath come violently upon me as it were a giant. I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and have covered my flesh with ashes. My face is swollen with weeping, and my eyelids are dim/* So many and so great are the torments of this night, and so many the places in the Holy Writings, which may be quoted to this effect, that time and strength would fail me were I to enumerate them. For no doubt, all that can be said will fall short ; something may be gathered on the matter from the texts already before us.

2. And now to conclude the subject of the first line of the stanza, and to show what this night is to the soul, I will repeat how it was felt by the prophet Jeremias : ‘ I, the man that see my poverty in the rod of His * Job xvi. 13 — 1 7.

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK II.

indignation. He hath led me and brought me into darkness, and not into light. Only against me He hath turned, and hath converted His hand all the day. He hath made my skin old and my flesh ; He hath broken my bones. He hath built round about me, and He hath compassed me with gall and labour. In dark places He hath placed me as the everlasting dead. He hath built round about against me, I go not forth. He hath aggravated my fetters. Yea, and when I shall cry and ask. He hath excluded my prayer. He hath shut up my ways with square stones. He hath subverted my paths. He is become unto me a bear lying in wait ; a lion in secret places. He hath subverted my paths, and hath broken me ; He hath made me desolate. He hath bent His bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He hath shot in my reins the daughters of His quiver. I am made a derision to all my people, their song all the day. He hath replenished me with bitterness, He hath inebriated me with wormwood. And He hath broken my teeth by number ; He hath fed me with ashes. And my soul is repelled from peace ; I have forgotten good things. And I said : Mine end is perished and mine hope from our Lord. Remember my poverty and transgression, the wormwood and the gall. Remembering I will be mindful ; and my soul shall languish in me/*

* Lament, iii. i — 20.

OF THE SOUL.

CHAP. VII.]

3. These are the lamentations of the prophet over these pains and trials, whereby he most vividly depicts the sufferings of the soul, which come upon it in this purgation

and spiritual night. That soul is worthy of all compassion which God leads into this dreadful and horrible night. For, although it is well with it because of the great blessing of which this night is the source, for as Job saith, God will raise up good things for it out of this darkness, and bring light over the shadow of death : 'Who revealeth profound things out of darkness, and bringeth forth the shadow of deathjnto light :** so t hat h is light shall be as the darkness ; ' the darkness thereof so also the light thereof/ as David speaks.f Nevertheless, because of the excessive pain it endures, and the great uncertainty of relief, it imagines now, as the prophet says, that its calamities will never come to an end. God, in the words of David, having made it to 4 dwell in darkness as those that have been dead of old/ the spirit being in anguish within it, and 4 the heart within ' it 4 troubled/ it is a very painful and pitiable state.

4. Besides, the soul derives no consolation now in the advice that may be given it, or from its spiritual director, because of the loneliness and desolation of this dark night. Though its confessor may set before it in many ways good reasons why it should be comforted

* Job xii. 22. f Ps. cxxxviii. 12.

because of the blessings which these pains supply, the soul will not believe him. For as it is so filled with and overwhelmed by its sense of these evils, whereby it discerns so clearly its own misery, it imagines that its spiritual director, not seeing that which itself sees and feels, speaks as he does without comprehending its state, and, instead of being comforted, is pained anew, for it considers that his counsel cannot relieve its misery ; and in truth so it is, for until our Lord shall have perfected the purification of the soul, according to His will, no help and no remedy can be of any service or profit in this pain.

5. Moreover, the soul can do so little in this state ; like a prisoner in a gloomy dungeon, bound hand and foot, it cannot stir, neither can it see or feel any relief, either from above or below, until the spirit is softened, humbled, and purified; until it becomes so refined, simple, and pure, as to become one with the Spirit of Gpd in that degree of the union of love which He in His mercy intends for it, and corresponding to which is the greater or less violence, the longer or shorter duration, of this purgation.

^6. But if this purgation is to be real it will last, notwithstanding its vehemence, for some years, but /admitting of intermissions and relief, during which, by | the dispensation of God, the dim contemplation divested [of its purgative form and character assumes that of the

CHAP. VII.] OF THE SOUL.

illuminative and of love. Under this form of it, the soul, like one escaped from the dungeons of its prison into the comfort of space and freedom, enjoys the sweetness of peace, and the loving tenderness of God in the flowing abundance of spiritual communications. This is to the soul a sign of the spiritual health which is being wrought within by this purgation, and a foretaste of the abundance it hopes for. So much so is this at times that it thinks all its trials are over. For such is the nature of spiritual things in the soul, when they are most purely spiritual, that the soul thinks when trials return, they will never end, and that all its blessings have perished ; and when it prospers in its spiritual course it thinks all its calamities are past, and that it shall always abound in good things. Thus it was with David when he said : ‘ In my abund ance I said : I shall never be moved/*

7. The reason of this is that the actual presence of one thing in the mind is naturally inconsistent with the presence and sense of its contrary ; this is not so much so in the sensual part of the soul, because of the weakness of its apprehension. But as the

spirit is not yet wholly purified and cleansed from the imperfections contracted by its lower nature, though more resolute and consistent now, it is liable to further sufferings, so far as it is under the dominion of these affections, as we see in

* Ps. xxix. 7.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

the many afflictions and distress of David after the change, though he had said in the day of his prosperity,

1 1 shall never be moved/

8. In the same way the soul, amidst the abundance of spiritual blessings, but not observing the root of imperfection and impurity which still remains, thinks that all its trials are over. This thought, however, is of rare occurrence, for until the spiritual purgation is complete, the sweet communications are rarely so abundant as to conceal the root that remains behind, in such a way that the soul shall not be inwardly conscious of some deficiency, or that something still is to be done. Nor is the communication such as to allow it to enjoy the relief that is offered it perfectly, for it feels as if an enemy were lurking within, who, though he may be as if subdued and asleep, the soul fears it may yet return in his strength and 'assault it as before.

9. And so it comes to pass, for when the soul is most secure it returns, drags down the soul and then plunges it at once into another affliction heavier, darker, and sadder than the previous one, and which, perhaps, will be of longer continuance. The soul again is convinced that all its good is gone from it for ever. Experience cannot teach it : the blessings that followed its former trials, during which it thought that its sufferings would never end, cannot hinder it from believing, during its present trials, that all its good has perished, and that it

CHAP. Vin.] OF THE SOUL.

will never be again with it as it was before. For, as I am saying, this belief, so persistent, is wrought in the soul by the present impression made on the mind, which destroys within it all the occasions of joy.

io. Thus the soul in this purgation, though it seems to love God greatly, and is ready to die for Him a thousand deaths — and that is true, for souls thus tried love God with great sincerity, nevertheless they find no relief, but rather an increase of pain herein. For seeking God alone, and nought else, seeing also its own great misery, it doubts whether God be not angry with it. It cannot then persuade itself that there is anything in it worthy of love, but rather is convinced that there is that in it which should make it hated not only of God, but of all creatures also for ever ; it grieves to see that of itself it deserves to be abandoned of Him Whom ft so loves and so longs for.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of other sufferings which distress the soul in this state.

Another source of much affliction and distress to the soul in this state is that, as the dark night hinders the exercise of the faculties and affections, it cannot lift up the heart and mind to God as before, nor pray to Him.

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK H.

It thinks itself to be in that state described by Jeremias when he said, 4 Thou hast set a cloud before Thee, that prayer may not pass/* This is the meaning of the words quoted beforet — 4 He hath shut up my ways with square stones/* If at any time it

prays, it prays with so much aridity, and without sweetness, so as to' think that God neither hears nor regards it ; as the prophet tells us in the same place, saying, 4 Yea, and when I shall cry, and ask, He excludeth my prayer/§ And, in truth, this is the time for the soul, in the words of Jeremias, to put its 4 mouth in the dust/|| suffering in patience this purgation.

2. It is God Himself Who is now working in the soul, and the soul is therefore powerless. Hence it comes that it cannot pray or give much attention to divine things. Neither can it attend to temporal matters, for it falls into frequent distractions, and the memory is so profoundly weakened, that many hours pass by without its knowing what it has done or thought, what it is doing or is about to do ; nor can it give much heed to what it is occupied with, notwithstanding all its efforts, rj. Inasmuch, then, as not only the understanding is purified from its imperfect perceptions, and the will from its affections, but the memory, also, from all its Knowledge and reflections, it is necessary that the soul

* Lam. iii. 44. f Ch. vii. § 2. { lb. iii. 9.

CHAP. VIH.] OF THE SOUL.

should be annihilated herein, that the words of the Psalmist, when he was in this purgation may be fulfilled :

‘ I am brought to nothing, and I knew not/* This ‘knowing not* extends to these follies and failures of the memory. These wanderings and failures of the memory are the result of interior recollection, by which the soul is absorbed in contemplation. For in order to prepare the soul, and temper it divinely in all its powers for the divine union of love, it must, first of all^be absorbed with all its powers in the divine ^fid dim spiritual light of contemplation, and be thus detached from all affection for, and apprehension of, created things. This continues ordinarily in proportion to the intensity of its contemplation.

4. Thus, then, the more pure and simple the divine^ light when it beats on the soul, the more does it darken it, empty it, and annihilate it, as to all itfs apprehensions and affections, whether they regard heavenly or earthly things. And also, the less pure and simple the light, the less is the soul darkened and annihilated. It seems strange to say, that the purer and clearer the supernatural and divine light the more is it in the soul, and that it is less so when less pure.

5. But this may be easily explained ; if we keep in mind the saying of the philosopher that supernatural things are more dark to the understanding the more

* Ps. Ixxii. 22.

98 THE DARK NIGHT [BOOK H.

clear and evident they are in themselves. Thus the ray

of high contemplation, transcending as it does the natural powers, striking the soul with its divine light, makes it dark, and deprives it of all the natural affections and apprehensions which it previously entertained in its own natural light. Under these circumstances, the soul is left not only in darkness but in emptiness also, as to its powers and desires, both natural and spiritual, and in this emptiness and darkness is purified and enlightened by the divine spiritual light, but it does not ^imagine that it has it ; yea, rather, it thinks itself to be in darkness.

6. As a ray of light, if pure, and if there be nothing to reflect it, or against which it strikes, is almost invisible, and is by reflection better seen, so the spiritual light, which beats on the soul is, of itself, neither visible nor perceptible, because it is so pure, but when it beats upon anything that reflects it, that is, upon any matter of perfection which presents itself to the understanding or a decision to be made as to the truth or falsehood of anything, the soul sees it at once, and understands the matter more clearly than it ever did before it entered into this darkness. In the same way the soul discerns the spiritual light which is given it that it may easily recognize

its own imperfection ; thus, when a ray of light is of itself not so visible, but when the hand or any other object is held before it, the hand is seen

CHAP. VIII.] OF THE SOUL. 99

forthwith, and the light of the sun is known to be there.

7. Then, because this spiritual light is so clear, pure and diffused, neither confined to, nor specially related to, any particular matter of the understanding — seeing that with respect to all such matters the powers of the soul are empty and as if they did not exist — the soul in great ease and freedom discerns and searches into every thing high or low, that is presented to it ; and for that reason the Apostle said, i The Spirit searcheth all things, even the profundities of God ; ’* for it is of this pure and diffused wisdom that we are to understand that which the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of the wise man, i Wisdom reacheth everywhere by reason of her clearness ;'f that is, because not connected with any particular object of the understanding or affection. The characteristic of a mind purified and annihilated as to all particular objects of affection and of the understanding, is to have no pleasure in, or knowledge of, anything in particular ; to abide in emptiness and darkness ; to embrace all things in its grand comprehensiveness, that it may fulfil mystically the words of the Apostle, 4 having nothing and possessing all things/}: for such poverty of spirit merits such a blessing.

* 1 Cor. ii. 10. t Wisd. vii. 24. { 2 Cor. vi. 10.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

CHAPTER IX.

p low this night enlightens the mind though it brings darkness over it.

It remains for me now to explain that this blessed night, though it darkens the mind, does so only to give it light in every thing ; and though it humbles it and makes it miserable, does so only to raise it up and set it free ; and though it impoverishes it and empties it of all its natural self and liking, it does so only to enable it to reach forward divinely to the possession and fruition of all things, both of heaven and earth, in perfect liberty of spirit. As it is fitting that the primary elements, that they may enter into the composition of all natural substances, should have no colour, taste, nor smell peculiar to themselves, in order that they may combine with all colours, all tastes, and all smell, so the mind must be pure, simple, and detached from all kinds of natural affections, actual and habitual, in order that it may be able to participate freely in the largeness of spirit of the divine wisdom, wherein by reason of its pureness it tastes of the sweetness of all things in a certain pre-eminent way. And without this purgation it is altogether impossible to taste of the abundance of these spiritual delights. For one single affection remaining in the soul, or any one matter to which the mind clings either habitually or actually, is sufficient to prevent all perception and all communication of the

CHAP. IX.] OF THE SOUL.

tender and interior sweetness of the spirit of love, which contains within itself all sweetness supremely. £_

2. As the children of Israel, merely on account " 5 ^ that single affection for, and remembrance of, the fleshpots of Egypt, could not taste the delicious bread of angels, the manna in the desert, which as the divine writings tell us, had ‘ the sweetness of all taste/ and

1 turned to that every man would/* so the mind which is still subject to any actual or habitual affection or particular or narrow mode of apprehending, or understanding

anything, cannot taste the sweetness of the spirit of liberty, according to the desire of the will. The reason is this : the affections, feelings, and apprehensions of the perfect spirit, being of so high an order and specially divine, are of another kind and different from those which are natural ; and in order to be actually and habitually enjoyed, require the annihilation^ of the latter.

3. It is therefore very expedient and necessary, if the soul is to advance to these heights, that the dark night of contemplation should first bring it to nothing, and undo it in all its meannesses, bringing it into darkness, aridities, loneliness, and emptiness ; for the ^ light that is to be given it is a certain divine light of the highest nature, surpassing all natural light, and not naturally cognisable by the understanding. If the

* Wisd. xvi. 20, 21.

Google

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

understanding is to be united with that light, and become divine in the state of perfection, it must first of all be purified and annihilated as to its natural light, which must be brought actually into darkness by means of this dim contemplation.

4. This darkness must continue so long as it is necessary to destroy the habit, long ago contracted, of understanding things in a natural way, and until the divine enlightening shall have taken its place. And therefore inasmuch as the power of understanding, previously exerted, is natural, the result is that the darkness now endured is awful, and most afflictive, because it reaches to, and is felt in, the innermost depths of the spirit. In the same way, inasmuch as the affection of love, communicated in the divine union, is divine, and therefore most spiritual, subtile, delicate, and most interior, surpassing all sense and affection, natural and imperfect,

of the will and every desire of the same, it is necessary for the fruition, in the union of love, of this divine affection and most exquisite delight, that the will should be first purified and annihilated, as to all its affections and feelings, left in darkness and distress proportional to the intensity of the habit of natural affections it had acquired, in respect both of human and divine things.

5. And this must be done, in order that the will, in the fire of dim contemplation, wasted, withered, and

CHAP. IX.] OF THE SOUL.

deprived of all selfishness — like the liver of the fish which Tobias laid on the burning coals* — may acquire a pure and simple disposition, a purified and sound taste, so as to feel those sublime and wonderful touches of divine love when it shall be divinely transformed ; all its former contrarieties actual and habitual being expelled.

6. Moreover, in order to attain to the divine union, for which the dark night disposes it, the soul must be endowed and replenished with a certain glorious magnificence in the divine communication, which includes innumerable blessings and joys, surpassing all the abundance which the soul can naturally possess — so speak the prophet Isaias and S. Paul, c Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him/t it is necessary for it that it should be first brought into a state of emptiness and spiritual poverty, detached from all help and consolation in all the things of heaven and earth, that being thus empty it may be really poor in spirit and divested of the old man, and may live that new and blessed life to which it attains in this dark night which is the state of union with God.

7. And because the soul is to attain to the possession of a certain sense, and divine knowledge, most generous and full of sweetness, of all human and divine things

THE DARK NIGHT.

[BOOK n.

which do not fall within the common-sense and natural perceptions of the soul — it views them with different eyes now ; as the light and grace of the Holy Ghost differ from those of sense, the divine from the human — it is necessary that the spirit should be brought low, and inured to hardships in all that relates to the natural and common sense. It must suffer hardships and afflictions in the purgative contemplation, and the memory must become a stranger to all pleasing and peaceful knowledge, with a most interior sense and feeling of being a stranger and a pilgrim here, so that all things shall seem strange to it, and other than they were wont to seem.

8. For this night is drawing the spirit away from its ordinary and common sense of things, that it may draw it towards the divine sense, which is a stranger and an alien to all human ways ; so much so that the soul seems to be carried out of itself. At other times it looks upon itself as if under the influence of some charm or spell, and is amazed at all that it hears and sees, which seem to it to be most strange and out of the way, though in reality they are as they usually are, the same. The reason is this : the soul has bec o me a stranger to the ordinary sense of things, in order that being brought to nothing therein, it might be informed in the divine. Now this belongs more to the next life than to this.

CHAP. IX.] OF THE SOUL.

9. The soul suffers all these afflictive purgations of the spirit that it may be born again to the life of the spirit through the divine inflowing, and in these pangs bring forth the spirit of salvation, fulfilling the words of Isaias : ‘ So are we become in Thy presence, O Lord. We have conceived, and been as it were in labour, and have

brought forth the spirit ** of salvation. Moreover, as in the night of contemplation the soul is prepared for that tranquillity and inward peace which is such and so full of delight as, in the words of Scripture, to ‘ pass all understanding,' t it is necessary for the soul that all its former peace, which, because involved in so many imperfections, was no peace, though it seemed to be a twofold peace, namely, of sense and spirit, because it was pleasing, should first of all be purified, and the soul withdrawn from and disturbed in that imperfect peace, as Jeremias felt and lamented in the words cited before to express the trials of the night that is now past, namely: ‘My soul is repelled from peace/ J

10. This is a painful unsettling, full of misgivings, imaginations, and inward struggles, in which the soul, at the sight and in the consciousness of its own misery, imagines itself to be lost, and all its good to have perished for ever. In this state the spirit is pierced by sorrow so profound as to occasion strong spiritual groans and cries, to which at times it gives utterance,

* Is. xxvi. 1 7, 18. f Phil. iv. 7. { Lam. iii. 17.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

and tears break forth, if there be any strength left for them, though this relief is bujt rarely granted. The royal prophet David has well described this state, being one who had great experience of it, saying, ‘ I am afflicted and humbled exceedingly ; I roared with the groaning of my heart/* This roaring proceeds from great pain ; for sometimes the sudden and sharp recollection of the miseries that environ the soul, makes it feel such pain and grief that I know not how it can be explained otherwise than by the words of Job : ‘as overflowing waters so is my roaring/f For as waters sometimes overflow, drown and fill all places, so this roaring, and sense of pain, become occasionally so strong as to flow over and into the soul, filling all its deepest

affections and energies with spiritual pain and sorrow which defy all exaggeration.

11. Such is the work wrought in the soul by this night that hideth the hopes of the light of day. It was in reference to it that Job said, ‘In the night my mouth is pierced with sorrows, and they that feed upon me do not sleep/* The mouth here is the will, pierced by these sorrows which cease not to tear the soul, neither do they sleep, for the doubts and misgivings which harass it are never at rest.

12. This warfare and combat are deep, because the peace hoped for is most deep : the spiritual sorrow is

* Ps. xxxvii. 9. f J°b iii- 24. { Job xxx. 17.

CHAP. IX.] OF THE SOUL.

interior, refined, and pure, because the love to be enjoyed must be also most interior and pure. The more interior and perfect the work, the more interior, perfect, and pure must the labour be that produces it ; and the stronger the building, the more solid it is.

‘ My soul fadeth within myself/ saith Job, 1 and the days of affliction possess me.* So, in the same way, because the soul has to attain to the enjoyment and possession, in the state of perfection to which it journeys in this purgative night, of innumerable blessings, of gifts, and virtues, both in the substance of the soul and in the powers thereof, it is necessary that it should first consider and feel itself generally a stranger to and deprived of them all, and regard them as so far beyond its reach as to be persuaded that it never can attain to them, and that all goodness is perished from it. This is the meaning of those words of Jeremias, ‘I have forgotten good things.f

13. Let us now see why the light of contemplation,! so sweet and lovely to the soul that nothing is more desirable — for it is that, as I said before, + whereby the divine union takes place, and whereby the soul in the state of perfection finds all the good it desires — produces, when it strikes the soul, these painful beginnings and terrible

effects. The answer is easy, and is already given in part ; there is nothing in contemplation and

* Job xxx. 16. f Lam. iii. 17. J Bk. ii. ch. v. §§ I, 2.

108 THE DARK NIGHT [BOOK n.

the divine inflowing, to cause pain, but rather much sweetness and joy, as the soul will find later. The cause is the imperfection and weakness of the soul, and dispositions not fit for the reception of this sweetness. And so, when the divine light beats upon the soul, it [makes it suffer in the way described.

CHAPTER X.

Explanation of this purgation by a comparison.

To make what I have said, and what I have still to say, more clear, it is well to observe here that this purgative and loving knowledge, or divine light, of which I have spoken, is to the soul which it is purifying, in order to unite it perfectly to itself, as fire is to fuel which it is transforming into itself. The first action of material fire on fuel is to dry it, to expel from it all water and all moisture. It blackens it at once and soils it, and drying* it by little and little, makes it light and consumes all its foulness and blackness which are contrary to itself. Finally, having heated and set on fire its outward surface, it transforms the whole into itself, and makes it beautiful as itself. The fuel under these conditions retains neither active nor passive qualities of its own, except bulk and weight, and assumes all the properties and acts of fire. It becomes dry, being dry it glows.

Google

CHAP. X.] OF THE SOUL.

and glowing, burns ; luminous, it gives light, and burns more quickly than before.

All this is the property and effect of fire.

2. It is in this way we have to reason about the divine fire of contemplative love which, before it unites with, and transforms the soul into, itself, purges away all its contrary qualities. It expels its impurities, blackens it and obscures it, and thus its condition is apparently worse than it was before. For while the divine purgation is removing all the evil and vicious humours, which, because so deeply rooted and settled in the soul, were neither seen nor felt, but now in order to their expulsion and annihilation, are rendered clearly visible in the dim light of the divine contemplation, the soul — though not worse in itself, nor in the sight of God — seeing at last what it never saw before, looks upon itself not only as unworthy of His regard, but even as a loathsome object and that God does loathe it. By this comparison we shall be able to understand much that I have said, and purpose to say.

3. In the first place, we can see how that very light, and that loving knowledge which unites the soul and transforms it into itself, is the same which purifies and prepares it ; for the fire that transforms the fuel and incorporates it with itself, is the very same which also at the first prepared it for that end.

4. In the second place, we may see that these

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

sufferings of the soul do not proceed from the divine wisdom — it being written, ‘ All good things came to me together with her/* — but from its own weakness and imperfection, being incapable, previous to its purgation, of receiving this divine light, sweetness, and delight ; and that is the reason why its sufferings are so great. The fuel is not transformed into fire, at the instant of their contact, if it be not previously prepared for burning.

5. This is the experience of the Wise Man, who thus describes his sufferings before his union with, and possession of, wisdom : ‘ My soul hath wrestled in it.

. . My belly was troubled in seeking it ; therefore

shall I possess a good possession/t

6. In the third place we learn by the way how souls suffer in purgatory. The fire would have no power over them if they were perfectly prepared for the kingdom of God, and union with Him in glory, and if they had no faults for which they must suffer, for these are the matter on which that fire seizes ; when that matter is consumed there is nothing more to burn. So is it here, when ail imperfections are removed, the suffering of the soul ceases, and in its place comes joy as deep as it is possible for it to be in this life.

7. In the fourth place, we learn that the soul, the more it is purified and cleansed in the fire of love, the

* Wisd. vii. 11. t Ecclus. li. 25 — -29.

Ill

CHAP. X.] OF THE SOUL.

more it glows with it. The better the fuel is prepared for the fire the better it burns. The soul, however, is not always conscious of this burning of love within it, but only now and then, when the contemplation is less profound, for the soul is then able to observe, and even to delight in, the work that is being wrought, because it is visible ; the hand of the artificer seems to be withdrawn from the work, and the iron taken out of the furnace, so as to show in some measure the work that is being wrought. Then, too, the soul is able to see in itself that good which it did not see while the process was going on. Thus, when the flame ceases to envelop the fuel, it is possible to see clearly how much of it has been burnt.

8. In the fifth place, we shall also find by this comparison that which has been said before,* namely, how true it is that after these consolations, the soul suffers again more intensely and keenly than it did before. For after the manifestation of the work that has been done, when the more outward imperfections have been expelled, the fire of love returns again to purge and consume that which is more interior. The suffering of the soul herein becomes more penetrating, deep, and spiritual, according as it refines away the more profound, subtle, and deeply rooted interior imperfections of the spirit. It is here as with the fuel in

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

the fire, the deeper the fire penetrates the greater is its force and energy in disposing the inmost substance of the fuel for its own possession of it.

9. In the sixth place, we shall learn that the so'ul, though it rejoices intensely in these intervals of peace — so much so that it seems at times, as we have said, to think its trials over, never to return, even while it is certain that they will soon return — cannot but feel, if it observes a single root of imperfection behind — and sometimes it must do so — that its joy is not full. It seems as if that root threatened to spring up anew, and when that is so, it does so quickly.

10. Finally, that which still remains to be purified and enlightened within cannot well be concealed from the soul in the presence of that which has been already purified ; so also that portion of the fuel which is still to be set on fire is very different from that which the flame has purified. And when this purgation commences anew in the inmost soul, it is not strange that it should consider all its goodness to have perished, and think that it can never recover its former prosperity ; for in most interior sufferings all outward goodness is hidden from it.

11. Keeping this comparison, then, before our eyes, with that which I have already

said,* on the first line of this stanza, concerning this dark night and its fearful

* Ch. iii.

CHAP. XI.] OF THE SOUL.

characteristics, it may be well to leave the subject of these afflictions of the soul, and to enter on the matter of the fruit of its tears and their blessed properties, of which the soul sings in the second line.

CHAPTER XI.

Begins the explanation of the second line of the first, and shows how a vehement passion of divine love is the fruit of these sharp afflictions of the soul.

With anxious love inflamed .

In this line the soul speaks of the fire of love of which we have spoken,* and which, in the night of painful contemplation, seizes upon it as material fire on the fuel it burns. This burning, though in a certain way resembling that which, as we explained before, t takes place in the sensual part of the soul, is still, in one sense, as different from this, of which I am now speaking, as the soul is from the body, the spiritual from the sensual. For this is a certain fire of love in the spirit whereby the soul, amidst these dark trials, feels itself wounded to the quick by this strong love divine with a certain sense and foretaste of God, though it understands nothing distinctly, because, as I have said,J the understanding is in darkness.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

2. The spirit is now conscious of deep love, for this spiritual burning produces the passion of it And inasmuch as this love is infused in a special way, the soul

corresponds only passively with it, and thus a strong passion of love is begotten within it. This love has in it something of the most perfect union with God, and thus partakes in some measure of its properties, which are more especially actions of God received in the soul rather than of the soul, consenting unto them in simplicity and love.

3. But this warmth and force and temper and passion of love, or burning, as the soul calls it, are solely the work of God Who is entering into union with it. The more the desires are restrained, subdued, and disabled for the enjoyment of the things of heaven and earth, the more room does this love find in the soul, and better the dispositions for its reception, so that it may unite itself with that soul, and wound it. This takes place, as has been said before,* during the dark purgation in a wonderful way, for God has so weaned the faculties, and they are now so recollected in Him, that they are unable to take pleasure as they like in anything whatever.

4. All this is the work of God ; wrought with a view to withdraw the faculties of the soul from all objects whatever, and to concentrate them upon Himself, that the soul may acquire greater strength and fitness for the

CHAP. XI.] OF THE SOUL.

strong union of love of God which He is communicating in the purgative way ; and in which the soul must love Him with all its strength and desire of sense and spirit, which it could never do if the faculties thereof were dissipated by other satisfactions. The Psalmist, therefore, that he might be able to receive this strong love of the union with God, said unto Him, 4 1 will keep my strength for Thee ; '* that is, all my capacity and desires, the strength of my faculties, neither will I suffer them to do or rejoice in anything but Thee.

5. Here we may perceive, in some degree, how great and how vehement is this burning of love in the spirit when God gathers and collects together all the strength*

faculties, and desires of the soul, both spiritual and sensual, so that all this unison may use all its energies and all its forces in this love, and so come to satisfy truly, and in perfection, the first commandment, which, neglecting nothing that belongs to man, and shutting out nothing that is his from this love, saith, namely, 4 Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength/f

6. When all the desires and energies of the soul are thus recollected in this burning of love, and the soul itself touched, wounded, and set on fire with love, in them all, what must the movements and affections of

* Ps. lviii. 10. t Deut. vi. 5.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book II.

these desires and energies be when they are thus wounded and burning in this strong love, when that love does not satiate them, when they are in darkness and doubt about it, and suffering also, beyond all question, a more grievous hunger, in proportion to the past experience of God ? For the touch of this love and of the divine fire so dries up the spirit, and enkindles its longing to satisfy its thirst, that it turns upon itself a thousand times, and longs for God in a thousand ways, as David did when he said, ‘For Thee my soul hath thirsted, for Thee my flesh, O how many ways ; '* that is, in desire. Another version reads, 4 My soul thirsteth after Thee, my soul is dying for Thee/

7. This is the reason why the soul says, ‘With anxious love inflamed/ In all its works and thoughts, in all its employments and on every occasion, the soul loves and longs in many ways, and this longing also is manifold in its forms, always and everywhere present ; the soul has no rest, feeling itself to be wounded, and on fire with anxious love; its state is thus described by holy Job : ‘ As a servant desireth the shadow, as

the hired man tarrieth for the end of his work, so I also have had vain months, and have numbered to myself laborious nights. If I sleep, I shall say, ‘ When shall I arise ? and again I shall expect the evening, and shall be replenished with sorrows even until dark-

♦ Ps. lxii. 2.

OF THE SOUL.

CHAP. XI.]

ness/* The soul is discontented with itself, with heaven and with earth, being replenished with sorrows even until the darkness of which Job is here speaking. That darkness, speaking in a spiritual sense, and according to the matter which I am discussing, is distress and suffering without the comfort of any certain hope of any light and spiritual good.

8. The anxieties and sufferings of the soul while thus on fire with love are the greater, because of their twofold origin : the spiritual darkness which envelops it is one, and that afflicts it with doubts and misgivings. The love of God which sets it on fire is the other, which stirs it with the wound of love and makes it burn marvellously. These two kinds of suffering are thus referred to by Isaias, being in a like condition : ‘ My soul hath desired Thee in the night ; ' that is, in misery. This is one kind of pain which proceeds from the dark night, ‘Yea, and with my spirit in my heart I will watch to Thee in the moming/f This is the other kind of suffering in desire and anxiety, which proceeds from love, in the bowels of the spirit; that is, the spiritual affections. The soul, however, amidst these gloomy and loving pains, is conscious of a certain companionship and inward strength which attends upon it and so invigorates it that if the burden of this oppressive darkness be removed, it ♦ Job vii. 2-4. f Is. xxvi. 9.

Google

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

oftentimes feels itself desolate, empty, and weak. The reason is that the force and courage communicated to the soul flow passively from the dark fire of love which assails it, and so, when that fire ceases to assail it, the darkness, the strength, and fire of love at the same time cease in the soul.

CHAPTER XII.

Shows how this awful night is a purgatory, and how in it the divine wisdom illuminates men on earth with that light in which the angels are purified and enlightened in heaven.

What I have said will enable us to see how the dark night of loving fire purifies in the darkness, and how the soul in the darkness is set on fire. We shall also see that, as the dark and material fires in the next life, so the loving, dark, and spiritual fires here, purify and cleanse the predestinate. The difference is that in the next world they are purified by fire, and here, purified and enlightened by love. David prayed for this love when he said, ‘ Create a clean heart in me, O God ! ’* for cleanness of heart is nothing else but the love and grace of God. ‘ The clean of heart/ are called blessed by our Saviour, and it is as if He had said, blessed are those who love, for blessedness can come of nothing less than love.

CHAP. XII.] OF THE SOUL.

2. The following words of Jeremias, ‘ From on high He. hath cast a fire in my bones, and hath taught me/* show plainly that the soul is purified when it is enlightened in

the fire of loving wisdom, for God never grants the mystical wisdom without love ; it being love itself that infuses it into the soul. David also saith that the wisdom of God is silver tried in the purifying fire of love ; 1 words of our Lord are chaste words, silver examined by fire/f for the dim contemplation infuses into the soul love and wisdom, in every one according to its necessity and capaci y, enlightening the soul, and cleansing it of all its ignorances, according to the words of the Wise Man, ‘ He hath enlightened my ignorances.:}:

3. Here, also, we learn that the wisdom which purifies the ignorances of the angels, flowing from God through the highest, down to the lowest, in the order of the heavenly hierarchy, and thence to men, is that very wisdom which purifies these souls and enlightens them. All the works of the angels, and all the inspirations they suggest, are, therefore, in Holy Scripture, truly and properly said to be their work and God's work : for, ordinarily, His inspirations come through the angels ; they receiving them one from another

[J * Ignorantias meas illuminavit. These words have been expunged from Ecclus. li. 2 6 , by the Roman censure.]

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK II.

instantaneously,* as the light of the sun penetrates many windows at once, arranged one behind the other. For though it is true that the light of the sun pierces all, yet each window conveys and pours that light into the next, somewhat modified, according to the nature of the glass, somewhat weaker and fainter, according to the distance from the sun.

4. Hence it follows, with respect to the higher and lower angels, the nearer they are to God the more they are purified and enlightened in the general purgation ; the

lowest in rank receiving their illumination in a less perfect degree. But man, being lower than the angels, must, when God raises him to the state of contemplation, receive that enlightenment according to his capacity in a limited degree, and with suffering. For the light of God which illumines an angel enlightens him, and sets him on fire with love, for he is a spirit already prepared for the infusion of that light ; but man, being impure and weak, is ordinarily enlightened, as I said before,! in darkness, in distress and pain — the sun's rays are painful in their light to weak eyes — till the fire of love, purifying him, shall have spiritualised and refined him, so that being made pure he may be

[* Scot. 2. Sent, dist 10, qu unic. Secundum communem processum et ordinem revelantur majoraDei mysteria superioribus priusquam inferioribus, et ita superiores mittiintur ad inferiores, loquendo et illuminando eos interius, et alii inferiores mittuntur exterius ad ilia revelata nuncianda hominibus vel explenda.]

CHAP. XII.] OF THE SOUL.

able to receive with sweetness, like the angels, the union of this inflowing love ; for, as we shall explain, with the help of our Lord, there are souls who, in this life, are more perfectly enlightened than even the angels. But, in the meantime, this contemplation and loving knowledge come upon the soul through trials and loving anxiety, of which I am now speaking.

5. The soul is not always conscious of this burning and anxious love ; for in the beginning of the spiritual purgation all the divine fire is employed in drying up and preparing the soul, rather than in setting it on fire. But when the soul has become heated in the fire, it then feels most commonly this burning and warmth of love. And now, as the understanding is being purified more and more in this darkness, it happens occasionally that this mystical and affective theology, while inflaming the will, wounds also by enlightening the other faculty of the understanding with a

certain divine light and knowledge, so sweetly and so divinely, that the will, aided by it, glows in a marvellous manner, the divine fire of love burning within it with living flames, so that the soul appears to have received a living fire with a living understanding. This is what David referred to when he said, 4 My heart waxed hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall burn,* so vehemently that I thought it to be already on fire/

* Ps. xxxviii. 4.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

6. This kindling of love, in the union of these two powers, the understanding and the will, is to the soul a great treasure and delight, because it is certain that the foundations of the perfection of the union of love, for which the soul hopes, are now laid in that darkness. Thus the soul does not reach this sublime sense and love of God without passing through many tribulations, and accomplishing a great part of its purgation. But for other degrees of this union, lower than this, which are of ordinary occurrence, so intense a purgation is not required.

CHAPTER XIII.

Other sweet effects wrought in the soul in the dark night of contemplation.

By the expression i burning ' we understand some of the sweet effects which are wrought in the soul by the dark night of contemplation ; for occasionally, amid the darkness, the soul receives light — Might shineth in darkness ’* — the mystical inflowing streaming directly into the understanding, and the will in some measure partaking of it, with a calmness and pureness so exquisite and so delicious to the soul as to be utterly indescribable : now God is felt to be present in one way, and

again in another. Sometimes, too, it wounds the will at the same time, and enkindles love deeply, tenderly, and strongly ; * St. Johni. 5.

CHAP. XIII.] OF THE SOUL.

for, as I have said, the more the understanding is purified the more perfectly and delicate, at times, is the union of the understanding and the will. But, before the soul attains to this state, it is more common for the touch of the fire of love to be felt in the will than for the touch of the perfect intelligence to be felt in the understanding.

2. This burning, and thirst of love, inasmuch as it now proceeds from the Holy Ghost, is very different from that of which I spoke in describing the night of sense.* For though sense also has now its part in this, because it cannot but share in the afflictions of the spirit ; yet the root and living force of the thirst of love are felt in the higher part of the soul, that is, in the spirit. The spirit perceives and understands what it feels, and that it possesses not that which it longs for, so that it counts as nothing all the pain it feels, though it is beyond comparison greater than the pain of the first night, which is the night of sense ; for it thoroughly understands that one great good is absent, and that there is no remedy possible.

3. It may be observed here that, although at first, in the beginning of the spiritual night, this burning love is not felt because the fire of love has not yet done its work, God communicates to the soul, instead of it, a reverent love of Himself so great that, as I have said,f the

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK II.

heaviest trials and deepest afflictions of this night are the distressing thought that it

has lost God, and that He has abandoned it. It may, therefore, be always said that from the beginning of this night the soul is full of the anxieties of love, at one time that of reverence, at another that of burning. It is evident that the greatest of its sufferings is this doubt : for if it could be persuaded that all is not lost and over, and that the trials it undergoes are, as in truth they are, for its greater good, and that God is not angry, it would make no account whatever of all these afflictions ; on the contrary, it would rejoice, knowing that by them it is serving God.

4. This reverential love of God is so strong in the soul — though in the darkness and unaware of it — that it would be glad not only to endure its trials, but also to die a thousand deaths to serve Him. But when the fire of love and the reverent love of God together have set the soul in a flame, it is wont to gain such strength and energy, and such eager longing after God — effects of this glowing love — that it boldly disregards all considerations, and sets everything aside, in the inebriating force of love, and, without much consideration of its acts, it conducts itself strangely and extravagantly in every way that it may come to Him whom the soul loveth.

5. This is the reason why Mary Magdalene, though

CHAP. XIH.J OF THE SOUL.

so noble, heeded not the many guests, high and low, who were feasting, as we read in St. Luke, in the house of the Pharisee. She considered not that she was not welcome, and that tears were unseemly at the feast, provided she could, without an hour’s delay, or waiting for another occasion, reach Him for whom her soul was wounded and on fire.* This is that inebriating and daring force of love, which, when she knew that her Love was in the sepulchre, guarded by soldiers, and a stone rolled over it and sealed, allowed none of these things to move her ; for she went thither before dawn with the ointments to anoint her Beloved. And, finally, it was under the inebriating influence and anxieties of love that she asked Himself, Whom she took

for the gardener, who, she thought, had robbed the sepulchre, to tell her, if he had taken Him away, where he had laid Him. ‘ If thou hast carried Him away, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.’f She did not reflect upon the imprudence of her words ; for it is clear that if the gardener had stolen the Body he would not have told her, still less would he have allowed her to take Him away.

6. This conduct of Mary Magdalene proceeded from the vehemence and energy of her love : for love thinks all things possible, and that all are of the same mind with itself ; for it cannot believe that there is anything ♦ St. Luke vii. 37. f St. John xx. 15.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book. IX.

to occupy men, or anything to be sought for by them, except that which itself seeks and loves; it considers that there can be no other occupation or desire except its own. Thus, when the bride went out into the streets and highways seeking her beloved, she, believing that all were employed, like herself, in searching for him, adjured them, if they found him, to tell him that she languished with love.*

7. So strong was Mary’s love that she intended, if the gardener had told her where he had hidden our Lord, to go and take Him away, in spite of any prohibition. Of

‘this kind are those anxieties of love which the soul feels when it has made some progress in the spiritual purgation. The soul rises by night— that is, in the purifying darkness— in the affections of the will. As a lioness or a bear, robbed of its whelps, whom it cannot find, seeks them anxiously and earnestly, so does the wounded soul seek after God. Being in darkness, it feels His absence, and is dying of love. This is that impatient love which no man can endure long without obtaining his wishes or dying. It is like Rachel s longing for children, when she said to Jacob, ‘ Give me children, otherwise I shall die.’f

8. We have now to consider how it is that the soul, conscious of its own misery and

unworthiness before God, can be so bold, amid the purifying darkness, as to

* Cant. iii. 2 v. 8. t Gen. xxx. 1 .

CHAP. XIII.] OF THE SOUL.

aspire after union with Him. The reason is, that love gives it strength to love in earnest, it being the nature of love to seek for union, companionship, equality with, and likeness to the object beloved, so as to attain to the perfection of itself. Hence it is that the soul not yet made perfect in love, because it has not attained to union, hungers and thirsts for that which it has not — namely, union ; and the strength which love communicates to the will, which is on fire, renders it bold and daring as to the will, though as to the understanding, because that is in darkness, it feels itself to be an unworthy and miserable object.

9. I must not omit here to say why it is that the divine light, being always light to the soul, does not illumine it the moment it strikes it, as it does at a later time, instead of bringing with it the darkness and misery of which I am speaking.* Something has been already said, but I now speak of it directly. The darkness and other miseries of which the soul is conscious proceed not from the divine light when it strikes the soul, but from the soul itself, and it is the light which enables it to see them. The divine light gives light at once, but the soul sees nothing at first but th at which is im mediately before it, or rather within itself ; its own darkness and misery, which, by the mercy of God, it sees now, and formerly saw not,

THE DARK NIGHT

[book: n.

because this supernatural light had not been granted it.

10. This is the reason why, in the beginning, the soul is conscious of nothing but of

darkness and misery. But when it has been purified by the knowledge and sense of its misery it will have eyes to discern the blessings of the divine light, and being delivered and set free from all darkness and imperfections, the great blessings and profit will become known which the soul is gaining for itself in this blessed night.

11. This shows how great is the mercy of God to the soul when He thus purifies it in this strong lye and bitter purgation, as to its sensual and spiritual part, from all its affections and imperfect habits in all that relates to time, nature, sense, and spirit ; by darkening its interior faculties, and emptying them of all objects, by correcting and drying up all affections of sense and spirit, by weakening and wasting the natural forces which the soul never could have done of itself as we shall immediately show. God ^makes it die, in this way , to -a ll that i s not^ God v that, being denuded and strippe d of its fo rmer clothing T jt may cloth e itself anew. Thus the soul's * youth shall be renewed like the eagle's/* clothed with ' the new man, which, in the words of the Apostle, is created according to God in justice.'f

12. Now this is nothing else but the supernatural

* Ps. cii. 5. -f Ephes. iv. 24.

CHAP. XIV.] OF THE SOUL.

light giving light to the understanding, so that the human understanding becomes divine, made one with the divine. In the same way divine love inflames the will so that it becomes nothing less than divine, loving in a divine way, united and made one with the •divine will and divine love. ' The memory is affected in like manner; all the desires and affections also are changed divinely according to God. Thus the soul will be of heaven, heavenly, divine rather than human.

13. All this, as is clear from what I have said, is the work of God in the soul, during this night, enlightening it and setting it on fire in a divine way with an anxious solicitude for God alone, and for nought besides.

14. It is with great propriety and justice, therefore, that the soul repeats the third line of the stanza, which, together with those that follow, I repeat again and explain in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

Repeats and explains the last three lines of the first stanza.

O happy lot !

Forth unobserved I went ,

My house being now at rest.

"The happy lot of which the soul is singing in the first of these three lines befel it through those means of which it speaks in the two lines that follow it ; making use of a metaphor, it describes itself as one who, for the better

THE DARK NIGHT

[book: u.

execution of his purpose, goes out of his house by night, in the dark, the inmates of which are at rest, in order that none might hinder him. The soul having to perform so heroic and so rare an act, that of being united to the divine Beloved, sallies forth, because the Beloved is to be found only without, in solitude. The bride therefore desired to find him alone, saying : 4 Who shall give Thee to me for my brother, sucking the breasts of my mother, that I may find Thee without and kiss Thee?'* It is necessary for the enamoured soul, in order to obtain the end desired, to act in the same way ; to go out by night when all the inmates of its house repose and sleep ; that is, when its lower operations, passions, and desires are at rest and asleep in this night. These are the inmates of its house which when awake ever hinder its good,

enemies of its freedom. These are they of whom our Saviour said in the holy gospel, 4 A man's enemies shall be they of his own household/ f 2. Thus it is necessary that their operations and motions should be lulled to sleep in this night in order that they may be no hindrance to the supernatural blessings of union with God in love, for while they continue to energise and act, that is unattainable. All movement and action on their part, instead of helping, hinder the reception of the spiritual blessings of the union of love, because all natural exertion is defective with

♦ Cant. viii. i. f St. Matt. x. 36.

CHAP. XIV.] OF THE SOUL.

regard to those supernatural blessings which God alone secretly and silently infuses into the passive soul. Hence it is necessary that the powers of the soul should be at rest, if it is to receive what God infus es, and should not interfere with their own inferior actions and base inclinations.

3. It was a happy lot for the soul when God in this night put all its household to sleep, that is, all the powers, passions, affections, and desires of the sensual and spiritual soul, that it may attain to the spiritual union of the perfect love of God 4 unobserved/ that is, unhindered by them, because they were all asleep and mortified in that night. O how happy must the soul then be, when it can escape from the house of its sensuality! None can understand it, I think, except that soul which has experienced it. That soul clearly sees how wretched was its former slavery, and how great its misery when it lay at the mercy of its passions and desires ; it learns now that the life of the spirit is true liberty and riches, with innumerable blessings in its train, some of which I shall speak of while explaining the following stanzas, when it will more clearly appear, what good reasons the soul has for describing the passage of this awful night as a happy lot.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book. n.

CHAPTER XV. |

The second stanza and its explanation. \

In darkness and in safety , (

By the secret ladder, disguised,

O happy lot !

In darkness and concealment.

My house being now at rest.

In this stanza the soul goes on singing still of certain properties of the darkness of this night, speaking again (

of the happy lot which befel it through them. It speaks (

of them in answering an implied objection, observing I

that no one is to think that because in this dark night it I

passed through so many storms of affliction, doubt, fear ^

and horror, as I said before,* it had therefore run any /

risk of being lost ; yea rather, it found safety in the darkness, because in the darkness it was free and /

skilfully escaped from its enemies who were ever ;

hindering its departure. \

2. In the darkness of the night it changed its \

garments, and disguised itself in three colours, of which I shall speak hereafter, f It sallied forth unknown to the whole of its household by a most secret ladder, which,

as I shall show in the proper place, is a living (

faith — in such secrecy and silence, for the better (

execution of its purpose, that it could not possibly be in greater security ; especially now, because in the purgative night, the desires, passions, and affections of y

Google

CHAP. XVI.] OF THE SOUL.

the soul are asleep, mortified, and subdued ; and these are they which, awake and active, would never have consented to that departure.

CHAPTER XVI.

Showeth how the soul journeys securely when in darkness.

In darkness and in safety.

The darkness of which the soul here speaks, relates, as I have said,* to the desires and powers of sense, interior and spiritual, all of which are deprived of their natural light in this night, that, being purified as to this, they may be supernaturally enlightened. The desires of sense and spirit are lulled to sleep and mortified, unable to relish anything either human or divine •. the affections of the soul are thwarted and brought low, become helpless, and have nothing to rest upon ; the imagination is fettered, and unable to make any profitable reflections, the memory is gone, and the will, too, is dry and afflicted, and all the faculties are empty, and, moreover, a dense _ and^heavy cloud overshadows the soul, distresses it and holds it as if it were far away from God. This is the darkness in which the soul says that it travels in safety.

2. The reason of this safety has been clearly shown : for usually the soul never errs, except under the influence

♦ Ch. iii.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

of its desires, or tastes, or reflections, or understanding-, or affections, wherein it generally is overabundant, or defective, changeable, or inconsistent ; hence the inclination to that which is not becoming. It is therefore clear that the soul is secure against being led astray by them, when all these operations and movements have ceased. Because then the soul is delivered, not only from itself, but also from its other enemies — the world and the devil — who, when the affections and operations of the soul have ceased, cannot assault it by any other way or by any other means.

3. It follows from this, that the greater the darkness and emptiness of its natural operations in which the soul travels, the greater is its security. For as the prophet saith, ‘ Perdition is thine own, O Israel ; only in Me is thy help/* The perdition of the soul is exclusively its own work — the result of its own operations, of its unsubdued desires, interior and sensual — and its salvation, saith God, cometh from Me only. When the soul is hindered from giving way to its imperfections there descend upon it forthwith the blessings of union with God, in its desires and faculties which that union will render heavenly and divine.

4. If, therefore, while this darkness lasts, the soul will look within, it will very clearly see how slightly the desires and the faculties have been diverted towards vain

♦ Os. xiii. 9.

CHAP. XVI.] OF THE SOUL.

and unprofitable matters, and that it is secure itself against vainglory, pride and presumption, empty rejoicing, and many other evils. It is quite clear, therefore, that the soul which is in this darkness is not only not lost, but that it gains much, for now it acquires virtue.

5. But here a question arises : Why is it — seeing that the things of God are profitable and beneficial to the soul, and a source of security — that the desires and faculties are so darkened by Him in this night that they cannot have any joy in spiritual things or occupy themselves with them as with other things, but are, in some way, less able to do so ? To this I reply, that it is then very necessary for the soul not to act and be devoid of pleasure even in spiritual things, seeing that its faculties and desires are base and impure ; and even if they have pleasure in, and are familiar with, divine and supernatural things, that can be only in a mean way.

6. It is a philosophical axiom that all that is received is received according to the condition of the recipient. From this it follows that the natural faculties — being without the requisite purity, strength, and capacity for the reception and fruition of divine things in their way, which is divine, but only in their own, which is mean and vile — must be in darkness with regard to the divine way, so as to secure their perfect purgation. That being weaned, purified, and brought to nothing, they may lose

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

their own mode of acting and receiving, and may be thus disposed and tempered for the reception and fruition of that which is divine in a high and noble way ; which cannot be if the old man do not die first. Hence it is that all spiritual graces if they do not descend from the Father of lights upon the human will and desire, however much a man may exercise his taste, desire, and faculties about God, and however much he may seem to succeed, are still not divinely nor perfectly enjoyed.

7. As to this I might here show, were this the proper place, that there are many whose tastes and affections, and the operations of whose faculties are directed to God and to spiritual things, who may imagine all this to be supernatural and

spiritual, when in reality it is nothing more, perhaps, than acts and desires most natural and human. As they regard ordinary matters, so also do they regard good things, with a certain natural facility which they have in directing their faculties and desires to anything, whatever it may be. If I can find an opportunity in the course of this discussion, I propose to enter upon this question,* and describe some of the signs by which we may know when the motives and interior acts of the soul in the things of God are natural only, when they are spiritual only, and when they are natural and spiritual together. It is enough for us here to know that the interior acts and movements of the soul, if they * Living Flame, St. iii. Bk. 4.

OF THE SOUL.

CHAP. XVI.]

are to be divinely influenced by God, must be first of all lulled to sleep, darkened and subdued, in their natural state, so far as their capacity and operations are concerned, until they lose all their strength.

8. O spiritual soul, when thou seest thy desire obscured, thy will arid and constrained, and thy faculties incapable of any interior act, be not grieved at this, but look upon it rather as a great good, for God is delivering thee from thyself, taking the matter out of thy hands ; for however strenuously thou may est exert thyself, thou wilt never do anything so faultlessly, perfectly, and securely as now — because of the impurity and torpor of thy faculties — when God, taking thee by the hand, is guiding thee in the dark as one that is blind, along a road and to an end thou knowest not, and whither thou couldst never travel by the help of thine own eyes and thine own feet, however strong thou mayest be.

9. The reason why the soul not only travels^ securely when it thus travels in the dark, but makes even greater progress, is this 2 In general the soul makes greater

progress when it least thinks so, yea, most frequently when it imagines that it is losing. Having never before experienced the present novelty w r hich dazzles it, and disturbs its former habits, it considers itself as losing, rather than as gaining ground, when it sees itself lost in a place it once knew, and in which it delighted, travelling by a road it knows not, and in which it has no pleasure.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book ii.

As a traveller into strange countries goes by ways strange and untried, relying on information derived from others, and not upon any knowledge of his own — it is clear that he will never reach a new country but by new ways which he knows not, and by abandoning those he knew — so in the same way the soul makes the greater progress when it travels in the dark, not knowing the way. But inasmuch as God Himself is here the guide of the soul in its blindness, the soul may well exult and say , 4 In darkness and in safety/ now that it has come to a knowledge of its state.

10. There is another reason also why the soul has travelled safely in this obscurity ; it has suffered : for the way of suffering is safer, and also more profitable, than that of rejoicing and of action. In suffering God gives strength, but in action and in joy the soul does but show its own weakness and imperfections. And in suffering, the soul practises and acquires virtue, and becomes pure, wiser, and more cautious.

11. There is another and stronger reason why the soul travels securely when in darkness. This reason is derived from the consideration of the light itself, or dark wisdom. The dark night of contemplation so absorbs the soul, and brings it so near unto God, that He defends it, and delivers it from all that is not God. For t jie soul is now, a s it were, under medical treatment for t he re covery of its health, which is God Himself : God

CHAP. XVI.] OF THE SOUL.

compels it to observe a particular diet, and to abstain from all hurtful things, the very desire for them being subdued. The soul is treated like a sick man respected by his household, who is so carefully tended that the air shall not touch him, nor the light shine upon him, whom the noise of footsteps and the tumult of servants shall not disturb, and to whom the most delicate food is given most cautiously by measure, and that nutritious rather than savoury.

12. All these advantages — they all minister to the safe-keeping of the soul — are the effects of this dim contemplation, for it brings the soul nearer to God. The truth is, that the nearer the soul comes to Him it perceives that darkness is greater and deeper because of its own weakness ; thus the nearer the sun the greater the darkness and distress wrought by its great brightness, because our eyes are weak, imperfect, and defective. Hence it is that the spiritual light of God is so immeasurable, so far above the understanding, that when it comes near to it, it dims and blinds it.

13. This is the reason why David said that God made darkness His hiding-place and covert. His tabernacle around Him, dark water in the clouds of the air.* The dark water in the clouds of the air is the dim contemplation and divine wisdom in souls, as I am going to explain, of which they have experience as a

* Ps. xvii. 12.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

thing near to the pavilion where He dwells, when God brings them nearer to Himself. Thus, that which in God is light and supreme splendour, is to man thick darkness, as S. Paul saith,* and as the royal prophet David explains it in the same psalm, saying : ‘ Because of the brightness of His presence the clouds passed/t that

is, clouds and darkness over the natural understanding, ‘ the light of which/ saith the prophet Isaias, 1 is darkened in the mist thereof/J

14. O wretched condition of this life wherein it is so difficult to find the truth ! That which is most clear and true, is to us most obscure and doubtful, and we therefore avoid it though it is most necessary for us. That which shines the most, and dazzles our eyes, that we embrace and follow after, though it is most hurtful to us, and makes us stumble at every step. In what fear and danger then must man be living, seeing that the very light of his natural eyes, by which he directs his steps, is the very first to bewilder and deceive him when he would draw near unto God. If he wishes to be sure of the road he travels on, he must close his eyes and walk in the dark, if he is to journey in safety from his domestic foes, which are his own senses and faculties.

15. Well hidden and protected then is the soul in the dark waters close to God. For as the da rk waters are

* Acts xxii. 11. ‘I did not see for the brightness of that light/ f Ps. xvii. 13. X I s - v * 3°-

OF THE SOUL.

CHAP. XVI.]

a .t abernacle and dwelling-place for God Himself, so the v^ are also to th e soul perfect safety and protection, though in darkness, where it is hidden and protected from itself, as I have said,* and from all the injuries that created things may afflict. It is of souls thus protected that David spoke when he said in another psalm : ‘ Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy face, from the disturbance of men. Thou shalt protect them in Thy tabernacle from the contradiction of tongues.'f These words comprehend all kinds of protection ; for to be hidden ‘in the secret of the face* of

God ‘from the disturbance of men/ is to be strengthened in the dim contemplation against all the assaults of men. To be protected in His ‘ tabernacle from the contradiction of tongues/ is to be engulfed in the dark waters, which is the tabernacle of which David speaks. That soul, therefore, whose desires and affections are weaned, and whose faculties are in darkness, is set free from all the imperfections which war against the spirit, whether they proceed from the flesh, or from any other created thing. The soul, therefore, may well say, ‘ In darkness and in safety.'

1 6. Another reason, not less conclusive, why the soul, though in darkness, travels securely, is derived from that courage which it acquires as soon as it enters within the dark, painful, and gloomy waters of God.

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK II.

Though it be dark, still it is water, and therefore cannot but refresh and strengthen the soul in all that is most necessary for it, though it does so painfully and in darkness. For the soul immediately discerns in itself a certain courage and resolution to do nothing which it knows to be displeasing unto God, and to leave nothing undone which ministers to His service, because this love, which is dim, is most watchful and careful of what it is to do, and what it is to leave undone, for His sake, so as to please Him. It looks around and considers in a thousand ways whether it has done anything to offend Him, and all this with much more solicitude and carefulness than it ever did before, as I said when speaking of this anxious love.* Here all the desires, all the strength, and all the powers of the soul, recollected from all besides, direct all their efforts and all their energies to the service of God only. Thus the soul goes forth out of itself, away from all created things, to the sweet and delightsome union of the love of God, ‘in darkness and in safety.'

CHAPTER XVII.

Gives the second line and explains how this dim contemplation is secret.

By the secret ladder, disguised.

I HAVE three things to explain in reference to the three words of this line. Two of them — ■« secret ' and 4 ladder’ * Bk. i ch. xi. § 3, and ch. xi. supr.

CHAP. XVH.] OF THE SOUL.

— belong to the dark night of contemplation of which I am speaking, but the third — ‘ disguised ' — belongs to the way of the soul therein. As to the first, the soul calls the dim contemplation, by which it goes forth to the union of love, a secret ladder, and that because of two properties of it which I am going to explain. First, this dark contemplation is called secret, because it is, as I have said before,* the mystical theology which theologians call secret wisdom, and which according to St. Thomas t is infused into the soul more especially by love. This happens in a secret hidden way in which the natural operations of the understanding and the other faculties have no share. And, therefore, because the faculties of the soul cannot compass it, it being the Holy Ghost Who infuses it into the soul, in a way it knoweth not, as the Bride saith in the Canticle, + we call it secret.

2. And, in truth, it is not the soul only that knows it not, but every one else, even the devil ; because the Master who now teaches the soul dwells substantially within it. This is not the only reason why it is called secret, for it is secret also in its effects. It is not only secret beyond the powers of the soul to speak of it, during

t [S. Thom. 2 d ® qu. i8o, art. i. Et propter hoc Gregorius — Horn. 14 in Ezech. ante med. constituit vitam contemplativam in

charitate Dei ideo vita contemplativa terminatur ad

dilectionem, quae est in affecta, ex quo etiam amor intenditur.]

{ Cant. vi. 11.

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK II.

the darkness and sharpness of the purgation, when the secret wisdom is purifying the soul, but afterwards also, during the illumination, when that wisdom is most clearly communicated, it is so secret that it cannot be discerned or described. Moreover, the soul has no wish to speak of it, and besides, it can discover no way or proper similitude to describe it by, so as to make known a knowledge so high, a spiritual impression so delicate and infused. Yea, and if it could have a wish to speak of it, and find terms to describe it, it would always remain secret still.

3. Because this interior wisdom is so simple, general, and spiritual, that it enters not into the understanding under any form or image subject to sense, as is sometimes the case, the imagination, therefore, and the senses — as it has not entered in by them, nor is modified by them — cannot account for it, nor form any conception of it, so as to speak in any degree correctly about it, though the soul be distinctly conscious that it feels and tastes this sweet and strange wisdom. The soul is like a man who sees an object for the first time, the like of which he has never seen before ; he handles it and feels it, yet he cannot say what it is, or tell its name, do what he can, though it be at the same time an object cognisable by the senses. How much less then can that be described which does not enter in by the senses ?

4. Such is the nature of the divine language that

CHAP. XVH.] OF THE SOUL.

the more interior, infused, and spiritual it is, the more it transcends every sense ; the

powers of the senses, interior and exterior, cease, and their harmonies become mute.

5. The Holy Writings supply both proofs and illustrations of this principle. Jeremias shows the impossibility of manifesting and expressing it in words : for when God had spoken to him he knew not what to say, except, ‘ Ah, ah, ah, Lord God/* Moses, also, is an instance of the interior helplessness, that is, of the interior imaginative sense, and of the exterior also at the same time : for when God spoke to him out of the bush, he not only saw that he could not speak, but as is said in the Acts of the Apostles, f he ‘durst not behold; 't that is, the imagination itself was weak and silent. The wisdom of this contemplation is the language of God addressed to the soul, as pure spirit, and as the senses are not spiritual, so they do not perceive it ; it remains therefore a secret from them, they cannot understand it, nor express it.

6. This explains why some persons, walking in this way, good and timid souls, who, when they would give an account of their interior state to their directors, know not how to do it, neither have they the power to do it, and so feel a great repugnance to explain themselves, especially when contemplation is the more simple and

* Jerem. i. 6. f Exod. iv. 10. { Acts vii. 32.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book h.

with difficulty discernible by them. All they can say is that their soul is satisfied, calm, or contented, that they have a sense of the presence of God, and that all goes well with them, as they think; but they cannot explain their state, except by general expressions of this kind. But it is a different matter when they have a consciousness of particular things, such as visions, impressions, and the like; these in general are communicated under some species, in which the senses participate ; in that case they are able to describe them. But it is not in the nature of pure contemplation that it can be described ; for it can scarcely be spoken of in words, and therefore we call it

secret.

7. This is not the only reason why it is called secret, and why it is so. There is another, namely the mystical wisdom has the property of hiding the soul within itself. For beside its ordinary operation, it sometimes so absorbs the soul and plunges it in this secret abyss that the soul sees itself distinctly as far away from, and abandoned by, all created things; it looks upon itself as one that is placed in a wild and vast solitude whither no human being can come, as in an immense wilderness without limits ; a wilderness, the more delicious, sweet, and lovely, the more it is wide, vast, and lonely, where the soul is the more hidden, the more it is raised up above all created things.

8. This abyss of wisdom now so exalts and elevates

CHAP. XVII.] OF THE SOUL.

the soul— orderly disposing it for the science of love — that it makes it not only understand how mean are all created things in relation to the supreme wisdom and divine knowledge, but also, how low, defective, and, in a certain sense, improper, are all the words and phrases by which in this life we discuss divine things, and how utterly impossible by any natural means, however profoundly and learnedly we may speak, to understand and see them as they are, except in the light of mystical theology. And so the soul in the light thereof discerning this truth, namely, that it cannot reach it, and still less explain it by the terms of ordinary speech, justly calls it secret.

9. This property of being secret, and of surpassing all natural capacity, belongs to divine contemplation, not only because it is itself supernatural, but also because it is the guide of the soul to the perfections of union with God, which not being humanly known, we must reach by not knowing the way, and being divinely ignorant. For, to use the language of mystical theology, as we are doing, these things are neither

understood nor known when they are sought, but when they are found and practised. For thus the prophet Baruch speaks of the divine wisdom : ‘ There is none that can know her ways, nor that can search out her paths/* The royal prophet also, speaking of this way of the soul, says unto God :

* Baruch iii. 31.

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK II.

4 Thy lightnings enlightened the round world, the earth was moved and trembled, Thy way is in the sea T an d Thy paths in many waters, and Thy steps shall not be known.'* All this in a spiritual sense explains the matter I am discussing.

io. The lightnings that enlightened the round world is the illumination of the faculties of the soul in the divine contemplation, the moving and trembling of the earth is the painful purgation of which it is the cause. To say that the way of God, by which the soul draws near unto Him, is in the sea, and His paths in many waters, and therefore not known, is to say that this way to God is as secret, and as hidden from the senses of the soul, as the way of one who walks on the waters is from the senses of the body, and whose paths and steps are not known. The paths and steps of God in those souls which He is drawing to Himself, making them great in the union of His wisdom, have this property, that they are not known. That is the meaning of these words in the book of Job, impressing upon us this truth, 4 Knowest thou the great paths of the clouds, and perfect knowledges ? ' t that is, the paths and ways of God, in which He makes souls great and perfect in His wisdom ; these are the clouds. This contemplation, therefore, which guides the soul to God is secret wisdom.

* Ps. lxxvi. 19, 20.

t Job xxxvii. 16.

CHAP. XVIII.]

OF THE SOUL.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Shows how this secret wisdom is also a ladder.

It remains for me to explain the second property, namely, how this secret wisdom is also a ladder. There are many reasons for calling secret contemplation a ladder. In the first place, as men employ ladders to mount up to those strong places where treasures are laid up, so also by secret contemplation, without knowing how, the soul ascends, and mounts upwards, to the knowledge and possession of the goods and treasures of heaven. This is well expressed by the royal prophet David when he says, ‘ Blessed is the man whose help is from Thee : he hath disposed ascensions in his heart, in the vale of tears, in the place which he hath appointed. For the Lawgiver shall give blessing ; they shall go from virtue into virtue : the God of gods shall be seen in Sion/* He is the treasure of the citadel of Sion which is blessedness.

2. We may also call it a ladder, for as the steps of one and the same ladder serve to descend as well as to ascend by, so, too, those very communications which the soul receives in secret contemplation raise it up to God and make it humble. For the communications which really come from God have this property : they humble and exalt the soul at one and the same time. In the

* Ps. lxxxiii. 6, 7, 8.

[book n.

spi ritua l wayyjtCL descen d is to ascend, and to ascend is to descend, ‘ because everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.'* Moreover, as the virtue of humility is an exaltation, for the trial of the soul therein, God is wont to make it ascend by this ladder that it may descend, and make it descend that it may ascend ; for thus are fulfilled the words of the Wise Man, ‘Before he be broken the heart of a man is exalted, and before he be glorified it is humbled/f

3. If the soul will reflect on the nature of a ladder — I omit the spiritual which is not perceptible— it will easily see how uneven is the road ; how after prosperity, which makes it glad, storms and trials follow at once, so that its previous repose seems to have been given it to prepare it and strengthen it for its present sufferings ; how also, after misery and distress, come abundance and ease, so that the soul shall seem to have kept a vigil before the feast. This is the ordinary course of the state of contemplation, for until the soul attains to repose it never continues in one state ; for all is ascending and descending. The reason is this ; the state of perfection, which consists in the perfect love of God and contempt of self, can only subsist on two conditions, the knowledge of God and of oneself. The soul, therefore, must of necessity be tried in the one and * St. Luke xiv. 11. t Prov - *viii. I2 *

CHAP, xm] OF THE SOUL.

the other, in the first which exalts it, by giving it to taste the sweetness of God, in the second which, by trials, humbles it, until, perfect habits having been acquired, it ceases to ascend and descend, having arrived at the summit, united with God, Who is at the top of it, and on Whom, too, the ladder rests.

4. The ladder of contemplation, which, as I have said, comes down from God, is shadowed forth by that ladder which Jacob saw in a dream, and the angels ascending and descending by it, from God to man and from man to God, Who was Himself

leaning upon it.* This took place by night, when Jacob slept, as the Scriptures declare, that we may learn from it how secret is the way and ascent unto God, and how different from all human conception. This is plain enough, for, in general, that which is to our greater profit — the loss and annihilation of self — we esteem a calamity ; and that which is of but little value — comfort and sweetness, where, in general, we lose instead of gaining — we look upon as the more advantageous for us.

5. But, to speak with more accuracy, and to the purpose, of the ladder of secret contemplation, I must observe that the chief reason why it is called a ladder is, that contemplation is the science of love, which is an infused loving knowledge of God, and which enlightens the soul and at the same time kindles within it the fire

* Gen. xx\Hii. 12, 13.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

of love till it shall ascend upwards step by step unto God its Creator ; for it is love only that unites the soul and God. With a view to the greater clearness of this matter, I shall mark the steps of this divine ladder, explaining concisely the signs and effects of each, that the soul may be able to form some conjecture on which of them it stands. I shall distinguish between them by their effects with St. Bernard and St. Thomas,* and because it is not naturally possible to know them as they are in themselves, because the ladder of love is so secret that it can be weighed and measured by God only.

CHAPTER XIX.

Begins the explanation of the ten degrees of the mystic ladder according to St.

Bernard and St. Thomas.

The steps of the ladder of love, by which the soul, ascending from one to another, rises upwards to God, we say are ten. The first degree of love makes the soul languish to its great profit. On this the bride is speaking when she says, ‘ I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love.’t This languishing is not unto

* [S. Thom, de dilectione Dei et Proximi, cap. xxvii. Ut dicit Bernardus, magna res est amor, sed sunt in eo gradus, Loquendo ergo aliquantulum magio moraliter quam realiter decern amoris gradus distinguere possumus, per quos contingit a statu viae ad statum patriae scandere ordinate, quos gradus cognosces per actus.]

t Cant. v. 8.

CHAP. XTX.] OF THE SOUL.

death, but to the glory of God ; for the soul faints away as to sin and all things whatsoever that are not God, for God’s sake, as the Psalmist testifies, saying : ‘ My spirit hath fainted away '* from all things after Thy salvation ; as he says in another place : c My soul hath fainted after Thy salvation. ’+

2. As a sick man loses the desire for, and the taste of all food, and the colour vanishes from his face, so the soul in this degree of love loses all pleasure in earthly things, and all desire of them, and, like one in love, changes its colour. The soul does not fall into this languishing state if the vehement heat descends not into it from above, which is the mystic fever, according to the words of the Psalmist, 4 Voluntary rain shalt Thou separate, O God, to thine inheritance, and it was weakened, but Thou hast perfected it/J This languishing and fainting away as to all

things — it is the first and earliest step to God — I have already explained, § when I spoke of that annihilation to which the soul is brought when it begins to stand upon the ladder of contemplative purgation, when it finds no comfort, pleasure, nor support anywhere. In consequence of which it begins immediately to climb the other steps of the ladder.

3. On the second step the soul is unremitting in its search after God. Thus the bride speaks of her seeking Him in her bed by night — she had fainted away when on

* Ps. cxlii. 7. f Ps* cxviii. 81. J Ps. lxvii. 10. § Bk. 1 ch. xL

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

the first step of the ladder — and had not found Him, says : ‘ I will rise ; I will seek Him whom my soul loveth/* This is now the unceasing occupation of the soul, ‘ Seek ye the Lord, seek His face evermore/ 1 is the counsel of the Psalmist, and never rest until He be found ; like the bride who, when she had questioned the watchmen, passed on in her search, + and left them. Mary Magdalene did not remain even with the angels at the sepulchre § So anxious is the soul now that it seeks the Beloved in all things ; all its thoughts, words, and works are referred to Him; in eating, sleeping, and waking, all its anxieties are about Him, as I have already described it when speaking of the anxieties of love.li As love becomes strong, regaining health, it commences the ascent to the third step by a new purgation in the night— as I shall hereafter explainlT — and which issues in the effects that follow.

4 . The third step of the ladder of love renders the soul active and fervent, so that it faints not. Of this step the royal prophet said, 1 Blessed is the man that feareth our Lord, he shall delight exceedingly in His commandments/** If then, fear, being the fruit of love, produces this delight, what will be the effect of love itself ? On this step the soul looks on great things as little, on many as few, its long service as short,

by

* Cant. iii. 1, 2. f Ps - civ * 4 - + Cant. iii. 4. § St: John xx. 14.

|| Bk. 2 ch. xi. § 7. Spirit. Cant, stanza xiii. ** Ps. cxi. 1.

CHAP. XIX. J OF THE SOUL.

reason of the fire of love which is burning. It is with the soul as it was with Jacob, who c served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed but a few days, because of the greatness of his love/* If the love of a created being did so much in Jacob, what will the love of the Creator Himself do, when it shall have taken possession of the soul on the third step of the ladder ?

5. Here the soul, because of the great love it has for God, is in great pain and suffering because of the scantiness of its service ; if it could lawfully die for Him a thousand times it would be comforted. It looks upon itself therefore as unprofitable in all it does, and on its life as worthless. Another most wonderful effect is that it looks upon itself as being in truth the very worst of all, because its love continues to show it what is due to God ; and then, because as it labours much in the service of God and sees how faulty and imperfect are its works, it is ashamed and distressed, seeing that the service it renders to God Who is so high, is so exceedingly mean. On this third step the soul is very far from giving way to vainglory or presumption, or from condemning others. These anxious effects and other of the same kind are wrought in the soul when on the third step of the ladder, and so the soul acquires strength and courage to ascend to the fourth.

6. When the soul is on the fourth step of the ladder

* Gen. xxix. 20.

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK II.

of love, it falls into a state of suffering, but without weariness, on account of the Beloved ; for, as St. Augustine saith, love makes all that is grievous and heavy to be light as nothing.* It was on this step that the bride stood when longing for the last, she said : ‘ Put me as a seal upon Thy heart, as a seal upon Thy arm ; for love * — that is, the acts and operations of love — ‘ is strong as death ; jealousy is hard as hell.t

7. The spirit is now so strong, and has so subdued the flesh, and makes so little of it, that it is as regardless of it as a tree is of one of its leaves. It seeks not for consolation or sweetness either in God or elsewhere, neither does it pray for God's gifts through any motive of self-interest, or its own satisfaction. For all it cares for now is how it shall please God, and serve Him in some measure in return for His goodness, and for the graces it has received, and this at any and every cost.

8. It is now saying with heart and mind, my God and my Lord, how many there are who seek their own comfort and joy in Thee and who pray for gifts and graces, but those who strive to please Thee, who offer Thee that which costs them something, and who cast their own interests aside, are very few ; it is not Thy will to show mercy that fails, O my God ! but it is we

* Serin. LXX. de Verb. Evan. Matth. Opp. tom. v. p. 383. Lib. de Vidnitate, Cap. 21, Tom. vi. p. 384. Ed. Ben.

t Cant. viii. 6.

CHAP. XIX.] OF THE SOUL.

who fail in using Thy mercies in Thy service, so as to bind Thee to show us Thy mercy continually.

9. This degree of love is exceedingly high, for now

as the soul, earnest in its love, always follows after God in the spirit of suffering for His sake, God frequently and, as it were, continually gives it joy, visiting it sweetly in spirit, for the boundless love of Christ, the Word, cannot look on the sufferings of the souls that love without coming to their relief. He has promised this by the mouth of the prophet Jeremias, saying, 'I have remembered thee, pitying thy youth . . . when

thou followedst me in the desert/* which in its spiritual sense is that detachment of the soul from all created things, not resting upon them nor at ease among them. On this fourth step of the ladder the soul is so inflamed with love, and so set on fire with the desire after God, that it ascends upwards to the fifth, which is the next.

10. On the fifth step of the ladder the soul longs after God, and desires Him with impatience. So great is the eagerness of the soul on this step to embrace, and be united to, the Beloved, that all delay, how slight soever, seems to it long, tedious, and oppressive, and it is ever thinking that it has found its love ; but when it sees that its desires are disappointed — which is almost continually the case — it faints away through its longing, as the Psalmist says, speaking of this step : (My soul

* Jerem. ii. 2.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

longeth and fainteth for the courts of our Lord/* On this step the soul must either obtain its desires or die, as Rachel, because of her great longing for children said to Jacob, her husband, ' Give me children, otherwise I shall die/t The soul is now nourished by love, for as was its hunger so is its abundance, and so it ascends to the sixth step, the effects of which are as follows.

CHAPTER XX.

Of the other five degrees.

When the soul has ascended to the sixth step, it runs swiftly to God ; and hope too runs without fainting, for love that has made it strong makes it fly rapidly. Of this step also Isaias speaks, saying : ‘ They that hope in our Lord shall change their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not labour, they shall walk and not faint, '+ to this step also the Psalmist refers : ‘As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God/§ The hart when thirsty runs very swiftly to the water. The cause of this swiftness which the soul experiences on this step is/that charity is enlarged, and the soul is now almost wholly purified, as it is written in the psalm :

* Ps. lxxxiii. 2. f G en * xxx. J Is. xl. 31. § Ps. xli. 1.

OF THE SOUL.

CHAP. XX.]

€ without iniquity have I run/* and in another psalm, ‘ I ran the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst dilate my heart/t and thus the soul ascends immediately from the sixth to the seventh degree which follows.

2. On the seventh step the soul becomes vehemently bold, in this intense and loving exaltation, no prudence can withhold it, no counsel control it, no shame restrain it ; for the favour which God hath shown it has made it vehemently bold. This explains to us those words of the Apostle, that charity ‘ believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things/* It was on this step that Moses spoke, when he said unto God : ‘ Either forgive them this trespass, or if Thou do not, strike me out of the book that Thou hast written/§ Men of this spirit obtain from God what they so lovingly pray for. Hence the words of David : ‘Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart/ 1|

3. Standing on this step, the bride was bold, and said ‘ Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth/IT But consider well here, it is not lawful to be thus bold, unless the soul feels that the interior favour of the king's sceptre is extended to it,** lest it should fall down the steps already ascended ; in all of which humility must ever be preserved. From this boldness and courage which God grants to the soul on the seventh step, that

* lb. lviii, 5. f Ps. cxviii. 32. J 1 Cor. xiii. 7. § Ex. xxxii. 31, 32.

|| Ps. xxxvi. 4. Cant. i. 1. ** Esth. v. 2 ; viii. 4.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

it may be bold with Him in the vehemence of its love, the soul ascends to the eighth, where it lays hold of the Beloved and is united to Him.

4. On the eighth step the soul embraces the Beloved and holds Him fast, according to the words of the bride :

4 1 found Him whom my soul loveth ; I held Him ; and I will not let Him go.'* On this step of union the desires of the soul are satisfied, but not without interruption. Some souls ascend to this step and at once fall back, if they did not, and remained there, they would have attained to a certain state of blessedness in this life, and thus the soul tarries but briefly on this step of the ladder. Daniel, being a man of desires, was bidden, on the part of God, to remain here : ‘ Daniel thou man of desires, stand upright/ 1 After this comes the ninth step, which is that of the perfect.

5. On the ninth step the soul is on fire sweetly. This step is that of the perfect who bum away sweetly in God, for this sweet and delicious burning is the work of the Holy Ghost because of the union of the soul with God. St. Gregory says of the Apostles, that they burned interiorly with love sweetly, when the Holy Ghost

descended upon them.* The blessings and the riches of God which the soul now enjoys cannot be described. And if we were to write many books on the subject there would still be more to say. For this reason, and because

* Cant. iii. 4. ^ f JDan. x. 11. J Horn. 30, in Evang.

CHAP. XX.] OF THE SOUL.

I intend to speak of it hereafter,* I shall now say no more of this step, except that it is immediately followed by the tenth and the last, which does not belong to this life.

6. On the tenth step of the ladder the soul becomes wholly assimilated unto God in the beatific vision which it then enjoys ; for having ascended in this life to the ninth, it goeth forth out of the body. Love works in such souls — they are few, and perfectly purified in this life — that which purgatory works in others in the next. For according to St. Matthew i Blessed are the clean in heart, for they shall see God/t As I have said, the vision is the cause of the soul's perfect likeness unto God. 4 We know,' saith St. John, * that, when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is And thus, whatever the soul is, it will be like unto God, and so is called, and is, by participation, God.

7. This is the(secret ladder which the soul speaks, though in the higher steps no longer secret, for love reveals itself exceedingly in the great effects it produces. But on the highest step, the beatific vision, the last of the ladder, where God is leaning, as I said before, § nothing remains secret from the soul, by reason of its perfect likeness. And, therefore, our Saviour saith, 1 In

* Spirit. Cant. Stanza xiv. f St. Matt. v. 8.

§ Ch. xviii. § 4.

t 1 St. John iii. 2.

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK II.

that day you shall not ask me anything/* Until that day comeTnotwithstanding the heights to which the soul ascends, something still remains secret from it, and that in proportion to the distance from its perfect likeness to the Divine Essence. In this way, then, by means of mystical theology and secret love, thfc soul goeth forth from all things and from itself, ascending upwards unto God. For love is like fire, which ever ascends, hastening to be absorbed in the centre of its sphere.

CHAPTER XXI.

The meaning of ‘disguised/ The colours in which the soul disguises itself in this night.

Having now explained why contemplation is called a secret ladder, I have further to explain what is meant by the word ‘ disguised ' ; for the soul says that it went forth by the secret ladder ‘ disguised/

2. For the understanding of the whole matter it is necessary to keep in mind that to be disguised is nothing else but to hide oneself under another form than our own, either for the purpose of showing, under that concealment the will and purpose of the heart with a view to gain the goodwill and affection of the person beloved, or for the purpose of escaping the observation of rivals, and thereby the better effect our object. Such * S. John xvi. 23.

CHAP. XXI.] OF THE SOUL.

a person assumes the disguise which shall most represent and manifest the affection of his heart, and which shall the best conceal him from his rivals.

3. The soul, then, touched with the love of its Bridegroom Christ, that it may gain His favour and goodwill, sallies forth in that disguise which shall most vividly represent the affections of the mind and secure it against the assaults of its enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh. The disguise it assumes is, therefore, a garment of three principal colours, white, green, and purple, emblems of the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity ; by the help of which it shall not only enter into the good graces of the Beloved, but shall also be most secure and protected against its three enemies.

4. The faith is a garment of such surpassing whiteness as to dazzle the eyes of every understanding : for when the soul has put on faith it becomes invisible and inaccessible to the devil, because it is then most securely defended against him, its strongest and most cunning foe.

5. St. Peter knew of no better defence against the devil than faith, for he said, ‘ whom resist, stedfast in faith/* And with a view of entering into favour and union with the Beloved, the soul cannot put on a better garment, as the ground of the other virtues, than the

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK n.

white garment of faith, for without it, the Apostle saith, ‘ it is impossible to please God.’* But with a living faith the soul is pleasing and acceptable unto God, for He says so Himself by the mouth of the prophet: ‘I will espouse thee to Me in faith.'t It is as if He said to the soul, If thou wilt be united and betrothed to Me, thou must draw near inwardly clad in faith.

6. The soul put on the white robe of faith on its going forth in this dark night, when walking in the darkness amidst interior trials, as I said before,* it received no ray of light from the understanding; not from above, because heaven seemed shut and God

hidden ; not from below, because its spiritual directors gave it no comfort. It bore its trials patiently and persevered, without fainting, or falling away from the Beloved, Who by these crosses and tribulations tried the faith of His bride, that it might be able hereafter truly to say with the Psalmist, ‘ For the words of Thy lips, I have kept hard ways.’§

7. Over the white robe of faith the soul puts on forth-

with that of the second colour, green, emblem of the virtue of hope, by which it is delivered and protected from its second enemy, the world. The freshness of a living hope in God fills the soul with such energy and resolution, with such aspirations after the things of eternal life, that all this world seems to it — as indeed * Heb. xi. 6. t ° s < "• 20 - l Ch. vii. § 4. $ Ps. xvi. 4.

CHAP. XXI.] OF THE SOUL.

it is — in comparison with that which it hopes for, dry, withered, dead, and worthless. The soul now denudes itself of the garments and trappings of the world, by setting the heart upon nothing that is in it, and hoping for nothing that is, or may be, in it, living only in the hope of everlasting life. And, therefore, when the heart is thus lifted up above the world, the world cannot touch it or lay hold of it, nor even see it.

8. The soul then, thus disguised and clad in the vesture of hope, is secure from its second foe, the world, for St. Paul calls hope the helmet of salvation.* Now a helmet is armour which protects and covers the whole head, and has no opening except in one place, where the eyes may look through. Hope is such a helmet, for it covers all the senses of the head of the soul in such a way that they cannot be lost in worldly things, and leaves no part of them exposed to the arrows of the world. It has one loophole only through which the eyes may look upwards only ; this is the ordinary work of hope, to direct the eyes of the soul to God alone ; as David saith, * My eyes

are always to our Lord,'t looking for succour nowhere else ; as he saith in another Psalm, (As the eyes of the handmaid on the hands of her mistress, so are our eyes to our Lord God until He have mercy on us,'$ hoping in Him.

9. The green vesture of hope — for the soul is then

* 1 Thess. v. 8. t P s - xxiv. 15. { Ps, cxxii, j.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

ever looking upwards unto God, disregarding all else, and delighting only in Him — is so pleasing to the Beloved that the soul obtains from Him all it hopes for. This is why He tells the soul in the Canticle, 'Thou hast wounded My heart in one of thine eyes/* It would have been useless for the soul, if it had not put on the green robe of hope in God, to claim such love, for it would not have succeeded, because that which influences the Beloved, and prevails, is persevering hope. It is in the vesture of hope that the soul goes forth disguised in this secret and dark night ; seeing that it goes forth so detached from all possession, without any consolations, that it regards nothing, and that its sole anxiety is about God, putting its 'mouth in the dust if so be there may be hope,' in the words of Jeremias quoted already.!

io. Over the white and green robes, as the crown and perfection of its disguise, the soul puts on the third, the splendid robe of purple. This is the emblem of charity, which not only enhances the beauty of the others, but which so elevates the soul and renders it so lovely and pleasing in His eyes that it ventures to say to Him, ' I am black but beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem, therefore hath the king loved me and brought me into His. secret chamber.'! This robe of

* Cant. iv. 9. t Ch. viii. § 1.

t Cant. i. 4. Off. B. M. V. ant. ad Vesp.

CHAP. XXI.J OF THE SOUL.

charity, which is that of love, not only defends and protects the soul from its third enemy, the flesh — for where the true love of God is there is no room for selflove or for selfishness — but strengthens the other virtues also, and makes them flourish for the protection of the soul, beautifying it and adorning it with grace, so that it shall please the Beloved ; for without charity no virtue is pleasing unto God. This is the purple, spoken of in the Canticle, by which the soul ascends to the seat where God reposes : ‘ the seat of gold, the going up of purple/* It is vested in this robe of purple that the soul journeys, as the first stanza declares, when in the dark night it went out of itself, and from all created things, with anxious love inflamed, by the secret ladder of contemplation to the perfect union of the love of God its beloved Saviour.

ii. This, then, is that disguise which the soul says it puts on in the night of faith on the secret ladder ; and these are the three colours of it, namely, a certain most fitting disposition for its union with God in its three powers, memory, understanding and will. Faith blinds the understanding, and empties it of all natural intelligence, and thereby disposes it for union with the divine wisdom. Hope empties the memory and withdraws it from all created things which can possess it ; for as St. Paul saith, ‘ Hope that is seen is not hope/t * Cant. iii. io. f Rom * viii. 2 4«

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK II.

Thus the memory is withdrawn from all things on which it might dwell in this life, and is fixed on what the soul hopes to possess. Hope in God alone, therefore, purely disposes the memory according to the measure of the emptiness it has wrought for union with Him.

12. Charity in the same way empties the affections and desires of the will of everything that is not God, and fixes them on Him alone. This virtue of charity, then, disposes the will and unites it with God in love. And because these virtues — it being their special work — withdraw the soul from all that is not God, so also do they serve to unite the soul to Him. It is impossible for the soul to attain to the perfection of the love of God unless it journeys, in earnest, in the robes of these three virtues. This disguise, therefore, which the soul assumed when it went forth in order to obtain that which it aimed at, the loving and delightful union with the Beloved, was most necessary and expedient. And it was also a great happiness to have succeeded in thus disguising itself and persevering in it until it obtained the desired end, the union of love, as it declares in the next line.

CHAP. XXII.]

OF THE SOUL.

CHAPTER XXII.

Explains the third line of the second stanza.

O happy lot !

It is very evident that it was a blessed thing for the soul to have succeeded in such an enterprise as this, by which it was delivered out of the hands of satan, from the world, and from its own sensuality, in which, having gained that liberty of spirit so precious and desirable, it rose from meanness to dignity, from being earthly and human became heavenly and divine, having its c conversation in Heaven/* like unto those who are in a state of perfection, as I shall proceed to explain.

2. I shall, however, be brief, because the most important point — that which chiefly

determined me to explain this dark night to many souls who enter on it without knowing it, as I said in the preface — has been already in some degree explained, and I have also shown, though not in adequate terms, how great are the blessings that descend upon the soul in this night, and what a great happiness it is to be passing through it. This I did that when such souls are alarmed at the trials that have come upon them, they may be encouraged by the certain hope of the numerous and great blessings of God which they receive in this night. Besides this, it was a happy lot for the soul for the reason assigned in the following line.

* Philipp, iii. 20.

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK H.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Explains the fourth line — describes the wonderful hiding place of the soul in this night, and how the devil, though he enters other most secret places, enters not this.

In darkness and concealment .

4 In concealment/ that is, secretly or hidden. So when the soul says that it went forth in darkness and concealment, it explains more clearly the great safety spoken of in the first line of this stanza — which it finds in this dim contemplation on the road of the union of the love of God.

2. The words of the soul 4 darkness and concealment ' mean here that the soul, because it went forth in the dark, travelled in secret, undiscovered by the evil one, beyond the reach of his wiles and stratagems. The reason why the soul is free, concealed from the devil and his wiles in the dimness of this contemplation, is, that

infused contemplation, to which it is now admitted, is passively infused into it, in secret, without the cognisance of the senses, and of the interior and exterior powers of the sensual part. And that, too, is the reason why it escapes, not only from the embarrassments which the faculties, and naturally, through their weakness, present before it, but also from the evil one who, were it not for the sensual faculties, could never know what is passing

CHAP, xxni.] OF THE SOUL.

in the soul. The more spiritual therefore the communication is, and the further it is removed beyond the reach of sense, the less able is the devil to perceive it.

3. This being so, it greatly concerns the soul's security, that the lower senses should be in the dark, and have no knowledge of the interior conversation of the soul with God, and that for two reasons ; first, that the spiritual communication may be the more abundant, for then the weakness of the sensual part hinders not liberty of spirit. The second is, that the soul is more secure because the evil one cannot know what is passing within it. The words of our Lord, 1 Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth,'* may be, in a spiritual sense, understood of this, and we may understand Him to say : Let not thy left hand, that is man's lower nature, know what is passing in the higher and spiritual part of the soul. That is, let the divine communications remain unknown to the lower senses, and a secret between the spirit and God.

4. It is very true, that oftentimes when these interior and most secret spiritual communications are made to the soul, the devil, though he knows neither their nature nor their form, ascertains their presence, and that the soul is then receiving some great blessings, merely from observing the silence and repose some of them effect in the senses, and in the powers of our lower nature. And

* St. Matt. vi. 3.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

then, when he sees that he cannot thwart them in the inmost depth of the soul, he does all he can to disquiet and disturb the sensual part which is accessible to him, now by pain and at another time by horrible dread, intending thereby to trouble the higher and spiritual part of the soul, and to frustrate the blessings it then receives and enjoys.

5. But very often when this contemplation pours its light purely into the spirit and exerts its strength therein, the devil, with all his efforts, is not able to disturb it, for then the soul becomes the recipient of renewed benefits, love, and a more secure peace ; for, wonderful to tell ! in its consciousness of the disturbing presence of the foe, it enters deeply into itself, without knowing how it comes to pass, and feels assured of a certain refuge where it can hide itself beyond the reach of the evil one ; and thus its peace and joy are increased, of which the devil attempted to rob it. All those terrors assail it only from without ; it sees clearly, and exults, that it can in the meanwhile securely enjoy in secret the calm peace and sweetness of the Bridegroom, which the world and the devil can neither give nor take away. The soul is now experiencing the truth of that which the bride says in the Canticle, * Behold, threescore valiants . . . compass the bed of Solomon . . .

for fears by night.’* Strength and peace abound

* Cant. iii. 7, 8.

CHAP. XXIII.] OF THE SOUL.

within the soul, though it feels the flesh and the bones frequently tormented without.

6. At other times, when the spiritual communications flow over into the senses, the devil succeeds the more easily in disquieting the mind, and in disturbing it with the terrors with which he assails it through the senses. At that time the mental agonies are great, and occasionally surpassing all description ; for when spirit has to do with

spirit, the evil one causes an intolerable horror in the good one, that is, in the soul, when it succeeds in disturbing it. This is the meaning of the bride in her account of that which happened to her when she tried to be interiorly recollected, so as to have the fruition of these goods : * I came down,' she says, ‘ into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valleys, and to look if the vineyard had flourished . . • . I knew not ; my soul troubled me for the chariots and the noise of Aminadab,' that is the devil.*

7. This attack of the devil takes place also when God bestows His favours upon a soul by the instrumentality of a good angel. The devil sees this occasionally, because God in general permits it to become known to the enemy, that he may do what he can, according to the measure of justice, against that soul, and that he may be debarred from pleading that he had no opportunity of seizing on that soul as he did in the case of Job.

* Cant. vi. 10, 11.

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

It is, therefore, expedient that God should place these two combatants, the good angel and the devil, on an equality when they contend for the soul, in order that the victory may be of greater worth, and that the spul, triumphant and faithful in temptation, may be the more abundantly rewarded.

8. This is the reason — and it is right we should observe it — why God, in the order of grace, permits satan to disquiet and tempt the soul which He is guiding therein. When such a soul has real visions, through the instrumentality of an angel, God suffers the evil spirit to represent false visions of the same kind, in such a way that an incautious soul may be very easily deluded, as it has happened to many. We have an instance of this in Exodus, where we read that the

magicians of Pharao wrought apparently signs and wonders resembling those really

wrought by Moses. For when Moses turned water into blood, the magicians of Egypt did the same ; and when he brought forth frogs, so did the magicians.*

9. It is not in bodily visions only that the evil spirit apes God, but in spiritual communications also, which are effected through the instrumentality of an angel* whenever he succeeds in discovering them. For as Job saith, ‘He seeth every high thing, 'f that is, he apes them, and insinuates himself among them as well as he

CHAP. XXIII.] OF THE SOUL.

can. Spiritual visions have neither form nor figure — that is the characteristic of spirit — and, therefore, satan cannot imitate them, nor occasion others which shall in any way represent them. And so when the good angel communicates spiritual contemplation, the evil spirit, in order to attack it while the soul is being thus visited, presents itself before it with a certain horror and spiritual confusion, which is occasionally exceedingly painful. Sometimes the soul can quickly disembarrass itself, so that the terror of the evil spirit shall have no time to make any impression upon it, and recollects itself, favoured herein by that spiritual grace which the good angel then communicates.

io. Sometimes, too, God permits this horror and trouble to last a long time, and this is a greater torment to the soul than all the evils of this life can be ; the remembrance of which afterwards is sufficient to produce great pain. All this passes in the soul without its doing or undoing anything of itself to bring about these representations or impressions. But we must remember that, when God suffers the evil spirit thus to afflict the soul, it is with a view to purify and prepare it by that spiritual vigil for some great festival and spiritual grace which it is His will to bestow upon it, for He never mortifies but to give life, and never humbles but to exalt. This speedily ensues ; for the soul, according to the measure of the dark purgation it has undergone,

THE DARK NIGHT

[BOOK II.

enters on the fruition of sweet spiritual contemplation, and that so sublime at times that no language can describe it. This is to be understood of those visitations which God makes by the ministry of an angel, and wherein the soul, as I said before/ is not wholly secure, nor in such darkness and concealment as to be altogether unobserved by the enemy.

11. But when God visits the soul Himself, the words of the stanza are then true, for, in perfect darkness, hidden from the enemy, it receives, at such times, the spiritual graces of God. The reason of the difference is that God, being the sovereign Lord, dwells substantially in the soul, and that neither angel nor devil can discover what is going on there, nor penetrate the profound and secret communications which take place between Him and the soul. These communications, because the work of our Lord Himself, are wholly divine and supreme, and, as it were, substantial touches of the divine union between Himself and the soul ; in one of these, because it is the highest possible degree of prayer, the soul receives greater good than in all the rest. These are the touches for which the bride in the Canticle prayed, saying, ‘ Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth / 1

12. This being a state so near unto God, into which the soul so anxiously longs to enter, one touch of the Godhead is prized and desired by it above all the other

CHAP. XXIII.] OF THE SOUL.

gifts which God grants it. For this reason the bride in the Canticlet, after the great things wrought in her, of which she there sings, not finding them enough, prays for the divine touches, saying : ‘ Who shall give to me Thee my brother, sucking the

breasts of my mother, that I may find Thee without, and kiss Thee ' with the mouth of my soul, ‘ and now no man despise me/* or presume to assail me. These words relate to that communication which God makes alone, without, and hidden from all creatures ; that is the meaning of the words ‘ alone/ ‘ without/ and * sucking/ This occurs when the soul in liberty of spirit enjoys these blessings in sweetness and inward peace, the sensual part thereof unable to hinder it, and the devil by means of it not able to disturb it.

13. Then indeed, the evil spirit would not venture to assail the soul, because he could not succeed, neither can he know of those divine touches in the substance of the soul with the substance of God, which is wrought by loving knowledge. No man can arrive at this blessed condition but by the most perfect purgation and detachment, by being spiritually hidden from all created things. It is a work wrought in the dark, in the hiding place, wherein the soul is confirmed more and more in union with God by love ; and, therefore, the soul sings, ‘ In darkness and concealment/

* Google

THE DARK NIGHT

[book h.

14. When these favours are granted to the soul in secret, that is, in the spirit only, the higher and lower portions of the soul seem to it during some of them — it knows not how, to be so far apart that it recognises two parts in itself, each so distinct from the other, that neither seems to have anything in common with the other, being in appearance so far removed and apart. And, in reality, this is in a certain manner true, for in its present operations, which are wholly spiritual, it has no commerce with the sensual part.

15. Thus the soul becomes wholly spiritual, and the spiritual passions and desires are in a high degree suppressed in this hiding place of unitive contemplation. The soul

then, speaking of its higher part, sings the last line of this stanza, ‘ My house being now at rest.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

Concludes the explanation of the second stanza.

My home being now at rest .

This is as much as saying, My higher nature and my lower nature also, each in its desires and powers, being now at rest, I went forth to the divine union of the love of God.

2. As in the warfare of the dark night, as I said

CHAP. XXIV.] OF THE SOUL.

before,* the soul undergoes a twofold contest and purgation : that is, in the sensual and the spiritual part, with their senses, powers, and passions, so also, in the sensual and spiritual parts, with all their powers and desires, does it attain to a twofold peace and rest. For this reason it repeats the words, as I said before, t 4 My house being now at rest/ at the end of the second stanza, because of the two parts of the soul, spiritual and sensual, which, if they are to go forth into the divine union of love, must first of all be changed, ordered, and tranquillised with regard to all the things of sense and spirit, after the likeness of the state of innocence in Adam, notwithstanding that the soul be not wholly delivered from the temptations of the lower part. These words, therefore, which in the first stanza are understood of the tranquillity of the lower and sensual part, now, in the second stanza, are understood particularly of the higher and spiritual part ; and this is the reason of the repetition.

3. The soul obtains this tranquillity and rest of the spiritual house, habitually and perfectly — so far as it is possible in this life — through the substantial touches of

the divine union, of which I have just spoken, { and which, in secret, hidden from the turmoil of satan, sense, and passion, it receives from the Divinity, whereby it

J Ch. xxiii. § 11.

Google

THE DARK NIGHT

[book n.

has been tranquillised, purified, strengthened, and confirmed, so as to become an effectual partaker of that union which is its divine betrothal to the Son of God. The instant the two houses of the soul are tranquil and confirmed, with the whole household of its powers and desires sunk in sleep and silence, as to all things of heaven and earth, the divine Wisdom, immediately in a new bond of loving possession, unites itself to the soul, and that is fulfilled which is written, ‘ While quiet silence contained all things and the night was in the mid-way of her course, Thy omnipotent Word sallying out of heaven from the royal seats/* The same truth is set before us in the Canticle, where the bride, after passing by those who took her veil away and wounded her, saith, 4 When I had a little passed by them, I found Him whom my soul loveth/f

4. This union is unattainable without great purity, and this purity is attainable only by detachment from all created things and sharp mortifications. This is signified by the robbery of the veil and the wounding of the bride in the night when she went forth searching after her beloved ; for the new veil of the betrothal cannot be put on till the old veil be taken away. He, therefore, who will not go out in this dark night to seek the Beloved, who will not deny and mortify his own will, but seek him at his ease on his bed, as the bride

* Wisd. xviii. 14. f Cant. iii. 4.

CHAP. XXV.] OF THE SOUL.

once did,* will never find Him. The soul says here that it found Him, as the soul says of itself that it found Him by going forth in the dark, and in the anxieties of love.

CHAPTER XXV.

In which the third stanza is briefly explained.

In that happy night ,

In secret, seen of none.

Seeing nought myself ,

Without other light or guide

Save that which in my heart was burning.

The soul still continues the metaphor of natural night in celebrating and magnifying the blessings of the night of the spirit, by means of which it has been able quickly and securely to compass the desired end. Three of these blessings are set before us in this stanza.

2 . The first is that in this blessed night of contemplation God is guiding the soul by a road so solitary and so secret, so remote and alien from sense, that nothing belonging thereto, nor any created thing, can approach it so as to disturb it or detain it on the road of the union of love.

3. The second blessing is that because of the spiritual darkness of this night, in which all the faculties

* Cant. iii. 1.

[BOOK II.

of the higher part of the soul are in darkness, the soul, seeing nothing, and unable to see, is not detained by anything which is not God from drawing near unto Him, and, therefore, advances unhindered by forms and figures and natural apprehensions : for these are the things which usually hinder the soul, from being always in union with God.

4. The third blessing is, that though the soul is supported by no particular interior light of the understanding, nor by any exterior guide comforting it on this high road — the thick darkness has deprived it of all this — yet love and faith, now burning within it, drawing the heart towards the Beloved, influence and guide it, and make it fly upwards to God along the road of solitude, while it knows neither how nor by what means that is done.

END OF THE DARK NIGHT.

INDEX.

INDEX.]

OF THE SOUL.

INDEX.

Angels, the ministry of, 119.

Anger, imperfections of, 21.

Aridity, the purgative, 35 ; cause of, 36 ; benefit of, 59, 62, 86. Attachment to trifles,

14.

Avarice, spiritual, 13 ; imperfections of, 13, 5 7.

Beginners, state of, 5 ; weak in virtue, 7 ; subject to pride, 8 ; imperfections of, 9 ; readiness of, to teach others, 12 ; childishness of, 12 ; impatience of, 22 ; disobedient to their directors, 23 delusions of, in the matter of prayer, 26.

Blasphemy, spirit of, 65.

Blessedness, 118.

Blessings, three, of the spiritual night, 18 1.

Burning of the soul, 109, 114 ; effects of, 116 ; not always felt, 12 1. Charity, robe of, 166 ; effects of, 168.

Contemplation, commencement of, 37 ; effects of, 40, 76, 78, 80, 86, 122, 138 ; not granted to all spiritual persons, 119 ; nature of, 44 ; dark night of, 69 ; a ray of darkness, 80, 1 39 ; painfulness of, 80 ; light of, 100, 101 ; secret, 146 ; called a ladder, 151. Devotion, sensible, 22-27.

Dionysius, St., 80.

Disguise of the soul, 162.

Disturbances, caused by the evil spirit, 173.

Ecstasies, source of, 70.

Egypt, fleshpots of, 101.

Envy, holy, 27.

Escape of the soul, 131.

Faith, robe of, 164 ; effects of, 167.

Fear of God, 59, 73.

THE DARK NIGHT

[INDEX.

Fervour of Beginners, io.

Fire of contemplation, 108.

Friendship, spiritual, 19.

Giddiness, spirit of, 65.

Gluttony, spiritual, 22, 58.

Hope, robe of, 165 ; effects of, 167.

Humility, effects of, 56.

Illumination of the angels, 120.

Imperfections of beginners, 5.

Job, trials of, 53.

Knowledge of self, 51, 55.

Ladder, the secret. 132, 149 ; the ten steps of, 152-162.

Love, two kinds of, 20 ; reverential, 124 ; degrees of contemplation, 152.

Lukewarmness, 35.

Luxury, spiritual, 16 ; effects of, 19 ; correction of, 58.

Mary Magdalene, 125.

Meditation, when to be abandoned, 43 ; on the Life of Christ, 44. Melancholy, 19, 35.

Miracles, false, 174.

Mortification, fruits of, 63.

Neighbour, love of, 56.

Night, the dark, effects of, 20, 30 ; two kinds of, 31.

of sense, 33 ; tests of, 34 ; troubles of, 41 ; benefits of, 47, 59 •;

entered by few, 48 ; brings with it the knowledge of God, 54 ;

duration of, 66.

Night of the spirit, 31, 32 ; entered by few, 64 ; beginnings of, 68 ; effects of, 76, 1 1 7, 135 ; pains of, 83 ; misery of the soul in, 92 ; duration of, 93 ; pains of, greater than those of the night of sense, 123; blessings of, 131, 137, 169, 181.

Obedience, 23.

Pains of the soul in contemplation, 96, 105.

Patience, 59.

INDEX.] OF THE SOUL. 187

Perfection, true, 15 ; conditions of, 150.

Presence of God, 122.

Proficients, sweetness of, 69 ; certain imperfections of, 71, 75 ; why spiritual sweetness was granted to, 74.

Purgation, distress of the soul in its, 94.

Purgatory in this life, 87, 16 1 ; how the souls suffer in. no.

Rachel, 126.

Recollection, interior effects of, on the memory, 97.

Reverence, 52.

Satan, buffetings of, 18 ; delusions of, 72 ; works through the senses, 170, 1 71 ; why allowed to disquiet souls, 172- 175.

Self-delusion of beginners, 8, 23.

Sloth, spiritual, 27.

Soul, the cause of the errors of, 133.

Spirit, liberty of, 62, 63, 70.

Strong, the trials of, 66.

Submission of the will, 28.

Sufferings, advantages of, 138.

Sweetness, spiritual, 21 ; how corrected, 57 ; from God, 61.

Teresa, St., writings of, 12.

Theology, mystic, 78 ; enlightens the understanding, 121 ; infused by love, 143 ; hides the soul, 146.

Thirst, the living, 46.

Tobias, 103.

Touches, divine, 82, 176.

Union, the divine, requisites for, 103 ; effects of, 179.

Vexation, 53.

Waters, the dark, 139, 141.

Way, the illuminative, 64.

Weak, the trials of, 66.

Wisdom, the divine, 79, 1 19 ; secret, 143 ; effects of, 144 ; inexplicable, 144, 147 ; a ladder, 149.

Zeal, indiscreet, 21.

v4,v1 C / HEMMONS, CENTRAL PRINTING WORKS BRISTOL.

The Dark Night of the Soul